Challenging state and corporate impunity: is accountability possible?

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CENTRE FOR CRIME
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Foreword

On 19 June 2015, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies and the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Liverpool co-hosted the conference *Challenging state and corporate impunity: Is accountability possible?* This publication presents edited transcripts of the speeches given to the conference. Each contribution has been edited for fluency, so some asides and digressions have been omitted. We have also added references where they might offer helpful background to the reader.

This was the third in the series of conferences, following the successful How Corrupt is Britain? (2013) and How Violent is Britain? (2014) conferences. It brought people together from a range of organisations to discuss how to hold state and corporate institutions to account.

The conference debated notions of accountability, in an era where surveillance and a concentration of power within the hands of elites render such concepts problematic. Neo-liberal policies and practices are disintegrating the liberal democratic forms of state and corporate accountability that exist in the UK system of government. The gap between the formal checks and balances and the ability to achieve real accountability is widening. To this end, the conference discussed at length the difficulty in holding state and corporate institutions to account for abuses of power and the social harm they cause, and provided a space to think strategically about how academics and activists can work together to challenge state and corporate power.

David Whyte introduced the event and reflected on the lessons of the previous two conferences. Secondly, **Suresh Grover** considered how the police can be made accountable in the context of institutional racism. **Tony Bunyan** considered how researchers can lend their efforts in supporting movements towards more comprehensive state accountability. **Sarah Lamble** discussed how accountability is restricted by being presented in an individualist context, and suggests how it can be used more effectively when broadened to the community. **Deborah Hargreaves** reflected on how the current neoliberal agenda prevents effective corporate accountability; and how this can be challenged in order to improve social responsibility. Finally, **Ewa Jasiewicz** reflected on the difficulties associated with the use of journalism to aid movements for international accountability.

Will McMahon
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David Whyte
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November, 2015

1. Challenging state and corporate impunity: is accountability possible?

David Whyte

I think we've got a good balance here today as we had at the previous conferences between campaigners/activists, interested individuals, academics and some critical journalists. Today, as at the other conferences, it's not very easy to see a kind of clear dividing line between these groups. But the one thing that we had in our minds when we organised the How Corrupt is Britain and the How Violent is Britain? conferences, is that often organisations and individuals that never meet and never speak to each other, have very similar experiences in challenging the state and challenging corporate power. Yet often they don't talk to each other or even know about each other's struggles. Beyond meetings and conferences like this, we don't have a way of systematically connecting people and organisations together, and this is badly needed.

One of the things we certainly don't want to come out of today is for us to set up a new organisation, or to be setting ourselves up as the leaders of some kind of initiative. But we definitely need to find a way particularly of linking up young critical academics and young critical journalists with campaigning organisations.

Campaigning

This was the first reason we organised the How Corrupt is Britain? and the How Violent is Britain? conferences. We come across campaigning organisations who can't afford to fund research work or small projects all the time, and at the same time there are academics and journalists who are desperate to get involved in that kind of work, and they just don't know how to make contact or cooperate effectively with campaigners. And part of that reason we know is because often it takes years and years of building a relationship across different people in communities to then know that we can work together and trust each other. These things don't develop overnight. So the second thing we want to discuss today is how might we help develop that process, or even just ways of facilitating those kind of relationships in a broader sense?

As part of this process of building our capacity to resist state and corporate power, we are thinking about trying to develop a model for 'rapid responses' to particular issues, and we'll come back to this, but one of the issues that we need to talk about is that there are particular issues around policing and police accountability at this moment. There are a whole range of issues around the abuse of power and the vacuum of accountability that seem to be an obvious place to really focus our attention on at the moment. So if we are thinking about this 'rapid response' approach, then policing might be a particularly important

topic to think about focusing on at the moment. If we can build our capacity to resist by bringing together a groups of people and organisations who were maybe not previously connected and organise around police accountability as a particular issue, we might be able to generate a more powerful response and make our voice much louder and more effective.

Response to How Corrupt is Britain?

I think we also need to be clear about the kind of challenges that we're facing right now, in particular the issues of both state and corporate accountability. The How Corrupt is Britain? conference led to a book , which is now being discussed fairly widely in the public domain. One of the arguments in several chapters in that book, including my introduction, is that under the present conditions we describe as neo-liberalism, there's been a rise in the 'individualisation' of explanations for social problems that are produced by systems of power, not by individuals. There's also been a kind of intense commodification, where monetary value counts a lot more in the provision of services and social relationships and so on, and where particular, targeted measures affect public authorities and place a monetisable value on all aspects of private and public service provision. Now that has intensified the problems of corruption and violence in particular ways. That's not to say that these problems are new by any means, but they are taking new forms, and in many ways present new challenges for accountability.

Challenges

Now, Peter Oborne, until recently the Chief Political Correspondence of *The Daily Telegraph*, reviewed the book *How Corrupt is Britain*.[1] The first thing he said was, and I paraphrase: 'The BBC could never have suppressed the Newsnight report into Jimmy Saville if it had been governed by rigorous systems of accountability favoured by the neo-liberals'. His argument is that neo-liberalism encourages more open and transparent governance structures to develop. So, in other words, if the public sector is governed by neo-liberal principles then corruption is not going to arise. His conclusion is based on an extreme ideological dogma that he, along with other people who don't have a critique of the police or of corporate power at the moment, think that we can restrain state power with the power of markets; that's the solution to the problems that we're finding in elites at the moment. I find it astounding that a political commentator can make

that kind of statement in public now given all our recent experience of how neo-liberal policies have encouraged all aspects of public interest - in the health system, in social care and criminal justice – to be opened up to the largest and most predatory corporations for profit.

Oborne argues: 'Human nature is venal'. Human nature is venal, that's why we have corruption! What kind of a statement is that for one of our most powerful and important journalists to be making. Venal is defined as 'Open to bribery, able to be bought over, corruptly mercenary'. That's how Oborne sees human nature! And actually that was the response to the 'How Corrupt is Britain' conference when we took the issues into a discussion on BBC Radio Four. One of the first questions we faced by the news anchor was: 'well that's just human nature isn't it?'

Human nature

This idea, that corruption is simply a part of human nature takes the individual as the focus of the problem. If you have the individual as the focus of the problem, rather than thinking about human beings as collective and as complex beings that interrelate and work together in particularly complex and contradictory ways, then you can make that argument: 'well we're all individuals competing with each other, against each other and we're venal'. But we are not

interested in reducing those complex problems, which are rooted in very specific types of social relationship, to the level of the individual. The social relationships that encourage the abuse of power are social relationships that encourage competition between individuals and encourage the concentration of power in particular institutions, whether they are state institutions such as the police, or whether they are private corporations.

And I think that's really why we got together, because we want to think about collective solutions to problems that aren't actually created by individuals in power; they're created by groups, by people working collectively in institutions. Our critique of the violence and the corruption that is produced by the British establishment is a critique of institutional power. Our analysis is that the problem is therefore a collective one and that that we need a collective response to institutional power, because nobody here really believes that human beings are venal. Rather, it is the institutions that have power and control over our lives that are venal.

