

We Saw the Smoking Gun: Conflict, Audience Participation and Digital Journalism

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This article describes the context that the city of Chihuahua, Mexico witnessed during the years 2007-2012 regarding the war that took place between the Mexican government and organized crime groups; centering the analysis on the particular role that the different types of newspapers (digital and printed) played on informing the violence that resulted from such conflict. This peculiar context gave way to a particular form of seeking and informing the news (journalist point of view) and the way the audience participated, perceived and even witnessed the conflict first hand (the audience point of view). The main theoretical framework utilized to describe this case study is through sociology of risk and uncertainty as well as the anthropology of violence and war. To fully comprehend the complexities of such context, and the social role the journalist and the audience played during the conflict, the main methodological approach utilized is ethnography as well as discourse and content analysis. This particular case provides a unique understanding of how a peculiar form of the free press was given way by a conflict that involved many sectors of society.

Keywords: Risk, uncertainty, violence, online newspaper, digital journalism

During the administration of President Felipe Calderon which began on 2006 and ended in 2012, a conflict began to brew, leaving several repercussions that are felt to this day in many states of the country; the war against organized crime and the drug cartels.

The violence that this conflict brought was in one part well known and localized in certain regions of the country, giving the many power of the state a fighting chance given that the encounter between the conflicting factions, the state, and the organized crime groups were few and far between; and on the other hand it began during this period to be more and continuously widespread and in many cases reported -by news media-, lived and witness on a daily basis.

For a lack of a better expression, thing got out of hand, in the sense that it was not only the organizations of the state in care of the security of the people such as municipal and federal police agencies and the military fighting against the many organized crime groups disputing territories and control that were involved in the conflict; however there were many crime syndicates, paramilitary and self-defense regional organizations also involved.

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A hard stance against crime was the policy of the administrations at the time, surprising a large amount of the population, given that in a matter of months the conflict that once was concentrated in the many mountain ranges of the country began to migrate to major cities and into the streets, or as many people referred to as the conflict being "in our door step".

In the years that came, and on new administration led by President Enrique Peña Nieto, things have changed in some regions but the phenomena that this peculiar kind of conflict generated a singular form of violence that has migrated to other regions of the country. The conflict is now addressed in a less aggressive standpoint, giving way to a more; justice must be procured attitude and discourse. But none the less the conflict is present in the streets, in the news –being digital, televised or printed- and in the mindset of the citizenship.

Given this background in context, this article explains the way this war against crime and drugs was addressed by several news media in the city of Chihuahua in the state by the same name, describing how in particular the digital media news procured a peculiar form of active audience participation in the news itself and the way the conflict was perceived and shaped a consensual way in which people behaved during this particular time.

Methodology

Social phenomena being complex by nature requires its own means to understand the many variables and relations that individuals and society procure and act on a contextual basis. It is well known that many social sciences have their peculiar method to understand, analyze and describe their study object. However, giving that there is a distinction in a method as there is given in the disciplines, sometimes the social situation (Spradley, 2016)-as some call it-, needs combining methodologies or adapting them to the phenomena, the individuals and the context that is needed or intended to either describe or analyze. In this peculiar case study, we have several peculiarities when it comes to the methodology applied. Such is the case of ethnography, virtual ethnography, and content analysis.

Ethnography describes actions, behaviors, traditions, culture and activities in any given society. We could summarize ethnography in terms of discovering and describing the actions that individuals undertake in their social contextualized integration, in the sense and meaning that the individuals give to their actions. Ethnography pretends to describe culturally meaningful behavior in a social context (Conklin, 1975:153) for this to be done a determined time in the field is required.

Given the vast range of this approach, ethnography became the basic form of social investigation (Galindo, 1998:348-350). However, ethnography contemplates more than description as we would further state clear; it also includes comprehension and interpretations of social phenomena. This permits to consider constantly and profoundly about the reality and meaning of what is being observed, listened and experienced. This is because ethnography incorporates the very experiences, beliefs, attitudes, thoughts and reflections of the participants in the social phenomena and context. This is important given that in the peculiarities of the case study here described and analyzed, we take into account as an important factor the terms and meanings that individuals give to their actions, sentiment, emotions and relations by and from their own point of view and perspective; such will be the case of the social perception of fear and risk that made way in a context of violence and uncertainty. Qualitative research and therefore ethnography proposes to discover what is behind social actions, based on the meaning that individuals

give to their attitudes and behaviors; the meaning of every individual derives or emerges from their social interaction and the meaning is given through their interpretation and actions.

