
TELEVISION NEWS ECOLOGY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A STUDY OF COMMUNICATIVE ARCHITECTURE, ITS PRODUCTION AND MEANINGS

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Abstract:

This article examines the communicative structures of UK television news presentation and how these grant characteristic shape and form to today's mainstream television news ecology. This communicative architecture remains generally under explored and under-theorized and yet can be demonstrated to be representationally consequential in terms of how TV news programmes variously open-up and elaborate, or close-down and delimit, opportunities for contending views and voices as well as the cultural display of difference. Based on a systematic analysis of mainstream UK television news, the study demonstrates how today's UK news ecology is 1) communicatively structured, 2) professionally reproduced and differentiated and 3) representationally consequential. The communicative architecture of television news, we argue, both naturalizes and conditions the public representations of news-mediated contention and consensus, and it does so through an established repertoire of analytical and affective communicative frames.

Key words: News ecology, television news production, communicative architecture

Introduction

The UK television news landscape has confronted considerable challenges in the last few years. Processes of commercial and technological convergence, the development of new platforms of news delivery, migrating advertising revenues, fragmenting audiences and intensifying international competition as well as the growth of global 24/7 news channels have all played their part in unsettling the traditional duopoly of public service and commercial news broadcasting in the UK. Public trust and reliance on television news programmes as a primary source of news and information nonetheless remains remarkably high, albeit not entirely intact when contrasted to TV news' pre-digital 'golden age' (Curran 1998, Harrison 2000, Phillips 2010). It is against this backdrop that academic discussion and debate focused on TV news programmes' representative function and its facilitation (or degradation) of processes of mediated democracy takes place.

A popular thread within this wider discussion is the growing commercialisation of TV news, often interpreted as the onward (downward) trajectory of news programmes toward 'populist', 'lowest common denominator' tabloid-style news (Humphreys 1999, Harrison 2006, McNair 2009) - UK trends that find their counterparts within news providers in different countries around the world (Sparks and Tulloch 2000, Thussu 2008). The debates surrounding the claimed erosion of traditional television news services and their popularization are often, in academic circles at least, proxy debates for contending views on mediated democracy, the public sphere and cultural citizenship. They tend to polarise too quickly however, and over-simplify the extent of complexity and differentiation within the UK news marketplace. This study sets out to secure increased theoretical and empirical traction on the nature of British TV journalism today and does so by examining its mainstream television news ecology and communicative architecture. Specifically, the study demonstrates how today's UK news ecology is 1) structured through an established and differentiated communicative architecture, that is 2) professionally reproduced and 3) representationally consequential. It does so by analytically identifying, systematically mapping and pursuing into the production domain the communicative structures that help characterize and differentiate mainstream UK TV news.

This TV news ecology, as elsewhere around the world (Cottle and Rai 2006), is characterized by an established and recognizable repertoire of communicative structures that routinely present and deliver news stories. These exhibit however far more complexity than is often acknowledged and they prove consequential for the public elaboration and engagement, or lack thereof, of contentious issues and contending interests. In such ways today's differentiated communicative architecture is implicated in processes of mediated democracy. (1)

On news ecology and communicative architecture

It is important to introduce and elaborate on what we mean by 'news ecology' and 'communicative architecture' and their inter-relationship. The idea of news ecology deployed here signals the importance of attending to the organizational structuration of news production and how different, often competing, news organizations and outlets position themselves relationally in respect of each other and seek to establish a distinctive market position. They do so, in important respect, through the selective deployment of television news' established communicative structures. It is by these means, we argue, that not only do forms of television news become distinguished and differently positioned in the competitive news marketplace (Cottle 1993), but also how news stories become told and visualised, that is, deliberately structured and visually displayed. News outlets and the corporate organizations and conglomerates that house them, seek to establish and maintain a distinctive positioning within the increasingly crowded and competitive news marketplace. This can grant them commercial advantage as well as wider cultural recognition and/or professional standing. Our conceptualization of news ecology, in this respect, is somewhat akin to Pierre Bourdieu's influential theorisation of 'cultural fields' (Bourdieu 1993, 1998, 2005), but it also departs from his writings on the journalistic field in at least three respects (see also Benson and Neveu 2005, Dickinson 2008).

Our conceptualization of news ecology deliberately places increased emphasis on the professional practices and inscriptions of difference that cannot simply be traced to news organisations' economic and symbolic positioning and general competitive location in the journalistic field (e.g. Benson 2006: 190). How news differences become

professionally constructed and reproduced in and through the extant cultural forms of journalism demands, we suggest, much closer examination of these available forms themselves as well as the journalist's practices that reproduce them (Cottle 1993, Cottle and Rai 2006, Matthews 2010) – a dimension that remains under-developed in Bourdieu's writings on the journalist field (Bourdieu 1998, 2005).