David Whyte is Professor of Socio-legal Studies at the Department of Social Policy and Criminology, University of Liverpool

Note
1   Whyte, D. (2015), *How Corrupt is Britain?*, London: Pluto Press

2. Challenging racism in policing and holding the police to account

Suresh Grover

The Monitoring Group was based in Southall and came about 35 years ago as a result of the murder of schoolteacher Blair Peach in Southall in 1979. And since then it's become one of the leading anti-racist organisations in the UK specialising in supporting families and communities suffering state racism, which essentially is the bedrock of popular or violent racism. Our campaigns are run on a national basis, supported by some investigative journalists and academics as well as communities. These campaigns have included Blair Peach's murder, Stephen Lawrence's murder and the inquiry, Victoria Climbié and Zahid Mubarek. All three of these cases are public judiciary inquiries and created a momentum for reform within those agencies where there's a police presence or care services. Through those campaigns I think we occupy a unique space in the UK's social landscape, through campaigning and trying to ensure that changes then take place.

Frontline

Apart from delivering frontline services, we were conscious about three things. The first is that the race discourse in academic policy formation were initially always about black people being the problem rather than state racism being the problem. So we have been trying to debunk those myths and the stereotypes around that. The second was trying to support and build evidence in relation to what is basically called action research, where there's no separation between doing things and thinking things and where thinking leads to action. This contributes to a process where thinking and action are part of a dynamic force that is continuous. So you're not just doing academic research for the sake of it, but making sure that it adds value to either grass-root campaigning or some basis of reform.

And the third was to try and service black minority communities where nobody would take the issue of racism seriously. For example, until 1998, when the Lawrence inquiry came into being, the Southall Monitoring Group was seen as anti-establishment and anti-police. I'm not saying it isn't now! But we had vociferous campaigns by leading Metropolitan police officers at different boroughs calling us the cancer, and we were cut by Hounslow Council for example in 1997, a year before the inquiry for 'supporting the Lawrence too much'. That's the kind of stuff we were going through before the Lawrence inquiry came into being.

In response, we tried to develop an organic link with friendly and investigative journalists who have been exposed to injustices that would be created. But more importantly than that is how we deliver messages which can be understood by a broader sector of the population. I think we were clear that it's not possible on these issues, which are seen as challenging and unpopular, to be able to convince 50 per cent of the British population, it's simply not possible. The reason for that is, in an information society communicators are in the engine room of power, and the discourse they create informs popular racism in government policy.

Unless you create an alternative, you're only going to be able to actually influence a section of the population, five to ten per cent. But this is actually significant to change policy and change the direction of a certain agency like the police and holding it to account. I may be mistaken there but that's the kind of premises we start with. You can gain popularity over a longer period of time, but there are issues to do with sexism, racism, and other issues to do with the occupation of Palestine, for example, that are non-runners in terms of widespread public support.

Police accountability in the context of racism

In terms of police accountability and racism, let me just quickly raise five critical areas which I think require some discussion. The first is that we have to accept there's a long history of deep seated concern within the public in relation to police racism and state failings. It didn't start ten years ago; it actually started if you look at it from a historical perspective, I found a quote in the *Liverpool Echo* in 1906 and there's a picture of six Somalis surrounded by 50 police officers – the title is 'Somali Rioting'!. So that narrative has existed for a long time. And a huge amount of material has been written on it by the Institute of Race Relations, by *Race Today*, by other journals etc., detailing analysis of how that concern has been addressed or should be addressed. So it's not a new problem, it's been there for generations.

The second point is that when we look at the issue of state accountability and police accountability, we have to start with the premises that the state and police acquiesce and accept a level of violence that exists in working class communities and in the black and minority communities. I don't need to give you the examples of deaths in custody. Since the 1970s there have been over 3,000 deaths in custody in this country. There have been, since the Lawrence murder in 1993, from our figures, at least 120 murders which have either racial motive or direct racial connotations.

The figures that exist on racial incidents last year, nationally, is about 48,000 - that can range from abuse to

murder. London has 28,000. 84 per cent of those are attacks on black minority ethnic communities. And in order to police, and ignore working class communities, there's a consensus by the government and the state to allow a certain amount of violence to exist, so you discount that community and marginalise it, and do not accept it as normal. It's a very important point, because the amount of times I've been told by police officers and local authority officers, 'so what if it's a punch, that's normal'.

The third point is that in terms of black and Asian communities, there is almost always, since the 1960s extensive saturation of policing in our communities, and as a result, overrepresentation of black people in the criminal justice system. Conversely there is an underrepresentation when it comes to crimes against black and Asian communities. Huge amount of evidence exists on that. The Institute of Race Relations' reports on black people and the police in the 1970s, when I was very young, details how policing in black communities exist in terms of over-policing and events that took place, weddings, concerts, the carnival in that early period for example.

And there are figures on stop and searches in black and Asian communities who are five times more likely to be searched than white people. Black and Asian people are more likely to be stopped, more likely to be charged, more likely to be arrested, more likely to get greater sentences and more likely to get time in prison. These are accepted and they were accepted by the government before the coalition as official figures, the disproportionate impact on black and Asian minority communities.

The fourth point is that whatever state-led mechanisms have been developed in terms of either state accountability are ineffective and structurally incapable of creating change on a medium or long-term basis. Now, I suppose we should go into the Lawrence inquiry and look at what impact it made and how the picture exists today. No doubt that it was an extensive inquiry. Over 40 days, it looked at a huge amount of information, the circumstances surrounding Stephen's murder, the level of police failure, which it called a catalogue of failures which included catalogues of failings by the police on one murder. And the report made some recommendations and said at the end the reason for this failure was because of institutional racism.

So this was the first time institutional racism was portrayed in such powerful sense. Other reasons cited for this failure was because of a lack of direction of senior officers and also general incompetence. The police actually admit they're generally incompetent; not just in relation to black minority communities but also to working class communities. Now I still remember when we had the discussion and the public inquiry and Paul Condon, who was the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, was being cross examined by Michael Mansfield QC, and we were going through and asking are you institutionally racist and they were replying 'no, we're incompetent'.[2] In other words they wanted to be seen as incompetent, as if that would be more acceptable. In this case you can hide behind a series of incompetence, which can actually end up in fatal failures.

So state-led initiatives, the changing recommendation in the Lawrence inquiry, changing in legislation of the Race Relations Act, which have allowed police officers to be charged and investigated. There are also changes in the police complaints system that at least created a nuance of so called independence that didn't exist before. But I think even the Independent Police Complaints Commission is in the long-term not an attractive remedy and is not accountable.

So what have been real changes of accountability in terms of policing? I think that this journey can teach us, we are still on that journey, that if you're relying on the state on its own or academics on their own, the changes are going to take place much longer than anybody expects. Not in our lifetimes.

Challenging police racism

I think three things have worked. The first is the persistent exposure by journalists, community activists and academics too, of failures of state, on the impunity of the state. This leads to people actually beginning to recognise that it's a series of events indicative of state failure. And that has to get in the popular imagination over of a period of time. Secondly, the coming together of activists, family campaigners, lawyers and journalists, into an alliance where they actually create a momentum for change. So they don't look at the problem, but they analyse what the solutions are going to be, and come up with positive outcomes of what should happen. The public actually realise that this is just not an exercise of damning an institution, but actually it's transparent, open to change, and the process of that change can be examined publicly. So they're involved in it. In this sense secretive public inquiries actually have no meaning whatsoever. In the Lawrence inquiry, we just didn't create a public setting and by not taking place in the High Court. It had room for about a 100 people. But we actually also set up public gallery of representatives who would make press statements on a daily basis of what happened in the inquiry. This is slightly different, certainly more vocal than the Stephen Lawrence campaign, and even more vocal than the Lawrence family themselves.