From a general standpoint and now that we are well aware of the relevant application of this methodology in social analysis, ethnography is then understood as the sociological and cultural method that studies, describes and classifies cultures or people. From this perspective it is sometimes distinguished as a theory that describes; this perspective has led to believe that ethnography is but the reflexing of a concrete reality, an empirical datum, absolute and relative according to arbitrary categories (Santana, 1996).

It is then more than evident so far that ethnography is the centerpiece in the forward description of the use and understanding that individuals give to the online newspaper. But it is necessary to state clear further peculiarities of the methodology applied in this case study, given that it lacks one of its main elements; place.

The place or scenario represents the physical placement, where individuals or participants share an activity. These three elements; scenario, individuals, and activities all intertwined assign or create a context. But to contextualize in this case study we must go further, then these elements, given that we have already included the sociopolitical particularities, and we will further include the social perception and the cultural particularities of the individuals that we set to describe through social mediated practices.

Here is where the central breakthrough is established, traditional ethnographic approach contemplates only the elements to construct context as theme being approachable or tangible. And we do not deny that. This study is placed in as we mentioned in the city of Chihuahua, Mexico; however, the scenario in which activity took place is not a physical one; it's virtual or digital.

The current ethnographic approach that is also featured here is denominated virtual or digital ethnography. This approach takes into consideration the many possibilities that digital technology and social media produce peculiar cultural behavior. Many have been said about virtual ethnography, however, the one approach that has been referenced many times and has been the one that has helped the most in this study is the one proposed by Christine Hine. This author contemplates that the internet can be viewed and understood in many ways; as culture and as a cultural artifact.

Firstly the Internet as culture is understood as the place or scenario where certain behavior has significant meaning to individuals that began to interact in certain activities in online spaces. Communities are therefore created and become somewhat important and perceptible by the users the social scientist. In this case, the ethnographic approach becomes the form to study the culturally significant context made possible by the users and not the tangible displaceable physical space (Hine, 200: 21). This type of ethnography involves the real-time approach with the multiple forms of interacting with individuals. This new space for ethnographic study takes into account the socially determined interactive scenario. However, this does limit the interaction to the online. The formation of communities and the construction of identities understood in the traditional way (Castells, 2016) have exacerbated the tendency to view the internet as a culturally contained space. But the internet is the place where culture also develops. Therefore cyberspace becomes and is a plausible scenario for social scientific inquiry.

Secondly, the Internet as cultural artifact refers to the idea that the internet is the product of a culture, not a culture. It's more in the scene that is a technology created by people that have defined objectives and priorities contextually situated and defined (Woolgar, 1996). To refer this perspective implies the assumption that reality could have been different, given that the definitions of what is and what does, are the result of cultural

comprehension that could be different (Hine, 2000). We could say that the users or participants are involved in the construction of technology through the understanding of the practices and the content that they create; the internet, therefore, is confirmed by a constant social process (2000).

Finally, it's important to outline that regardless of the perspective or the elements implied in the understanding of a social context, a constant in ethnography as a social investigation practice, is that it remits itself to a space-time context. And it obligates the social scientist to interact with the otherness.

We will finally mention that it was necessary to the full comprehension of the social context the implementation of content analysis. Given that the temporality of the many opinions given to understand the significance of the social phenomena it has necessary to recognize how opinion, information, and participation were taking place in the many digital newspapers. Content analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessary from an author's or user's perspective (Krippendorff, 2004).