It also follows that much more may be at play, and at work, in the journalist field than shared news values (Galtung and Ruge 1965, Harcup and O'Neill 2001, Schultz 2007) or a competitive imperative that prompts the collective pursuits of scandals, sensationalism and an entertainment disposition that leads to news stories 'all looking the same' and a general 'de-politicisation' of events (Bourdieu 1998: 6-7). Journalism's historically forged democratic credentials and professionally proclaimed mission in facilitating processes of democratic representation and public opinion formation (acting as the nation's political watchdog) may not be entirely rhetorical or chimerical only - even when confronting economic imperatives and commercial forces that challenge the field's autonomy. Something of this democratic mission may in fact be variously discharged in and through its established communicative architecture, its ways of organizing and disseminating public discourse and contention. The political in this sense becomes complexly infused *inside* the field of journalism, in its practices and communicative forms, and not solely in *interaction with* the surrounding (heteronymous) political field. In so far as journalism's democratic claims and mission become enacted and conveyed through the established communicative structures of journalism, elaborated below, so these warrant increased recognition and research.

The idea of news ecology here, then, is used to capture something of the evident but often theoretically diminished importance of news differentiation and that is constituted in important respects by a system of internally defined relations of difference – differences that are consciously monitored and reproduced by practicing journalists who work within/for particular news outlets reproducing their specific news forms (and managing thereby career moves within and across this differentiated news ecology). How different news programme forms are professionally reproduced also has bearing not only on the wider ecology of news of course, but also on the representations and discourses of broadcast news - including their deficiencies and silences.

The news ecology is professionally demarcated and differentiated in important measure through the deployment of an established, generally recognizable and seemingly universalised, communicative architecture (Cottle and Rai 2006). It is this, we argue, that fundamentally facilitates and organizes the communication of news. At its centre is a repertoire of communicative frames each of which offers differing possibilities for the public elaboration and engagement of contending interests, issues and identities. These communicative frames prove pragmatically useful to news producers in terms of the production of their distinctive news programmes as well as managing the logistics, technical capabilities and pressurized environment of news production. They also permit some degree of journalist and organizational latitude in their use.

In the world of television news production these tried and tested communicative frames pre-exist the discursive construction of particular issues or news events, whereas conventional ideas about ‘frames’ and ‘framing’ are generally disposed to see these as discourse dependent and/or issue-specific (Gitlin 1980, Gamson 1989, Entman 1993). As such they can under-estimate the shaping influence of established communicative forms that routinely make up television news and they can also foreclose too quickly on the deliberative and open-ended possibilities that inhere within at least some of them. Studies in the sociology of news production and ethnographies of news producers, for their part, also tend to forego, with few exceptions, the opportunity to explore the construction of the communicative forms of news, preferring to focus on particular news stories or subjects through an organizationally focused (but ecology-bereft) prism of interest (Cottle 2007) – a methodological stance that is rapidly becoming of limited insight in an increasingly virtual news production environment that extends beyond any one production location (Wahl-Jorgensen 2010). Recent production-focused news research is clearly interested in issues of pluralism and its commercial containment and how new digital technologies, multi-skilling and multi-media production are informing or even transforming the traditions, practices, professional identity and skill-set of contemporary journalists (MacGregor 1997, Deuze 2007, Lee-Wright 2010). But the importance of these academic concerns notwithstanding, there is a general lack of attention granted to how programmes organise and structure their news stories within and across today’s

news ecology and the direct bearing that such communicative complexities have on debates about ‘democracy.’

The following now describes and illustrates the established repertoire of communicative frames that routinely characterize the mainstream UK TV news ecology and also attends to something of the professional thinking and practices of the news producers that inform their selection and use (2). This is then followed by a systematic and comparative analysis of the UK’s mainstream TV news channels and programmes approached in such terms.

UK news communicative architecture: Differentiated and consequential

Our sample comprises of the main daily news programmes, from all the terrestrial TV networks in the UK, both public and commercial, including BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel Four and Channel Five as well as representative local news programmes (3). All make use of a communicative architecture composed of different communicative frames (Cottle and Rai 2006). Many of these, as illustrated below, are structured in propositional terms, delivering contending claims and arguments and often oriented to conflict reporting. At the core of this TV communicative architecture is the discursively thin ‘*reporting frame*’ that delivers in general surveillance mode basic description and information about news events. A number of more elaborate communicative frames, however, are also available to communicate news stories that often involve conflicts. These can be analytically differentiated as ‘*dominant*’, ‘*contest*’, ‘*contention*’, ‘*campaigning*’ and ‘*exposé/investigative*’ communicative frames. Not all news is about conflicts or framed in such propositional ways however.