So you had a number of creative dynamic processes going on in that process. So people actually taking control of how that process works, if that space is allowed for them. Lastly, I think what has worked, and it can only work over a longer period of time, is that if there is a legal strategy combined with a campaigning strategy. And I'm not saying that's relevant in every single instance, but if you don't have a legal team behind a campaigning strategy over a period of time, because we are human, it gets very tiring and actually has an impact of fatigue. But the dynamic of a legal campaign, because lawyers love this stuff, providing it's in control of the activists and families, it can create a dynamic of its own.

Moving on to the last point, which is a new version of over-intelligence-led operations by police, covert intelligence operations that have existed in our

communities for a long time. Irish communities are one example over a period of time, because of the so-called Troubles in the six counties of Northern Ireland. The issue of so-called domestic extremism in this country post 7/7 and 9/11 is an obvious example where it opens those racial imbalances and surveillance on people has taken place. But we have a new inquiry coming out, a public inquiry, which Theresa May announced on 6 March last year, which is actually undercover operations by the London Metropolitan Police on protest groups as well as family justice campaigns.

She claimed that a number of pieces of critical information were not disclosed at the Lawrence inquiry, that police spies went into the Lawrence camp and gave information to the police. Obviously one of the whistle blowers, who used to be a covert officer called Peter Francis in his book Undercover, exposes how he carried out his operations, including undercover officers having relationships with targeted women who were in environmental groups, and how they had fathered a child with them and then went away. This was targeted towards animal rights activists and environmental groups, in which they took part in collusions of criminal acts which led to almost a hundred convictions for example; 50 of which have been acquitted.

You have a public inquiry coming over the next two years of covert operations and undercover officers infiltrating protest groups. So not only is there saturation policing, nor is there only the level of violence that's accepted, but once you begin to campaign you're also being spied upon by the police. The net impact of that is to pulverise a community and make it even more suspicious, and contain it from being involved with political protests. Let me explain what I mean by that.

For black and Asian people policing is a daily experience, unlike activists in different fields who only come into it because of protests. When you come to Southall or go to Tottenham, just by being on the street with five or six people who are ethnic minorities, and that's also true in working class communities, I think, invariably you get arrested, and invariably your gigs are monitored. I have just come from a meeting from New Scotland Yard with a family called the Reel family who were asked to come in because the police wanted to disclose redacted documents with them about the nature of spying on their family campaign. And this is just a family campaign which I was involved in where a young person had died in 1997 in Kingston after being chased by skinheads,[3] and Mrs Reel had come to the Lawrence inquiry with us trying to support it, by calling for petitions and arguing for an effective police investigation into the murder.

Today we had 13 documents being shown to us, 90 per cent redacted, where they actually spied on her house. They're spying on her when she comes for the Lawrence inquiry, and were spying on her when she launched the National Civil Rights Movement, which is a family-led campaign. They're spying on her when she goes shopping to Tesco's, which has no bearing on her political activities! They justify it on the basis of what they call collateral intrusion, in which the intended target is a left wing group which you may have encountered, but this leads to you simply coming into that area of surveillance, therefore you are monitored 'collaterally'. Then a simple question was asked, who are these redacted people? Are they a redacted organisation? In fact no, they're any third party who are helping the campaign. So I'm one of the people who is potentially being spied upon, John McDonnell MP who was there is also one of them. And they admitted that the Monitoring Group could have been spied upon since 1988.

Politically active response

So that's the information we have from today's meeting. But the point I make is this: that if you want to develop a real genuine accountability to the police and the state, it cannot be done just by black communities themselves. The issue of racism and anti-racism does of course have to be led by the communities that are directly affected but with a radical alliance of other activists. And we're beginning to see that in the American situation, where black lives matter have come into an operation, raising the spectre of police violence and now racist murder of nine people in America yesterday (on June 18, 2015).

In America every four days a black person is killed by the police. The rate of deaths is the same as the rate of lynching in the 1960s. And you have not people who are holding a gun, but you have spectres of 7 year old girls, 9 year old boys, and 12 year old people being killed while riding a bike, babies being killed in SWAT operations who have absolutely nothing to do with violence. There was a young girl who had gone to the funeral and a march of Eric Garner[4] who had been killed by the police, and a journalist asked her why are you on the march, a 13 year old girl, and she said because I want to live to be 18. It's a challenge that we face in terms of police accountability. For her, democracy has receded and civic society has become toxic. The challenge we face in this country, despite how we can pretend to be living in a post-racial country is that we are creeping, sleepwalking into an authoritarian state. If citizens do not become politically active then this will occur, and I don't mean this in a dangerous or alarming fashion, we will only have safeguards and absolutely no rights.

Suresh Grover is the Director of The Monitoring Group

Notes

1 For more information see: www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7193777.stm
2 For more information see: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/ricky-reel-died-after-a-racist-attack-16-years-ago-now-his-family-says-a-new-witness-could-prove-he-8531759.html
3 For more information see: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-33179019
4 For more information see: www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/24/eric-garner-funeral-calls-nypd-chokehold-prosecution

3. What is the role of researchers in supporting movements for state accountability?

Tony Bunyan

I'm going to talk about the work that Statewatch does which is relevant to the UK and the EU. Forget the possibility of a British exit from the EU. Currently we're in the EU, we're a very big player. One of the problems we face with the involvement of researchers in supporting state accountability is that civil society has come to be defined, in Brussels at least, as the specific sphere of NGOs. This definition limits civil society to a particular category and it takes away from the meaning of civil society where it involves researchers, academics, lawyers, journalists and NGOs all collaborating. That is what civil society should be defined as, and it's quite important that we carry that on so that we don't compartmentalise it, we don't marginalise it, because this approach leads to just academics talking to academics. We have a saying in Statewatch that 'there is a distinction between academic academics and academic activists, and it's the academic activists that we work with'.

What is the job of researchers? Well it is to research, and it may take a week and it may take months sometimes, it's to document everything so that people can make up their own minds, even though you may have one opinion and they may have a different point of view. It is not to reinvent the wheel. In other words if somebody else does really good work, don't think you've got to do it all again necessarily, use other people's work where possible.

Overall what is the role of researchers? The role in the end is to actually help people in struggle. It is to help them understand the context of their struggle and what they're up against. So the role of the researcher is to ensure their work is informed, that they understand what is going on, they understand what they're up against, they understand what's around the corner, what will happen tomorrow or in a year's time.

GCHQ

I am speaking in the context of the Snowden revelations and the consequent focus on the gatherers of security information, which is good. The gatherers are National Security Agency in the United States, GCHQ in Britain, the 5Is[1] which was set up in 1948 both in the UK and the USA. And they're the gatherers of security information. But then there are the users. Who uses that intelligence? Who will actually use it against the targets? There are the CIA and the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, MI6, MI5, Defence Intelligence, Special Branch, specialist units in the UK, they act against the target.