People and in this case the individuals that participated actively, regularly or rarely giving their opinions, left regardless of the temporality or the quantity of the participation left a trace of their perception and a valuable insight in how society understood and gave meaning to their lived social context. A content analyst is important because it infers phenomena that cannot be observed directly. The inability to observe phenomena of interest is the primary motivation for using content analysis (2004). Content analysis is of great help because it has its own approach to analyzing data that stems largely from how the object of analysis, content, is conceived. Online participation in form of comments and opinions are seen as conversation and the important feature of conversational interactions is that they take place in and generate interpersonal relations and define their own conditions for continuing the process. Conversation analysis has emerged as one approach to the study of talk or this case text in natural settings (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

Violence, Fear and Risk: Perception at Play

Violence as a term is its usage in many ways molded by different people as well as by many social scientists, to describe a whole range of events, fillings, and harm. The true problem of defining violence is not that there is no consent or agreement on how thing is to be explained; it is that there is no agreement on what is to be explained, or whether there is a single set of phenomena to explained (Burbaker & Laitin, 1998: 427). Therefore in order to understand and grasp a clear way in what violence means it is necessary to view it as something mutable and fluid rather than something fixed or stationary (Stanko, 2005).

Fortunately, efforts have been made in many branches of social science to understand violence. In order to do so, it is critical to take in consideration context. Given that, as we mentioned earlier ethnography has no problem considering the many factors, elements, and variables that context has necessary to procure certain phenomena. However, understanding the context of violence means that it is necessary we describe or specify what happened when it happened, where and between whom the phenomena occur. So far we have been setting the stage -if you will- of the phenomena in terms of context. It is essential to leave clear several elements; the act itself, the relationship of the participants to each other, the location of the act and the outcome or the resultant damage. In our case, we will concentrate in the outcome.

In order to outline the many elements, forms, and types of violence given in our context analysis it is necessary to address that they are the consequence of conflict. Even

there are many nonviolent paths to conflict solution such as relocation, exchange, territoriality, preventive or compensatory strategies rather than violent confrontation; this is not as effective as violence does to their prolonged effectiveness (Albers, 1993).

By making the link between violence and conflict we address the social ramifications that violence; expresses some sort of relationship and the acts are not random, violence is not completely senseless or meaningless, so it's never totally dissociated from instrumental rationality, and finally, violence is not an entirely an isolated act; it is a product of a historical process that transcends the conflict itself. Therefore thru conflict is an instrumental practice, historically situated by culturally represented structures.

Violence is an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and by some witness; it is a very efficient way of transforming the social environment -as we will describe that happened thru digital news sites participation- and staging an ideological message before a public audience, since the violent act is relatively easy to perform and it is highly visible and concrete (Riches, 1986).

We now have stated that conflict has one its main results the act or the "to do" of violence. Violence in order to understand it, it needs to be deconstructed into several factors and variables.

So far, we know that violence and conflict are related and procure context to social phenomena. But to understand the social interpretation and meaning of violence we must take into consideration, not the acts of violence themselves—they are as we have stated clear essential- but not total.

We must think more of the consequences or outcomes in a more emotional such consequence; in this case fear. Fear is a negatively valued emotion (Witte & Allen, 2000). In the same way, that violence is related to conflict and we must understand the relation between the two, fear also has an inner deep relation with another concept and it is necessary to fully now how and in what way fear operates; I am referring to risk.

Fear and risk are closely related, risk has come to stand as one of the focal points of fillings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty (Lupton, 1999). Now a day's reflections on risk are absorbed into a wider culture of insecurity, victimization, and fear (Cohen, 2002). Given the conditions of the conflict at the moment in the context that we mention, violence thru the war against crime, when it comes to fear of crime our fears and resentments and also our commonsense narratives and understandings, become settled cultural facts that are sustained and reproduce by communicated rules about fillings and also ideas about what those fillings means or as some put it acted by cultural scripts (Garland, 2001). The impact of fear is sometimes determined by the situation to find themselves in, but to some extent, it is also the product of social construction; fear is determined by individuals and the interaction with others (Altheide, 2002) so fear does not just happen; it is socially constructed. The meaning and the experience of fear are constantly shaped by cultural and historical factors. These historical and cultural factors procure social structures; what we fear, find fearful, and how we find it, is dependent upon how everyday life is conducted. The repeated patterns of the routine of social activity that form social structures and the many relations among individuals that they take for granted have an effect on the construction of fear just as they do in every other aspect of human endeavor (Tudor, 2003). Society is moving from a community of misery of social class to a community of fear; a risk society. We live in an age where cohesion arises from fear and it turns into a political force (Beck, 1998).