A number of consensual frames, based more on ‘cultural display’ than ‘informational conveyance’ and ‘analytic deliberation’, also characterize today’s television news and these can here be differentiated as: ‘*community service*’, ‘*collective interests*’, ‘*cultural recognition*’ and ‘*mythic tales*’. While the content of some of these news presentations may be premised on structural or hidden conflicts they present consensually nonetheless, with no obvious issue or contending perspective in play. Unlike the more analytical, conflict-driven frames, these communicative frames, in keeping with their more expressive communicative mode, principally work ‘culturally’,

displaying resonant symbols, affirming communal values and recycling cultural myths. An established in-depth communicative frame, termed here the '*reportage frame*', can also provide 'thick descriptions of reality' by bearing witness and recovering something of the lived, experiential reality of news subjects and/or providing depth background and analysis that purposefully seeks to move beyond the temporal/spatial delimitation of news event reporting. These more elaborate and crafted packages can draw on both analytic/propositional and aesthetic/expressive or *deliberative* and *display* modes of communication.

There is, then, a complexity in the repertoire of communicative frames available to and routinely deployed across television news broadcasters in the UK. And this, as we shall see, helps to both characterize and internally differentiate today's mainstream UK TV news ecology. (4)

Re-producing communicative architecture

The following provides illustrative examples of some of these different communicative frames in action and discussed in interview with news executives and producers. (5) These professional responses help provide insights into the pragmatics of news production and presentation and how this enters into the selection and deployment of these communicative frames in UK television news.

The instantly recognizable *reporting frame* illustrated below, functions principally in terms of information conveyance and the surveillance of current events and is often of short duration. It delivers at best thin accounts of events presented without context, background, competing definitions and accounts or emotional appeals.

Newsreader: Bangladesh is mopping up after the heaviest rainstorms in more than half a century. Much of the country, including the capital Dakar, is under several feet of water. More rain is expected over the next few days.

BBC1 News, BBC1, 15 September 2004

The use of this standard, relatively thin, communicative frame relates arguably, on the one hand, to journalism's professional mission 'to inform' and lends some factual

support to ideas about accuracy and objectivity, and on the other hand, to the pressures of producing news for the television medium where pragmatic decisions inform its use.

Daily journalism on the whole is just that – it’s daily journalism. ... They’re bulletins of record, you know, this is what happened today.

Acting Head, *BBC TV News*

In television news there’s no question, I think, that the story is only as good as the picture you have to illustrate the story, so quite often, if a story is broken which may be a valuable news story, but whether there’s no picture, it’s too soon to have picture or there’s simply no picture available, it will possibly not get as much coverage.

Presenter/Reporter, *ITV News*

Such thin reports provide basic informational elements that may (or may not) later be followed up with more elaborate communicative frames, possibly involving discursive engagement, emotional inscriptions and evaluative judgements of these same events. Here professional views of ‘the story’ can also influence the level of depth and elaboration an event receives and hence its selected communicative frame.

Some stories tell themselves. Some stories have no ‘behind the headline’ story and others do require analysis and do require explanation...Others are simply stories, whether good, bad, tragic, legal, they are face-value headline stories.

Deputy Editor, *Five News*

Deliberatively developing beyond the reporting frame the *dominant frame* is clearly defined and in this sense dominated by an external news source. This source may derive from authority or challenger groups within the social hierarchy, but it is their view that clearly ‘dominates’ the communicative frame and which either remains unopposed or receives, at most, marginal challenge. In principal it need not necessarily be dominated by social elites, though in practice it may often be (Hall et al 1978). The following excerpt illustrates the dominant frame in action:

Newsreader: Prime Minister Tony Blair says he wants to speed up the deportation of asylum seekers from Britain each year. Mr Blair said he wants deportations to outnumber unfounded applications

each month by the end of next year. A thousand extra detention places will be created to hold people awaiting deportation. ...

BBC1 News, BBC1, 16 September 2004

Television news also presents news stories in terms of a *contest frame*. Here conflictual news stories are framed in terms of binary opposition with opposing views and arguments generally given approximately equal weight or representation and structured in adversarial terms. The historically forged disposition (and felt liberal-democratic obligation) to ‘balance’ news stories informs the production and deployment of the *contest frame*, reflecting perhaps, as one journalist points out, the broader adversarial political culture that journalists inhabit in the UK.

Anything political has to have conflict within it. I mean just out of fairness...you have to go to the other side. ...The BBC thing is that we try terribly hard every day to produce individual items that are internally balanced.

Acting Head, *BBC TV News*

I would choose the word balance. And both legally and regulatory, we have to be balanced in our approach.

Deputy Editor, *Five News*

In Britain we have a kind of adversarial culture in our legal system – there’s the prosecution and the defence. In our political system there’s the government and the opposition and I think that’s probably also reflected in our journalism. There’s one view and then there’s another view. Of course there’s a whole series of shaded opinion in between but I think as human beings we like not necessarily conflict, but we like drama.

International Editor/Reporter, *ITV News*

Further conflictual complexity, however, is captured within the *contention frame*. Here a plurality of voices/perspectives may be presented and these do not take the form of a diametric opposition, but rather represent something of the complexity of positions and points of view that often inhere within and/or surround particular issues.

Newsreader: It’s reported that the US secretary of state, Colin Powell, has conceded that elections cannot be held in Iraq if the current levels of violence continue. This as the British Defense

Secretary, Geoff Hoon, said more troops may have to be sent to Iraq because of the upsurge in violence.