Then there are the suppliers. Now the suppliers are quite important, because this is the multinational companies. Their job is supplying the technology of

surveillance, and they're also supplying and developing the technology of enforcement. In other words, how do you enforce smart borders? What kind of smart borders are we going to have? What information are they going to take, these smart borders? And who's going to have access to that? Then you've got that nexus between the users and the suppliers, and that's very well described in Statewatch's work *NeoConOpticon, The security industrial complex of the EU* written by Ben Hayes.[2]

Main targets

So who are the main targets? The main targets are pretty obviously, in this current climate, suspected terrorists. This has been the case for a long time, certainly since 2001.

Apart from 'legitimate targets', where people are actually planning a criminal act, there is the problem of function creep. I'll give you five examples:

First, there is what is known in the EU as soft law, that is enabling law and how it applies to the definition or the scope of a 'radical message'. The EU definition is as follows, I'm quoting here: 'Extreme right, extreme left, Islamist, nationalist and anti-globalisation, etc'. In other words just about everybody who's politically active in the European Union; and on those people as individuals, on those people in these groups, there's a 70-page questionnaire about their work, their ideology, their connections and their friendships. That information is exchanged between law enforcement agencies within the European Union. That is what one calls function creep.

Second, are the refugees and asylum seekers. What we've seen in the Mediterranean is a panoply of technology and now militarism: struggling people facing persecution and war and poverty. It's interesting to note that in the EU, in the current crisis, they first of all talked about giving permanent residence to 5,000 migrants. Then they said it should be 20,000, then 40,000, now we're back to 20,000 again, and it was very interesting to see that recently the United Nations came out and said the EU could take a million – this is quite an interesting difference. There's the targeted surveillance of migrant communities where we see the recruitment of informers, the infiltration of those communities. And of course this fuels racism and it contaminates life in those communities.

Third, there's domestic UK political activity, domestic extremism, it's something which the police don't want to have because they realise that it puts them in trouble. Indeed, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester came out last year and he said you've got this new definition of non-violent extremism, please tell us what it is? It's not

our job to be the thought police, it's your job as a government department, so we ask what is non-violent extremism, how do you define it? And one sees it when talking to people in universities and in the schools, where they've suddenly got the administrators saying you've got to be making logs of people who've got a different point of view, and they're saying well what do we do, what are the parameters of this definition of extremism?

Fourth, and of course, this is as old as capitalism itself, you have the inner cities, you have the sink estates, and you have deprived areas, those with skills but no chance of a job, the underclass with no skills and no hope who have a tendency to riot and rebel, dissent from their situation out of austerity.

Finally, you also have cross-border protests. You wouldn't believe the amount of energy they put into any cross-border protest. Across the EU, six months in advance, if something's going to be organised, like an environment conference in Copenhagen, all of the police forces, all the special branches across Europe have to hand in monthly reports, then weekly reports and then daily reports and then finally send liaison officers over.

The same goes for the G7 as we saw recently in Switzerland on the border with Germany, there was extraordinary surveillance of protestors. They said they felt threatened by the protestors. It's interesting too when you look across Europe and what we see here is undercover police, surveillance, kettling, police units, tear gas, which we don't have here. But this is happening across Europe. There are reports in Germany and other places where they're using drones to police protests. But it is actually coordinated, and the UK is part of this. The UK is one of the instigators of this. It's interesting now what they are trying to do is have a database on what they call troublemakers, the protestors, but they can't find a legal basis to do it. But they are actively planning to try and put the troublemakers under surveillance. These are suspected troublemakers, but they're normally people who don't have a criminal offence.

Informal security structures

This is relevant to everybody who lives in the European Union because all our telecommunications are actively accessed by the security service, the police and special branch. This is despite the court judgement last year that the actual law which is being conducted in the UK and across Europe was itself unlawful the day it was passed. The UK is quite interesting of course because what they do under the *Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2014*, is make the unlawful lawful at a stroke. It was unlawful, but now it's lawful. You can do what you couldn't do last week.

I also wonder now that what is coming out of the foreign fighters and the war against terrorism. There's something unseen at the moment which we're just trying to get a handle on, we see certain documents which are not public, which are very worrying, and it came out in a

report from the EU terrorism coordinator a couple of months ago. I'm quoting here from his report: 'deepening cooperation of member state security services, cooperation which takes place outside of EU structures'. On that point alarm bells start to ring. If it's happening outside the EU structures, either that means that it's outside of any law, any directive, any accountability or any parameters. Now there is an ability within the EU for them to collaborate under Article 71. But what they're saying here is they're not using that formal side, what they're using is their ability just to cooperate if they feel like it.

Multinational teams

There are some examples I'd want to give on this point. One of the most dangerous ones I think is in 2002 the Spanish Government alone wanted to get through a set of conclusions by the EU, which were not binding, but they legitimise soft law. They wanted to set up ad hoc multinational teams. Now what are these ad hoc multinational teams meant to be? They will not be anything to do with criminal process, they won't be to arrest people, or anything like that, or just spy on the rest; it was to keep groups under surveillance and to destabilise them and disrupt their activities. It's something outside of with the criminal process.

Now, in all the years between 2002 and 2015, it's only been used on one occasion in Spain and Italy against anarchist groups. However, this year, this has suddenly been resurrected as a multinational initiative. When I applied for the documents and they replied to say that I couldn't have the documents, which is not unusual, and the letter said you can't have it because there were only two member states who were in favour of this, we've now got 14 member states that will take part. So it's extremely worrying, because they were talking about here about unaccountable, undercover units operating across Europe.

Surveillance

A second example is more formal but equally dangerous, and that is the new powers which have been given to Europol. Now they've not been given to Europol in a new law, a directive, a regulation; you've got the Council of the European Union who said we want you to undertake certain roles - the Council is comprised of the member state governments. There's no legal force to set behind this, no new power, but two of the things which stand out is that Europol are given the job of gathering these sorts of foreign fighters, or suspected foreign fighters, in Europe. At the end of February, in an unpublished document, they had been given the names of 5,000 people as suspected foreign fighters. The danger of this is these are not people who have actually committed or been arrested, these are people suspected.

The problem that's been clear for some time, in 2003 they passed a directive saying that if somebody is arrested for terrorism that information must be circulated around

the European Union. But of course it isn't just information on that individual; it's information on that individual, their friends, their family, their workmates and their political work as well, on each person. So six people could be 300 people and that information is going to be passed down through the European Union. In this new instruction there was no obligation if the people were not convicted to remove them from the records, even if they turn out to be quite innocent.

So you can have people on watch lists around the European Union. Just remember there was a time, if you think back to 2001, 9/11 and after that, where we had a UN sanctions list. Then there was a legal appeal process through the courts to say 'I want to challenge why I'm on that list'. Now there are people who don't even know they're on this new EU list in most cases. There's no mechanism then to find out how to get off it and they're not going to know also how it might be used against them it could conceivably lead to travel or employment restrictions. It may be that certain actions kick in, which you don't understand or are unaware of. That is the problem with this kind of intelligence.

Internet censorship

And the final example, the other power they've been given, is a list of websites which are to be taken down. The same problem arises, what is the basis of this? The way they're doing this is completely underhanded, because what they have been discussing in their secret meetings is they don't want to have to pass a law where governments tell search providers which sites to take down. That would be so controversial, there would be a challenge in the courts, so what do you do? You just tell the search providers they've got to take the site down, so they take the formal action, against which the rights of appeal are actually minimal compared to if you challenge a state. They're deliberately bypassing putting in place a law that would create proper structures.