Aside from the idea of political force- that sometimes does happen in digital activism, we will address the idea of cohesion thru the social structures that fear, risk conflict and, violence procured.

When referred to a society of risk is to address and find individuals that perceive themselves in a society in risk; individuals find themselves in a condition that makes them feel at drift; family, religious organizations, the government and even academia are no longer the safe harbors they once were. Communities become fractured either by the growing atomization of the urban landscape or by the uneven roughens of inequality of centralized powers. It is no easy task to understand a society that with difficulty finds itself fearful of the present and is aggravated by the future. Conflict and the violence it brings have as its consequence a society of risk hampered with fear. As conflict and violence become our scenario we state clear that fear is the shared emotion of a society whose mindset is a risk.

Digital Newspaper: The Space of Participation and Meaning

The population of the city of Chihuahua, Mexico during the years that President Felipe Calderon applied a hard stance policy against organized crime and drug trafficking groups, many main cities that house the major concentration of the population in the state suffered the most in the wave of crimes at the highest of the conflict. Chihuahua is a northern state of the Mexican republic and is also a state that shares the border with the United States of America state of Texas. The main border crossing is the adjacent cities of Juarez and El Paso. Being Chihuahua a border state, the capital –of the same name as the state—and Juarez struggled by the most violent acts. However, we will concentrate in the capital itself given that it was the one that saw the mayor increase of local digital news sites at the time.

In the year 2009, the city of Chihuahua had approximately between 20 and 28 websites that informed the news through digital means. By the year 2010, that number grew to approximately 180 to 200 websites. Some of them lasted a few months and others simply shared the news of the most consolidated sites. This presented a peculiar form to not only view the news but also it presented the peculiar form of making and participating on the news via social media comments. The participants on the news given by the conflicting violent context where on one side the reporters that was on the field documenting and publishing the news and other hand we have the receivers or spectators being informed.

At the time society lived in a constant state of alert, fear and risk. Many people at the time witnessed, lived at first hand or knew someone who either lived or witnessed a violent act. There was a constant fear to see, witness or observe some type of violence. The sense of threat was ever present; people would not discuss the witness or know in public places in fear of being listened by a member of the criminal groups. A good friend once put it in very clear terms; “we must be like the three little monkeys, we must not see even if it’s in front of you and you can’t close your eyes, we must not speak even if it’s the only thing to say, and we must not hear, even if it’s deafening.”

The situation as we said got so out of hand that people were afraid to even read the newspaper in a public place. It was not in vain that during this time the proliferation of digital news grew.

Digital media and virtual environments or spaces permit certain liberties when it comes to opinions and active comment participation. In the dawn of social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter and so on; they allowed peculiar forms of information appropriation and meaning. They permitted real-time participation and discussion of the active conflict or context, not only to be informed were allowed without repercussion, but the ability to participate and comment made way to a sense of community. No longer was it necessary to wait for the printed news; time and space no longer became a restraint. And an even more important feature presented itself; the possibility of being without the self; anonymity.

Anonymity or the lack of identifiability allows the ability to express one's true mind unrestrained by concerns of self-presentation (Spears & Lea, 1994; 430).

Digital technology, the internet, and social media set the stage necessary for individuals to share experiences, ideas, and fears. We have mentioned so far and left clear the variables in the context, the context itself and methodological peculiarities. Now it is necessary to provide the results of the applied methodology and relate them to the conceptual framework.

Before we go further, I must state clearly that the testimonies here presented are protected by anonymity. The many informants that allowed me to provide on record their experiences were very clear that in order to share their understanding, it was necessary they remain anonymous, given the sensible nature of the conflict described. Therefore reporters will be referred to as "reporter#1" and "reporter#2", and the participants in social media will be referred to as "Participant by numbering them and Commentator also by numbering them.