Reporter: It is war in Iraq, whatever spin the Pentagon may put on it, and in war there are two sides at least to every story. First, America's version. We bombed this compound south of Fallujah because resistance fighters were there, planning attacks on our people.

This morning on the ground at Basat Schnatier. It's a dozen miles or so outside Fallujah. Mass burials on a huge scale. They were putting the corpses into shared graves. Four bodies in each one. Iraqi officials – no allies of the resistance – said 44 people were killed during 3 hours of airstrikes. And local people here certainly didn't buy the American line about targeted strikes on known resistance forces.

Iraqi man: Why this injustice? Fifteen families were bombed in one strike. Missiles and planes were striking for three hours. Why this indiscriminate bombing?

Reporter: At Fallujah General Hospital they could barely cope with the sudden influx of injured people. Military and hospital officials say 27 people were injured, and 17 of them were children. The ambulance service completely overwhelmed, many came in cars. Hospital officials said women and children are among the dead. Yet more proof that, with key towns no longer under American control in Iraq, the US is now forced to conduct its war from the air, with all the indiscriminate killing that involves.

In Baghdad itself, another large suicide car bomb. 13 people killed this time when a vehicle was driven up to a police checkpoint close to the Tigris River. The resistance know they have the Americans stretched and the Iraqi security forces often terrified. And they press home their opportunities daily.

Fighting also broke out in North Baghdad when American and Iraqi troops carrying out raids on suspected resistance hideouts came under fire this morning. Several Iraqi soldiers were injured in the clashes.

And today another video news release from the resistance. This time, from the Sunni stronghold of Rammadi. Believed to have been filmed today, it shows fighters firing towards American troops.

Channel 4 News, Channel 4, 17 September 2004

This complexity of views and voices is clearly recognized by news producers in the UK and informs, documented below, their fairly extensive selection and deployment of the *contention frame*.

There are political debates, for example, where you've got a variety of different views ...and so you do have to take into a variety of different views and that will be dictated by the players or the stakeholders in the story.

Reporter, *BBC TV News*

Some stories are simply a polarisation of views and some stories aren't and there's texture and different contexts...

Deputy Editor, *ITV News*

The *exposé/investigation* frame conforms to the idealised liberal democratic role of journalism as public watchdog. Here journalists actively set out to investigate, expose and uncover information and practices that would not otherwise be revealed within the public domain. This frame includes, therefore, traditional investigative journalism based on intensive research and exploratory fact-finding as well as *exposé* journalism of public or private affairs, as this opening section illustrates:

Newsreader: Miracle worker or conman? For many women desperate for a child, the so-called Archbishop Gilbert Deya was heaven sent. They went to Kenya childless and miraculously came back with a baby. But now Deya's being investigated by police after allegations that many of the children were actually taken from other mothers. For tonight's special report, Jacky Rowland has been to Nairobi to investigate the trade in babies. ...

BBC1 News, BBC1, 20 September 2004

While journalists continue to hold the *exposé/investigation* frame in considerable esteem they acknowledge the difficulties in selecting and pursuing this communicative frame in light of the constraints of news production and costs. In the case of the BBC, the legal and regulatory pressures of the last few years also seem to have taken a toll on their selection of this challenging and, at times, politically sensitive frame.

We all agonise in news and I suppose in current affairs and broader journalism in Britain about the dearth of investigative news and exposes. ...it takes a lot of time and man hours and therefore money to invest in that kind of thing.

International Editor/Reporter, *ITV News*

It's incredibly expensive and it's incredibly time consuming.

Acting Head, *BBC TV News*

I think that's partly born of resources, that there aren't many resources to commit to lengthy investigation...I also think at the BBC, we are put under a degree of scrutiny that others are not and, therefore, you've got to utterly be 100% sure it's factually accurate, and if not, trouble can come very quickly.

Reporter, *BBC TV News*

Television news journalism in the UK also has the capacity to actively and performatively campaign for particular causes and issues though, unlike the press, it may rarely elect to do so. The *campaigning frame*, then, declares the news outlet's stance on a particular issue or cause and typically seeks to galvanize sympathies and support for its intervention, political or otherwise, beyond the world of journalism. The campaigning frame can be focused in terms of major social crusades or *cause celebres* or high media exposure given to individual cases and is more likely to be deployed by some news organizations and not others given their respective positionings in the news ecology. Given journalism's professionally ingrained commitment to norms of 'objectivity' and 'balance' (Tuchman 1978, McQuail 2005), though most recognize this frame fewer deploy it, and all tend to approach it with considerable caution.

You can't be fair if you're going to campaign. ...I mean clearly there's some things in which it's pretty hard to find the opposing point of view. ...But even if we all agree that we want to alleviate poverty...It's not so much the end result which you disagree about, it's how you get there. And that's why you can't campaign.