But who is on that list? Are you going to know it's them that's done it or is there some mistake? Just remember intelligence services can change stuff. They can access your computer and change it on your computer. They can take things off your computer. They have all those kind of powers.

So I'm just signalling up that these are the kind of issues which we need to become involved with, and it's our job to do it but obviously we've got to bring in others in or we can inform people what we're up against. I'm not trying to run scared; I'm just saying we need to know the context of what challenges are coming up and how we can help you understand about it.

Tony Bunyan is Director of Statewatch

Notes
1 For details of 5Is visit: www.5isframework.wordpress.com/what-is-the-5is-framework/
2 Available here: www.statewatch.org/analyses/neoconopticon-report.pdf

4. Community-based accountability

Sarah Lamble

I am currently working on a project about community-based accountability, primarily looking at groups that want to deal with interpersonal violence, sexual assault, harassment, and other kinds of problems in the community at the community level. In these situations community members don't want to turn to the police; they don't want to turn to the criminal justice system. This is either because they're from an over-policed community and they don't trust the system, or they see the system as not offering meaningful justice, or their communities are over-imprisoned and they don't want to contribute to the growing carceral state.

These groups are trying to do really interesting and innovative work around rethinking the concept and practice of accountability. So I thought I might talk about how these groups are rethinking accountability in ways that might connect to questions of accountability in other contexts. Most of the groups I'm looking at are in the USA and Canada, although there are groups doing community accountability here in the UK, which I'm starting to look at as well.

There may be people in the room who have been involved in community accountability processes. You will know that these processes aren't easy. They can be very time-consuming, they're often highly contested, and they're done in many different ways. But one of the key questions these groups are trying to grapple with is how do we think about accountability, and what does accountability look like, if we remove punishment from our core understanding of what accountability means. In the criminal justice system, punishment, isolation and stigmatisation are the main ways in which accountability is conceptualised but what if we try a different approach?

The neo-liberal accountability model

So, if we take punishment off the agenda, what might accountability look like? How might we do it differently? Of course in the current moment, accountability as a concept is very much dogged by the neoliberal context that we live in, which raises important questions about whether we should even be using the term accountability, or whether it inevitably puts us back within the individual responsiblisation model and thereby replicates the same problematic framework of the criminal justice system.

The groups that I'm working with are trying to move away from an individual accountability model and instead think about what it means to do collective accountability. For example when an assault happens in our community, the question is not just why did that one individual harm the other individual, but how did the community allow that to happen? What was the situation more broadly or the larger social context or values and norms that enabled that harm to happen?

If we have a structural and systemic analysis of violence, then we can't simply resort to a narrow individualistic frame to address that violence. That's not to say that the individual in question doesn't have some agency or choice in their actions, but rather it is to attempt to situate that behaviour within a broader analysis of why and how violence happens. This is also a question of being attentive to power, and what's going on in the power relations involved, particularly in terms of who gets hurt most often and who doesn't get hurt, and what our responses are to particular people who commit harm and violence. Some people are easily excluded from our communities, while other people we will make excuses for.

Challenges in accountability

There have been examples within activist communities when a prominent organiser, who is well-regarded and does important work in the community, commits a sexual assault against someone else. Often there's a denial or a minimisation; people claim it didn't happen or it wasn't really that bad or it's not that important because this activist is seen as too valuable to the community, so there's a process of minimisation and denial. On the other hand, when the harm involves someone in the community who is already prone to being stigmatised and isolated – there are all sorts of racialized and classed images of danger, for example -- it can become easy to demonise that person, or say this is a problem with someone's culture or background, and push them out of the community. So we need to be mindful of the power relations at play when we're thinking about what accountability looks like.

If you look up the word accountable in the dictionary, you'll find words like responsible, liable, answerable, chargeable, to blame. Yet many of these definitions evoke quite punitive meanings and are precisely the kinds of approaches these community groups are trying to move away from. A potentially more useful definition of accountability comes from an Oakland-based project called Creative Interventions, which has been documenting everyday responses to violence that communities can undertake. Their definition of accountability is as follows:

Accountability is the ability to recognise and take responsibility for violence. We usually think of the

person doing the harm as the one to be accountable for violence. Community accountability also means that communities are accountable for sometimes ignoring, minimising or even encouraging violence. Communities must also recognise and then take responsibility for violence by becoming more knowledgeable, skilful and willing to take action to intervene in violence and to support social norms and conditions that prevent violence from happening in the first place.

Accountability in a community context

I want to suggest five different ways of how we might try to rethink accountability, based on the strategies that many of these groups are undertaking. The first is to approach accountability as a collective rather than individual process. In the punitive model, someone serves their sentence and that's supposed to be accountability 'done' — even though that sentence may have very little bearing on the relationship between the people who are harmed and the people who did the harm; and it may not entail any kind of meaningful accountability for the survivor.

By contrast, a lot of groups are thinking about accountability as a collective process. It takes time. You can't ask someone who's engaged in a harmful behaviour to suddenly say 'yes I'm totally wrong, I did this harmful thing and now I'll be accountable for it'. People need time to come to terms with what has happened and to understand the wider impact of that behaviour. Both the people who were harmed and the people who did the harm need time to work it through. Giving space and time for this is important, ideally as a collective process where people can work through things together.

A lot of community accountability models involve setting up support teams for the person who has been harmed, or people have been harmed, and setting up a support team for the person or people who did the harm. These teams recognise that a lot of conversation will be needed within and across those two groups. It doesn't necessarily mean that the person who was harmed has to have contact with the person who did the harm. Sometimes that happens, sometimes it doesn't, and sometimes it is facilitated through third parties, but there's a recognition that there has to be a working through of what happened.

As the Creative Interventions toolkit describes: 'Accountability is a process. It involves listening, learning, taking responsibility and changing. It involves conscientiously creating opportunities in our families and communities for direct communication, for the understanding and repairing of harm, readjustment of power towards empowerment, and equal sharing of power and rebuilding of relationships and communities towards safety, respect and happiness.'

We also know that most sexual and intimate violence happens between people that know each other. The punitive model of expelling people from a community therefore doesn't work, because eventually we would have to expel a lot of people from our communities, because we all harm other people at some point in our lives. It doesn't mean that we all harm people equally, or that all people experience harm in equal ways, but it is important to recognise that we're all capable of harm and violence.

The second strategy is rethinking accountability as narrative or storytelling. Often what happens when violence occurs in the community is there's a narrative of minimisation from the person who committed the harm, 'I didn't do it', or 'I didn't mean to do it', or 'It wasn't really such a big deal'. On the other hand there's the narrative of the person who was harmed, who says 'this awful thing happened to me and I'm not being believed or I'm not being heard'. Story telling can provide an important way of processing what happened, identifying the issues at stake and recognising the needs of everyone involved. Perhaps the person who did the harm is minimising their actions because they are afraid of the consequences if they admit what they've done and what they really need is support to acknowledge and address their behaviour. Perhaps the person who was harmed needs to know that the issue is being taken seriously and that the impact of the harm is being recognised and addressed.

At the same time, a process of shifting the stories beyond individualised narratives is also required to address the bigger picture and to rethink the narrative around what happened in the community to allow this to occur. What were the broader social conditions that contributed to the harm? What were the community values or practices that enabled that harm? What were the social structures and power dynamics at work? If we look at childhood sexual abuse and all the scandals that have come out, people often knew that the abuse was happening; it's not just limited to the perpetrator and the survivor. There is often evidence that a lot of people knew and didn't do anything about it. Changing the narrative around what could be done – i.e. recognising how things could have been different - it is part of the process for opening up ways of changing our relationships and practices more broadly. In that sense accountability can be a process of rethinking the narratives we tell about harm in order to give a more full account of what happened and why – and what can be done to prevent that harm in the future.