Experience of a Digital Reporter

In order to understand and describe the way journalism was being done at the time, it became necessary to witness first-hand the job of the reporter. It was no easy task at first given that reporters were firstly doing a job, secondly, they were in as they put it "in the line of fire" and finally even do they competed with each other to get the story first, they are a very close circle; meaning as they say they "watch each other's back". After trying to get an interview in many newspapers for weeks finally one reporter granted me his time.

My first approach was quite unconventional; midtown rush hour in a summer afternoon on a busy street was the place we first met. This was because he was on the clock -meaning he was working and any time he could go a chase a story or a note- and the sound of the police monitor was in the highest volume, a common tool they say "to be always alert if any incident occurs we are set and ready to move". After a couple of cigarettes and as he explained to me how the police monitor worked *Reporter#1* says "it's a difficult job, one must be not only alert of what may happen in terms of looking for a story or reporting something, but also it is necessary to be aware that this is nonetheless a war, and we are war reporters. The only difference is that the war takes place in the city you grew up in, and things only seem normal. Right now we see traffic in the streets, mothers picking up their children from school, people leaving work and going to their houses, families in the park, people picking up groceries, high school kids in their uniforms waiting for the bus and such. But in any time, any place and at any moment hell breaks loose, you hear gunshots or the monitor sounds and then the face of war appears. You realize that normality is something that can dissipate in an instant, one must forget everything and remember that we carry on our daily lives in a battle zone". He receives a message on his cell phone and says he has to take off, another one of his colleagues has told him that someone got killed in front of a school while he was picking up his kids from school; "you see normality becomes war in an instant" and he takes off, not after agreeing to meet again.

After this first experience, things became more clear; the news reporters were indeed in the line of fire, being even the first to arrive on the scene before the police or any other security agencies. It was crucial the involvement and participation of this individual in the conflict. They were the agents that allowed the information to flow and become accessible to the public.

After a couple of days, I called *Reporter#1* and asked him if he had time for another interview. He gladly agreed and we meet on one of the downtown's largest sports and

recreation areas, this place shares areas with many university faculties so it's a very large and very public place; the Ciudad Deportiva or Sports city. This time however he was not alone, he introduced me to *Reporter#2*, he was an older than *Reporter#1*, three years to be precise – he was thirty-six years old- “this is my friend – said *Reporter#1*— he works for another digital newspaper but we work together sometimes to watch each other back. We even throw each other work sometimes; we pass on some tips every now and then” he says this with a nervous smile.

After being presented and hearing the police monitor on the back of their cars I see many digital cameras, two laptop computers, and a couple of cell phones being charged in the cigarette lighter power outlet and I ask –what was all of that for?

And they proceed to explain “this are our working tools, we need all of this to take pictures and report the occurrence that we get to witness. “Usually –explains *Reporter#2*— we get either the call from another colleague or from the police monitor that something has happened, a murder, a gunshot, an assassination or whatever...and then we go to the scene and take pictures talk to a couple of people, immediately we come back to the car and write the report, upload the best picture and upload it to the newspaper or send it to the editor that in a matter of minutes upload it himself. We must always have everything with batteries charged as well as extra batteries ready; our cell phones have an internet connection so we plug them to our laptops in order to upload everything. Sometimes we go to the office and download everything, and the editors do the work of putting everything together, but when it's a busy day we have to do everything in the back seat of the car” – I ask what did they meant with a busy day and *Reporter#1* smiles at me and replies- “a busy day they is when we have multiple incidents to report, meaning that many people get killed in one day” surprised by his answer I ask when was the last busy day they remember. *Reporter#2* reacts first and tells me “I remember one day, in particular, it was a weekend I don't remember quite if it was a long holiday weekend, but it was crazy.