Acting Head, *BBC TV News*

You have to play that card carefully and cautiously. ...You have to campaign on something which is deliverable. You also – just coming back to the impartiality point – have to campaign on something which is endorsable, regardless of your political views.

The news media also produce a number of consensual frames that operate at a discernibly more cultural rather than analytic or argumentative level. Moving beyond the standard news-reporting frame, for example, by going a little deeper into a particular issue or event in terms of what news ‘information’ actually means for the audience, is the *community service frame*. Here the news media explicitly advise the audience on what this information actually means and how it impacts on them. Information that is essentially consensual (as opposed to conflictual, which would suggest a media-led *exposé/investigative* frame) is represented as useful or essential advice and may be presented in a pedagogic and/or paternalist way. In today’s news ecology the latter may variously address or position audiences in terms of citizenship or consumption.

The *collective interests frame*, like the community service frame, structures its representation consensually. Here, however, news stories do not simply report on news events or provide advice but rather elaborate and visualise shared, communal or collective interests through their identification of presumed ‘common interest’ subject matter.

Newsreader: Julius Caesar is in it and so is Diana Princess of Wales. Not just a book, but a whole tower of them. The most definitive dictionary of people who’ve had a major impact on British society was published today. It’s been 12 years in the making and includes the history of nearly 55,000 people who made a difference to the way we live. Lindsay Taylor has been reading up on some famous and not-so-famous lives. ...

Channel 4 News, Channel 4, 23 September 2004

The *cultural recognition frame* refers to consensual items that not only represent, but also symbolise and/or affirm shared values and community ideals – by, *inter alia*, acknowledging and/or celebrating cultural groups and differences, by recognizing Others (Taylor 1994, Hannerz 2002). This consensual frame, then, can variously be deployed to display and endorse views of multicultural difference and harmony (broadly conceived) and/or implicitly reassert monocultural conceptions of cultural homogeneity, though neither will be framed in conflictual terms.

Newsreader: A triumph of unity over religious strife. Where politicians have failed, a football team from a poverty stricken part of Nazareth is showing the way. Bnei Sakhnin play Newcastle United tonight in the UEFA Cup. They kicked off just a few minutes ago. And they're the first Arab-Israeli team to play in the tournament. The side is made up of Jews, Muslims and Christians and they say their surprising success is an example of how playing together can overcome the sectarian divide. From Newcastle, Darshna Soni reports. ...

Channel 4 News, Channel 4, 16 September 2004

The *mythic tales frame* also functions culturally, activating and displaying cultural myths that have resonance for contemporary cultures. This communicative frame, then, is not principally about imparting new information but seemingly resurrecting and/or recycling pre-existent values, symbols and affective narratives (see also, Kitzinger 2000, on 'media templates'). *Mythic tales* may focus on individuals/groups/places/objects that symbolise values or ideals that are exceptional or extraordinary in some way and/or which are felt to be normative cultural 'goods'.

Newsreader: A man who was told he'd never walk again after being involved in an horrific motorbike accident has received an award for his bravery. Doctors had given Stephen Brain up for dead after he smashed six of his vertebrae. But three years on, he's back on his feet. ...*(footage of man walking down path with crutches)*

Stephen Brain: With having a young family, when you have that taken away from you, it's soul destroying, and you think, well, I'd love to get better for them really, to make their life a bit better. As well as mine. And it really gives you something to look forward to. You set yourself goals. You think 'Well, if I can at least walk with the children for a short distance or walk to watch them play football,' it's better than being stuck in the house doing nothing, feeling sorry for yourself. *(footage of Stephen Brain standing with his wife, watching his children kick a soccer ball)*

Reporter: Mr Brain spent seven months in hospital. He's still in a lot of pain, but experts are astonished at his recovery. His determination to beat the odds has now been recognized and he's been presented with an award for his bravery and courage. *(footage of the award ceremony)*

Lisa Brain, Stephen's wife: I'm proud of him for what he's achieved in the past three years. You know, we didn't know if he'd live or even be able to walk again.

Craig Brain, Stephen's son: It wasn't very nice seeing him in the wheelchair. But it's nice seeing him be able to walk now.

Reporter: Mr Brain hopes that his award can act as an inspiration to others. He's proved that sheer determination can work wonders.

ITV Local News, ITV, 16 September 2004

News producers agree that culturally inflected, non-conflictual, stories are much needed in today's news output. Considerations of audience appeal are also no less determinate in producing consensual and affirming news stories, massaging 'the gloom and doom' through a professional blend of news programme mix, item modulation and crafted news stories all aimed to culturally appeal and 'inspire'.

An important factor in choosing stories is the balance of coverage that you're giving across a range of stories. You don't want a program that's full of human achievement and nor do you want a program that's full of death and disaster ...you invest in the some stories, like the human achievement ones, because they give you a different texture and perspective on life and they are uplifting if they do that.

Deputy Editor, *ITV News*

It tends to be sort of sporting endeavour, human endeavour, human stories ... I think there's a desperate desire for celebrations, for human contact, for some kind of event that unites people.