Harm reduction

The third way that these groups are rethinking the concept of accountability is approaching accountability as harm reduction. The reality is that changing our behaviour and changing the conditions in our community that contribute to harm is a long term struggle. We really need to take a harm reduction approach. What will bring less harm in the short, medium and long term? Can we act to stop that violence now? If for example someone has a drinking problem and they repeatedly violate other people's consent when they drink too much, it may take time to address the drinking problem itself. But one way of intervening in the immediate problem is supporting that

person not to drink when they're at a party so that they don't continually violate people's consent.

From there we can work to a place in which understanding and respecting consent becomes a norm for everyone in the community in a broader and deeper way. That also enables us to sets out long and short-term goals that make our expectations and standards more realistic. Sometimes we hold the criminal justice system as the comparison point but the criminal justice system causes a lot of harm. So even if these other models are not perfect, even if they have difficulties and challenges and flaws, if they are less harmful than the other options, that's probably a good starting point for moving forward, within a harm reduction approach.

The fourth way of thinking about accountability is probably a more standard approach, which is accountability as reparation. But again these community accountability groups are thinking about reparation in more community-oriented ways. These approaches are much different from a so-called 'community payback' scheme that the government sets up where someone has to scrub graffiti off a wall or clean up garbage on the streets, where there's very little relationship between the person that was harmed and the person who did the harm. Meaningful reparation would involve compensating the person who was harmed and those affected by that harm. For example there's attention in some of these groups to the emotional labour that is undertaken when someone is sexually assaulted. Many people in that community will need to stop what they're doing to support that person. Maybe that person can't go to work and loses wages. Maybe they become ill from the stress and anxiety. There's a lot of other harms that occur in the aftermath of the violation itself, in terms of lost time, energy, and resources. Maybe the person was active in community organising and as a result of the assault had to take a step back. So one aim in reparation is thinking about how we bring that lost time, energy and emotional labour back into the community and to heal those who were harmed. Reparation doesn't necessarily mean financial compensation, but can be about finding ways of contributing back that various losses that were experienced in the community.

Community capacity building

The last approach to accountability is the idea of community capacity building. Part of this idea is that whatever harms are happening in the community, we should have the resources in our community to intervene and address them so we can all share in the responsibility

for reducing violence. But we need to foster the everyday skills that will enable us to do those interventions effectively. These groups encourage us to think about accountability not as some isolated kind of thing that we do when an egregious act of violence happens, but as something that we do on a daily basis; that we all practice being accountable. For this I want to read a quote from an activist who talks about how we need to think about accountability in everyday practice:

If taking accountability for harm became a daily practice rather than solely something that we demanded of others in egregious situations, then taking accountability would be less fraught with guilt, shame, defensiveness, punishment and retaliation. It would create more compassion for one another when we make mistakes, when we speak and act in harmful and oppressive ways, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and contribute to harm in some way. And it would make it easier to admit wrongdoing. When I hurt my friends or loved ones I too have suffered and felt isolated. It helps immensely to have a space to talk with others and to gain understanding and figure out ways to make things right. There are few spaces to talk about the harms we've caused and the systems of oppression in which we've been complicit. Mostly it seems that when we're confronted we try to prove that we are not responsible in order to prove our innocence, or we try and blame others or to claim that we are the real victims. Making it a practice of taking accountability and creating a supportive space where we can talk about our actions and our complicity would go a long way to creating more justice in our everyday interactions.
And that's from Ann Russo.

I recognise that there are important differences between thinking about accountability in the context of interpersonal violence and thinking about accountability in the context of state and corporate violence. But I think that the ways that community groups are trying to reimagine the concept of accountability nonetheless offer a lot of possibilities for adapting strategizing across contexts. So its important to give space to think about where there are resonances and where there differences and how we might draw from these examples to develop better models of accountability in various situations and contexts.

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5. **How do we challenge corporate abuses of power**

Deborah Hargreaves

At the High Pay Centre, we work on the issue of top executive pay and campaign on issues of pay and inequality, and we make the arguments as to why we should tackle large pay gaps in society. As part of this work we also look at corporate accountability. This summary will describe how we hold companies to account at the moment, why that's ineffective and what we could try and do to change that.

Corporate governance

At the moment, we have a system of corporate governance which is the way companies are meant to behave. It's very weak, it's very ineffective, it's not regulated; it's a purely optional governance system. Interestingly, I was at an event on Tuesday at the Institute of Directors (IOD), a very corporate event obviously, and everyone was congratulating themselves of how we have the best system of corporate governance in the world. This is different from the events that I go to with activists and NGOs where we all talk about how it's actually the worst system of governance in the world. So there's a massive gap in interpretation there.

This IOD event on Tuesday was about trying to measure corporate governance and rank companies alongside each other as to how well they were governed. But crucially not to regulate them, that's really quite taboo. Company bosses like this system of governance, because it's not enforced. This is why activists dislike it, because there's no way of really making companies obey the rules. It's a system of comply or if you don't comply with it, you explain to your shareholders why you're not complying. In fact there is only an obligation to explain this to shareholders; there's no obligation to talk to the public about it.

If you talk to any business, they really think they are actually doing a lot on this, in obeying a lot of rules. They talk a lot about red tape. There's too much red tape; there's too much for them to keep track of. They've got all these accounting rules; they're drowning in nonsensical regulation. But if you look at the way job security has been eroded, wages have been kept down and most rules that affect the rest of the workforce have been weakened, you can see that business is actually very effective at getting the rules changed to suit itself.

Business influence on policy formulation

Business has a disproportionate lobby on government policy. In fact business and governments around the world are almost one and the same thing. It's very difficult for an individual government to challenge a global multinational.

But governments, successive governments in fact, have fallen over themselves to appeal to the corporate sector. You just have to look at the debate that's going on in the Labour leadership election, discussion around whether policy in the manifesto will anger business. Governments have embraced business leaders into their ranks and we have some great examples.

The revolving door

At the High Pay Centre we've done this report on the revolving door,[1] by Professor Stephen Wilks from Exeter University. It has some really important examples of how government has encouraged business leaders to come into government, and vice versa, civil servants and ministers have gone out into business. HSBC, one of the largest and most affluent business we know has all sorts of problems, but they have huge numbers of ministers among their ranks. They are very much a beneficiary of the open door system of corporate influenced government.

Government tends to feel that business know best. It outsources a lot of our public services to business, and this idea of the public service ethos has been undermined. So one of the focuses that we have is on the people who run these businesses; they are paid huge amounts of money. A top corporate boss now earns on average £5 million, and we've worked out that it takes him - and it usually is a male - two days to earn as much as someone on average wages would take home in a whole year. So that means if you're on average pay it would take you 170 years to earn as much as your boss.

So executives have big lobbying power, not just on behalf of their companies but also on their own behalf. They argue, for example, that increasing top tax is anti-business, because they would be affected by that, and therefore have a lot of influence in this discussion around tax. Corporate tax evasion and individual tax evasion is something I find particularly toxic, and I've never quite understood why companies lobby against paying tax, given they need the spending on infrastructure and skills that taxes produce.