Acting Head, *BBC TV News*

Our response from viewers has been very good. They like that kind of thing. They like to hear stories that are uplifting. They like to hear stories that give them encouragement or optimism and there is a value in that kind of journalism as well as reporting everything as a criticism or a conflict.

Presenter/Reporter, *ITV News*

Finally, TV news also includes in its repertoire a communicative frame that aims to go behind the scenes of 'thin' news reports and provide 'thick' descriptions of reality (Geertz 1973). The *reportage frame*, given its affinity with observational documentary modes (Nicholls 1991), invariably makes use of film and visual authentication as well as personal testimonies, and thereby often positions itself (and us the viewer) as 'bearing witness'. Reportage often 'moves' (performatively, diachronically and emotionally) from

the *indicative* to the *subjunctive* in its story treatment (Cottle 2004, 2006a) and can creatively draw upon both deliberative and display modes of communication in relatively lengthy televisual packages. Analysis and background, as well as first-hand testimony accounts and authenticating scenes of the human plight of others can all, for example, feature within in-depth *reportage*.

Newsreader: And now for one of our special reports about places that are suffering the effects of global warming right now. For our Disappearing World series, Mark Jordan went to the Kiribati Islands in the South Pacific. *(footage of the idyllic Kiribati Islands and then cuts to islanders praying)*

Reporter: The South Pacific. For most of us, this is paradise. But as they praise their creator, they also pray he'll save them from what they claim the industrialized world is doing to their islands. Across the pacific, homes, schools, even the dead, are being washed away by rising tides. *(footage of crumbling ruins along the coastline)*

Reporter: So, this graveyard here, this used to be about 30 yards from the sea?

Nicholas Dunn, Village Chief: Yes.

Reporter: You've tried to rebuild the wall three times.

Nicholas Dunn, Village Chief: Yes.

Reporter: And the sea just keeps on rising?

Nicholas Dunn, Village Chief: Right. It is saddening. This was very nice. Not now. Been eaten. I'd like to blame somebody for it. But I haven't got the knowledge for who to blame.

Reporter: It's a story heard across the Pacific. The Fijian chief told me they'd soon have to abandon the village founded seven generations ago. But at my next destination – moving upward and inward isn't even an option. From here, you can see why they worry. *(aerial pictures of the island taken from an airplane)*

The Kiribati Islands are the first in the world to witness the dawn of each new day. But time's running out. Home to 90,000 people, the narrow atoll islands are often only a metre above sea.

Many homes have already gone. The President has asked Australia to take some of the homeless, fearing the islands could be lost within his lifetime. (*images of ruins of houses already under water*)

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati: We have posed the possibility of relocation. Nobody has been willing to answer that question. But I believe that the global community, which is responsible after all for the whole problem, must at some point address this issue. It's going to be a real humanitarian issue and it's not unreal.

Reporter: But the Australians don't accept that Kiribati is at risk of disappearing so soon. But even if the rising sea level is slower, no-one disputes the sharp increase in sea temperature. ...

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati: We don't have to wait for the water to actually go above the level of the land because the damage is going to happen well before that. And the damage that's likely to happen is through the change in the weather patterns. There will be nothing left of these islands as soon as one hurricane happens. ... (*footage of huge waves crashing against beach walls*)

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati: It would wipe out the islands.

Reporter: Including the water supply?

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati: Including the people and the land. And of course the water would be under sea level. (*footage of islanders singing and praying*)

Reporter: And so, they pray. The church that once believed only God could change the planet now desperately writing to a church near you.

Rev Bureleta Karati, church leader: The churches will write to other churches and other peoples telling that we are in the Pacific is a matter of death and life, you know? So they have pity on us and try to control all their green gasses emission. (*footage of sun setting over the Kiribati islands*)

And so the first place on earth to welcome the 21st century may yet become the first victim of a global warming created by others. Whoever said life is fair in paradise?

Five News, Channel 5, 21 September 2004

The pragmatics of news production and costs notwithstanding, journalists recognise the democratic value of 'in-depth' *reportage* in providing the insight and context that is necessary to deepen levels of understanding surrounding complex issues.

As a foreign correspondent I did a lot of them. I remember the first piece I did from Sudan was actually seven minutes long, which is quite long by news standards. ...We had to make it lengthy. Not just because the pictures were amazing, it was because you had to give some context as to why you were even there. And I think those little mini documentaries ...I think the reason for it is to explain. Sometimes it's to use the pictures but often it's there to explain what these people are going through. And I think they're great.

Chief Correspondent, *Five News*

Understanding of people's position in conflict is vital, because without that the reporting of the conflict is rather meaningless. It's empty, it's one-dimensional, it takes you no further forward and it's potentially voyeuristic.

Deputy Editor, *ITV News*

Evidently there is an ingrained and naturalized repertoire of communicative frames available to journalists that *precede* their deployment in news production practice. Research interviews here have begun to reveal something of the professional pragmatics and conditioning contexts of news production and how these shape their selection and deployment – in ways that are clearly consequential in terms of how voices, values and views become publicly enacted and elaborated, or distanced and delimited. The extent to which these different communicative frames become differently deployed by the UK's mainstream TV news outlets also serves to distinguish and position them within the wider news ecology and, as we have begun to detect in the above, different positioning in the news ecology also informs their differential use.

Communicative architecture and TV news ecology

Our sample of 1162 UK news items produced by all of the main terrestrial networks identifies some stark patterns as well as interesting differentiations in the news ecology (see Table 1). Far and away the most commonly used communicative frame, as might be anticipated perhaps, is the *reporting frame*, delivering 'thin' updates and information (52.7%), though it is also important to remember that these items are invariably of very short duration in comparison to some of the less frequent, but longer, communicative frames such as *contention*, *cultural recognition* and *reportage*. Significant differences

however are found across the networks with the BBC using this communicatively ‘thin’ frame to a much lesser extent (38.9%) than the other networks (53-63%). It is also worth pointing out that the high use of this frame by BBC’s Newsnight programme is largely accounted for by the package of short news updates that appear at the top of the programme with the bulk of its airtime then devoted to 2-3 news items that are explored in much greater depth and making use of more elaborate communicative frames and involving such presentational formats as extensive film reports, interviews and even forums and panel discussions.

The *dominant frame* averages as the next highest in use at 16.7%, but again this ranges from a low of 8.3%, interestingly, on the public broadcaster, BBC, to a high of 25.2% on Channel Four. *Contest* and *contention frames* together (12.7%) indicate how conflict reporting is often structured as an engagement of contending voices but interestingly, we see a much higher use of the more discursively complex *contention* frame (10.8%) than the simpler, adversarial *contest* frame (1.9%). The BBC’s news output is notable in this regard with the *contention* frame featuring on average in 26.8% of all news items and in 41.2% of news items in their flagship bulletin, BBC1 News, far outstripping even the use of the *reporting* frame.

Frames that communicate more consensually and expressively by means of display (*community service, collective interests, cultural recognition* and *mythic tales*) average at 15.2%, but feature much more prominently on local and regional news programmes than the flagship national bulletins of each network. Finally the more ‘depth’ frame of *exposé/investigation* is relatively infrequent across all broadcasters, while the *reportage* frame, averaging at only 1.9%, is used slightly more frequently by BBC and Channel Five than the other two networks. The different news channels and programmes structure their programmes and the communication of news by these different means and simultaneously thereby help to position themselves and their projected stance within the differentiated news marketplace.

Conclusion

It is clear from our study that UK television news exhibits a communicative complexity that we argue demands increased recognition in the field of television and journalism studies. The discussion above has simply begun to document this established communicative architecture and how it routinely serves to organize the production and dissemination of television news. This architecture or established framework for telling news variously draws upon modes of deliberation and display. Communicative frames we suggest are more central to the ways that news producers produce, organise, narrativize, visualise and tell their stories than has hitherto been recognized or theorized. Journalists and news editors, who exercise their professional judgement in the shaping and pressurised environment of news production, selectively draw upon and differentially deploy these basic communication structures. As they do so, they also produce and reproduce their distinctive news forms in accordance with known statutory and editorial requirements, available resources, logistical and technological capabilities *and* perceived story requirements. Today's distinctive news forms thereby become distinguished in the wider, competitive, news ecology. The established repertoire of communicative frames thereby is also consequential in processes of mediated democracy. Various opening up or closing down opportunities for public understanding based on processes of cultural recognition and deliberation.

The established and seemingly naturalized communicative architecture of television news in the UK, then, provides differing possibilities for the public elaboration and engagement of contending interests, issues and identities. How these communicative structures become selected and deployed in practice can often have profound consequences for the reporting of conflicts as well as the cultural representation of imagined communities – whether, for example, in the context, of the ‘war on terror’ (Cottle 2006b, 2011), crime and justice reporting (Barak 2006) or international disaster reporting (Cottle 2009: 139-145). If we are concerned about the contribution of TV news to ‘mediated democracy’, ‘citizenship’ and the ‘public sphere’ it follows that we also need to pay increased attention to these mediating communicative forms of television news.