But in the report, Professor Wilks describes this economic elite as defined by its pursuit of economic power achieved through control of large companies and increasingly also by control of government. The top 1 per cent of the pay scale in the UK takes home 13 per cent of national income - that's doubled since 1979 - and the ratio between average pay and top bosses has also increased from the late 1990s when it was 47 times to 149 times today.

There has been some public outcry over pay, but I've never really understood why there is no real public backlash against the way big companies have inveigled their way into every aspect of public life and are almost interchangeable now with governments. Governments don't see it as their responsibility to hold companies to account; they have outsourced that to shareholders. We argue that shareholders really aren't up to that job, they've got lots of powers, but they rarely choose to use them, and shareholders are also part of the same cosy group of elites that company bosses belong to. They behave in a way which is increasingly short-term, they're very international, and they're not particularly interested in public policy issues.

Ensuring corporate accountability

So how can we hold companies to account? I would argue that we need a complete transformation of our corporate architecture, and I would like to see companies run along completely different lines. That isn't a change which is going to happen soon. It would be a huge cultural change and would require quite severe legislation. One thing I think we need to remove from the heart of our company purpose is this idea that they're being run solely to maximise profits for shareholders. That's what all company bosses will tell you; we're there for our shareholders, no one else matters. That's not true, and that's not even actually enshrined in company law, although company bosses seem to think it is.

To this end we need to give companies more of a social purpose. They need to be run not just for the benefit of shareholders but for employees, for society and for the wider community as well. These companies need a licence to operate. They need public 'buy in' to that end, and we all give them that by being customers and employees. I think one interesting development is that some more perceptive company bosses are concerned about this public licence to operate, and they think that can be threatened by big pay scandals and public impatience with the way, for example, banks behave. I'm not sure that's led to much of a change in behaviour, but it is beginning to become an important issue on the agenda.

So it seems unlikely there will be a substantial transformation in our corporate architecture to run companies a bit more like the German system, or in the way of trust companies, such as the way Colin Mayer[2] at Said Business School at the University of Oxford has

suggested. However, I think there are some small steps that we can take to introduce more accountability.

Changes to company boards

We have argued, for instance, that there should be an obligation on companies to have elected employee representatives on their boards. Everywhere else in Europe, that is case; we're very far behind on that in the UK. We've also said that employees should sit on remuneration committees where pay is deliberated on and at least they would provide a little bit of challenge to that. These changes have to be accompanied by democracy in the workplace. Unions are very important for this function, but also we need to have works councils and we need to have a system where employees actually have a voice in their companies.

We need more diversity on company boards. We need to open these up much more broadly beyond the sort of cosy city elite that are currently circulating through boards, with some directors sitting on two or three boards. These appointments were never publicly advertised, so it's very difficult for people who want to break in – head hunters control that process. By challenging this arrangement there are some small steps that can be taken to further accountability.

We can also have some impact on the way government appointments are made. The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACoBA), is meant to police this but actually is particularly ineffective and doesn't really have any bite. Another measure to improve accountability would be rules that enforce a period between ministers stepping down from office and going straight into corporate life where they have an impact on the way companies operate, then get straight back into government. This could be enforced more stringently. In the short-term I think we have a government now that is not really focused on corporate accountability reform. Some of these ideas were in the Labour Party manifesto, and I think what we're trying to do is now take our arguments directly to the business community and try and achieve some reforms there.

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Notes
1 Wilks, S. (2015), *The revolving door*, London: The High Pay Centre.
2 Colin Mayer is the Peter Moores Professor of Management Studies at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford.

6. **Using journalism to support social movements for accountability**

Ewa Jasiewicz

This summary is about journalism in support of social movement, which is basically the kind of journalism that I've been doing. To make this clearer, I'd like to breakdown journalism into four categories. Firstly, it must be understood in terms of the journalist: your own self as a writer, as a journalist, your politics. I don't believe in objectivity, so I'm not even going to discuss that aspect. Secondly, you've got the craft, what medium are you using? Are you going undercover and writing on a first person basis? Are you using film, are you using radio, what is the craft, and also how is that impacted by market forces, market structures, employment? The third element is your focus... What is your story? What story do you want to tell? What are you invested in? What are you interested in working on?

In my case it started with deaths in police custody, in 2001 in the United Friends and Families campaign,[1] and then my interests moved on to anti-racist, anti-fascist struggles in this country, broader anti-capitalist troubles, and then finally to the issues in Palestine and Iraq. In this case then, what story do you want to tell? Is it a story of social injustice? Is it a neutral story? What are you trying to tell?

And then the fourth element is the market, and as an activist who wanted to stop the reproduction of capitalism, the market is capitalist, and your agency within that as a journalist is hugely determined by the kind of publications that you write for, and that you have access to and your reputation, as a journalist. In the case of an advocacy journalist, or a participatory journalist, it is therefore important how you could illegitimate and discredit it. I have to say that I've never really made a living out of journalism, and I think that's a really important point to make.

It's not particularly empowering for when I do lectures for first year media students who really want to get into journalism, because I always say actually it's very hard to make a living out of this. Even more so if you want to be accountable to social movements and work within social movements, you won't make money. Because if you begin to be guided by market principles and pitching to editors and newspapers based on what is a current affairs story, it's going to be quite hard to bring in the stuff that's not popularised and has been kept out of the public eye.

Privilege in advocacy journalism

So a really good example of this is Palestine. In 2002 I joined the International Solidarity Movement.[2] It's about bringing foreign activists from the West, mostly white people, into Palestine to live with families under threat, to go and oppose physically the Israeli occupation in

occupied territory. This involves going in front of tanks, dismantling road blocks, monitoring what happens at check points and taking direct action against the Israeli military. This is made possible through white supremacy, because Palestinian people getting attacked and sometimes killed on a regular basis doesn't make the headlines. Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall being killed,[3] and also Brian Avery[4] suffering a gunshot to the face, makes the headlines, because these are British or American peace activists. James Miller was a journalist, also killed is Gaza, and it is this kind of story that makes an impact.[5] The Israeli military and the Israeli state has always tried to represent itself as the only democracy in The Middle East. There is a story here which needs to be disrupted. And you do that by going and reporting and putting your body in the way.

So this is a personal story, but it exemplifies the problem with being identified as an activist. I'm advocating Palestinian liberation, and taking an anti-apartheid position - and this position means that you can get blacklisted, and your access is denied. I'm totally banned from entering Israel/Palestine. What does that mean for the quality of my journalism, for the craft of the journalism? Well I'm completely accountable to a social movement, but I don't have access to that movement on the ground. So there are issues there.

Wilderness

Likewise, I was at a press conference in Baghdad in 2003. Again, because I'm not really kind of a strict journalist, it was my intention to go into that press conference along with some Voices in the Wilderness activists. This was the press conference of General Sanchez, the Supreme Commander of the Occupational Forces in Iraq, and we wanted to disrupt it. We wanted to protest against it. We wanted to bring the anti-war movement that we were part of in our own countries into Baghdad. We were doing support work in the country and working with new media that had just come out after the fall of the dictatorship. In particular, working with a group called Voices in the Wilderness that had long been practising a form of advocacy journalism through working with communities in Basra and Baghdad, and telling their stories.

It is important to note that this is not very corporate journalism, not very saleable, not really a commodity in the market, but important in terms of building movements and being accountable to Iraqis resisting dictatorship and occupation. So, again, your access can be impacted if you're looking at getting into corporate spaces, if they

know who you are and that you actually also have a role in causing disruption, they'll shut you down or throw you out. But this is all worth it, that's my confession.

So, to continue from the Iraq work, I was living and working in Basra with the Iraqi oil workers union and I ended up working with an organisation called Platform. This is where I think the role of research and journalism and activism really comes together, because Platform is an arts and research-based organisation focused on the oil industry and working in conjunction with a researcher and oil expert Greg Muttitt. Greg brought out a report called *Crude Designs*,[6] which was really seminal in deconstructing what a production sharing agreement is, which is a contract favoured by multinational oil companies, and it's a form of privatisation. It sounded good. It sounds like there's an equal relationship between the state and the international oil company, but actually in terms of what they have planned for Iraq it would mean for the first time in 30 years that state-owned oil companies coming under the control of big oil companies. To react to this report we had it translated into Arabic and we made sure it got to the oil workers union and the technocrats, advocates within Iraq. It became available to religious scholars who eventually issued a fatwa, that presented the case that this oil law was going to enshrine production sharing agreements and privatisation deals couldn't be passed.

It still hasn't been passed 13 years on, since the original invasion of Iraq. These companies haven't actually got what they came for. And it can be attributed to really good research work done by Platform and Greg. This example shows it is crucial to be linking that with social movements, linking together with workers in the industry who were in a position to resist in a really physical, political way and in the context of a social movement. As workers, they're pumping the stuff out of the ground; they have a big stake and actually a lot of practical influence in the whole system.

Collective journalism

So, in terms of accountability to movements and forms of journalism I refer to a collectively written column, a free piece in *The Guardian* by London Palestine Action Group, that I am a member of and some people who wrote it are part of, this is an effective example of activism making the news. We created news by taking the group to the top of Elbit Systems subsidiary (which makes drone engines), outside Birmingham last year during the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip. And this grabbed a lot of public attention

and it did inspire a lot of other actions in Melbourne, in Glasgow and in Kent. But the important thing here is that we managed to get a platform in a national newspaper to write as a collective. To write not in the name of one individual but to actually put our story forward, and that's important for furthering activism within journalism. It's not that common, but I think we can learn a lot from that, because there's a greater accountability involved. It avoids using the journalist, or indeed their image or the reputation, as the subject of the piece. This can feed in to a form identity politics in which a journalist becomes a commodity which I think is problematic for journalism. Because once you start engaging in that market your work becomes your daily income. You can start to lose your accountability to movements because you need to pay your rent. You'll compromise!

I really think advocacy journalism and participatory journalism, journalism that's accountable to movements, does need to go out into the field when we're talking about being opposed to imperialism and war. To reiterate, there are genuine problems around passport privilege, white privilege, white supremacy that we need to be wholly aware of, but telling the untold story, relaying the stories that we don't hear and challenging established neoliberal or racist discourse is really important.

I'll just finish by urging you to come back to these four elements that we're talking about around accountable journalism and movements, it's you: what do you want to do, what do you want to say, what do you want? Two, the craft, what's the quality of our journalism where we're not impacted or impinged by the market. I'd argue that your voice, what you can cover, the quality of your journalism is going to be greatly enhanced. Three, the story you're wanting to tell, what you're trying to challenge, what you're trying to do. Fourth, the market, what are the pressures of the market and how will you react to them?

Ewa Jasiewicz is a journalist and human rights activist. She is part of the editorial collective of Le Monde Diplomatique Polish Edition

Notes

1 For more information: www.uffcampaign.org
2 For more information: www.palsolidarity.org
3 For more information see: www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/12/rachel-corrie-family-appeal-israel-court
4 For more information see: www.articles.latimes.com/2003/oct/26/news/adfn-shield26
5 For more information see: www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/4883442.stm
6 www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/185/40632.html
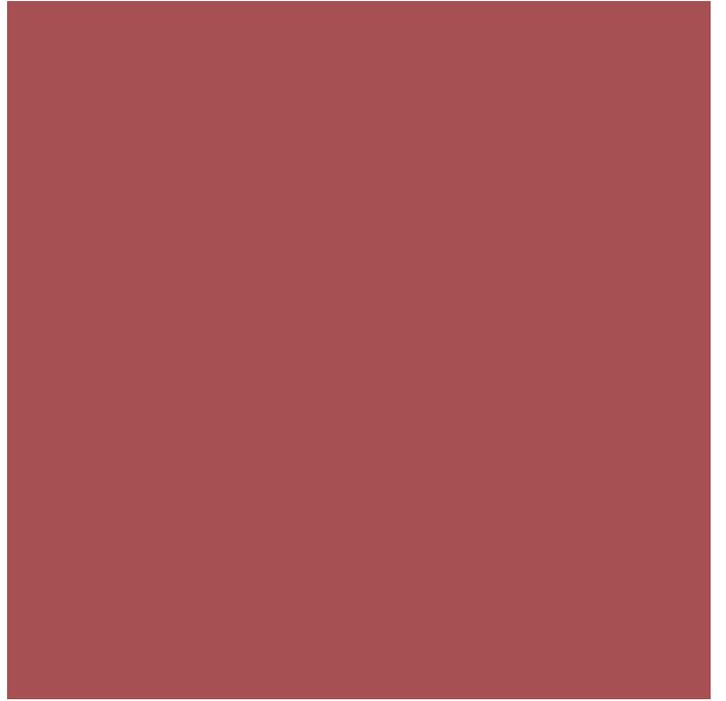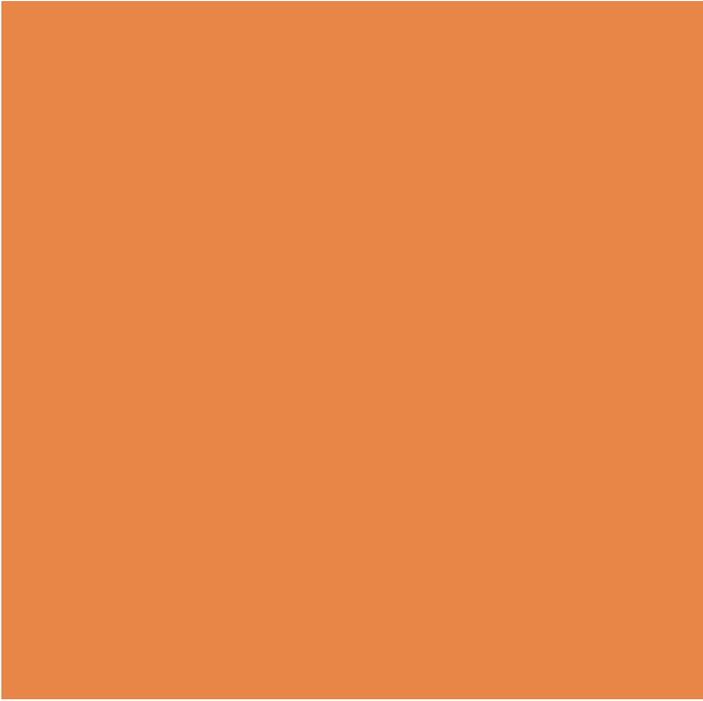
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