Notes

- (1) We would like to acknowledge both the Australian Research Council for funding the research project '*Television Journalism and Deliberative Democracy: A Comparative International Study of Communicative Architecture and Democratic Deepening*' (DP0449505) that forms the basis of this article, and Mugdha Rai, Principal Research Assistant, for her invaluable contribution.
- (2) Our analytical schema of 'communicative frames' is informed deductively in respect of recent approaches to deliberative democracy, the public sphere and public journalism and also studies of popular culture with its heightened sensitivity to the expressive/imagistic and aesthetic complementing the informational, analytic and dialogic emphases of the former. This schema was also refined inductively from observations taken during a pilot study then later in an extensive empirical study of news programmes broadcast in and across six different countries (see Cottle and Rai 2006). Methodologically, this conceptualization of 'communicative frames' approximates to 'ideal types' (Weber, 1949), that is, analytical categories designed to capture recurring and evident communicative structures of television news while nonetheless admitting to further levels of complexity in any particular case. That said, in their application we find that they demonstrate a grounded capacity to accurately capture the communicative structures of most television news items broadcast in different countries and regions and do so with little or no interpretative difficulty (see Table 1 for further details).
- (3) The research project examined the 'communicative architecture' of television news, current affairs and documentary programs produced and/or circulated in six selected countries: Australia, United States, Britain, South Africa, India and Singapore over a two week period (13-26 September, 2004). The UK sample referenced here included the following terrestrial television news programs collected over this period: BBC1 – *BBC News*, *BBC Regional News*; BBC2 – *Newsnight*; ITV – *ITV News*, *ITV Local News*; Channel 4 – *Channel 4 News*; Channel 5 – *Channel 5 News*. Using the analytical schema of 'communicative frames', we examined all news items featuring in the news programs over the two-week, representative sample, and comprising 1162 news items in total.
- (4) For the purposes of this study we confine our attention to the mainstream UK TV news ecology and its core communicative architecture and not its imbrications within the wider 'world news ecology' that now includes incoming international, alternative and citizen-based forms and flows of journalism (Cottle 2010: 476).
- (5) Our findings were followed up in the production domain with 16 interviews with UK TV news personnel conducted in July- August 2006. We would like to thank: Helen Boaden, Director of BBC News, Adrian VanKlaveren, Deputy Director of BBC News, Rachel Attwell Deputy Head of Television News, Louise Minchin, presenter BBC News 24, Mark Popescu Editorial Director of News 24, John Sopel, presenter News 24, Amanda Farnsworth Editor BBC1, Mary Wilkinson, Deputy Editor of Newsnight; Mark Calvert, Editor of Five News, Stewart Ramsey, Chief

Correspondent Five News, Michael Wilson, Head of Five News, Helen Fospero, Presenter Five News; Mark Austin presenter ITV News, David Mannion Editor in Chief ITV News, Bill Neely, International Editor ITV News and Jonathon Munro Deputy Editor ITV News.

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Table 1: UK TV News and Communicative Architecture

Frames	BBC								ITV						Channel 4 News		Channel 5		Sample Total	
	BBC1 News		Reg. News ¹		Newsnight		Total		ITV News		Local News ¹		Total		4 News		Five News			
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Reporting	46	33.8	30	31.9	56	51.4	132	38.9	119	65.4	101	54.9	220	60.1	158	53.2	102	63.8	612	52.7
Dominant	10	7.0	5	5.0	13	12.0	28	8.3	32	18.0	31	17.0	63	17.1	75	25.2	29	18.1	195	16.7
Contest	1	0.7	0	0.0	5	4.6	6	1.8	3	1.6	3	1.6	6	1.6	8	2.7	2	1.3	22	1.9
Contention	56	41.2	16	17.0	19	17.4	91	26.8	2	1.1	8	4.3	10	2.7	20	6.7	5	3.1	126	10.8
Expose/Investigation	1	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.3	2	0.7	0	0.0	4	0.3
Campaigning	1	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	3	1.6	0	0.0	3	0.8	0	0.0	1	0.6	5	0.4
Community Service	0	0.0	8	8.5	0	0.0	8	2.4	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.3	5	1.7	3	1.9	17	1.5
Collective Interests	7	5.1	21	22.3	12	11.0	40	11.8	12	6.6	38	20.7	50	13.7	19	6.4	12	7.5	121	10.4
Cultural Recognition	1	0.7	4	4.3	1	0.9	6	1.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.7	0	0.0	8	0.7
Mythic Tales	6	4.4	8	8.5	0	0.0	14	4.1	9	4.9	2	1.1	11	3.0	4	1.3	1	0.6	30	2.6
Reportage	7	5.1	2	2.1	3	2.8	12	3.5	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.3	4	1.3	5	3.1	22	1.9
Total	136	100.0	94	100.0	109	100.0	339	100.0	182	100.0	184	100.0	366	100.0	297	100.0	160	100.0	1162	100.0

Cohen's kappa statistic for inter-coder agreement: 0.944. The sample of 1162 items was coded by 4 different coders. On completion, a random sample of 350 items was selected by the SPSS program. This sub-sample was re-coded by Mugdha Rai, Principal Research Assistant to measure for levels of agreement. The Cohen's Kappa statistic for the 3 coders varied from 0.91 to 1 and the statistic above is an aggregate of these.

Sample Details - 2-week period (13 - 26 September 2004) comprising the following daily news programmes:	
BBC: BBC1 News, Regional News, BBC2 Newsnight; <i>ITV</i> : ITV News, Local News; <i>Channel Four</i> : Channel Four News; <i>Channel Five</i> : Five News	
Note 1: The Regional and Local News editions are from Bristol, where the sample was collected.	