I got into work at about nine in the morning and got the first call, some police officer found a body wrapped in a blanket in the outskirts of the city, it was a man and he was tortured and had his fingers cut and one was put in his mouth; this meant that he was a snitch and told something to someone that he mustn't. You see the drug cartels do these types of things; they leave messages with their victims, for either other criminal groups or to the authorities. It's some kind of gruesome telegraph. As I was uploading the report I heard the police monitor reporting that on the other side of the city multiple homicides occurred. I drove to the scene and the police and another reporter were already there. Apparently, some drug dealers were surpassing the territory of a drug cartel and got killed for it; five men on a pickup truck were killed with high caliber weapons. That took some time to report; by breakfast, I got a call from a friend that works on another digital newspaper that a young couple was found tighten up and eyes folded in a car in a neighborhood known for drug and gang problems. After that, a gun fight occurred but no casualties were reported only injured. By the end of the day I got the call that a car chase ended up in a gunfight between criminal groups outside a supermarket, four dead and two injured, one of the injured was a man that was shopping for groceries. It's like leaving in Gotham city but without any batman” they both laugh.

After this experience I asked what were the difficulties of doing this type of journalism, *Reporter#1* replied “thing don't get any easier as you go on reporting this type of incidents. Sometimes some of us have seen the pick-up trucks or the getaway vehicles all shot as we get close to the scene; that type of things gets in your head. You realize that you are the first to get on the scene and a still smell the gunpowder on the air when you get there. At first, we use to report as we got there but now it is necessary to wait for the police or an official authority to get the permit to get close to the scene. But things got very

difficult for some of us because by reporting these incidents, not only the public was getting the news but also the other criminal groups, so if we did not report the incident some reporters got beat up or threatened by the criminal groups. For example, a friend of mine got beat up because the picture he took of a message written on a tarp – narco manta are called- that hang on a bridge of a busy highway got folded by the wind and the message could not be seen completely. Some reporter got called that the pictures were taken where not good and that next time they must take them from a closer angle. You see that type of things get in your head; you do feel sometimes secure behind the camera. When you punch that card and get off the clock reality sinks in. you are in traffic or at the park and then you here a couple of blocks up gunshots and then you realize that you are a part of this. A war is going on around you.”

As we can see by the testimonies gathered by ethnography, we can say that the peculiar form, in which the conflict was address by the reporters, was one that demanded a peculiar form of journalism. Not only were they reporting the incidents, they lived close at hand in many ways living in the conflict. The demands of digital journalism, the need to inform in real time procured a type of journalists that is not only unique but it was the one needed mechanism in which information became accessible.

Audience Participation

We have now covered the experience of the reporters, we will now go on to describe how the news given by this type of journalism gave way to a unique form of audience involvement.

In order to do so, we will take for example the transcription of several social media comments and apply content analysis to understand the meaning that individuals gave to the conflict and the violent acts.

As mentioned earlier one of the peculiarities of digital journalism or new sites is that in that the reporters were updating the news on a real-time basis. This meant that very little time transited between the incident and the news report upload. When I spoke to people about how they got informed about the incidents that occurred in the city, a common replied was; “when we hear the police sirens or gunshots we commonly let ten maybe fifteen minutes tops and go online and enter to any digital news site and check what just happened. We realized sometimes that maybe the groceries store where you commonly go to get robbed, or that a few streets from where you live someone got killed, or even the bar where you go to on the weekends some guy walked in and began to shoot people, you know things like that”

Another person said “one time a heard in the middle of the night gunshots, ten minutes in the shootout no police sirens were heard, about an hour later when the shoots ended I was updating constantly the local news websites for the last twenty minutes until the news got uploaded; just about seven or eight streets near my house several men with guns got killed, it was very impressive, I mean in the picture I could see in the background the bus stop where every day I wait for the bus to go to school. That morning I could still see the dry blood stains on the pavement. It was very impressive if that occurred a few hours later I could be at that bus stop you know, that sort of things gets you thinking; it messes your head. You get scared but what can you do, you can't hide under you bed right”

When it comes to social media things get interesting given that continuity plays an important part. Next are the conversations and comments made on a news report that states that a man got killed in the parking lot in a supermarket near one of the freeways that encircle the city:

Participant 1: this is going out of hand a few minutes early I went to buy milk there. Thank god there were no lines in the cashier. You can't go and buy milk now without knowing if you are going to see something.

Commentator 1: that happened to me last week. I went to buy stuff at the grocery store. I heard a loud sound when I was in the fruit section, then they became louder, that is when I knew that they were gunshots.

Commentator 2: the SUV in the picture matches the decryption that started the police search early this morning. Maybe it was the same man does people earlier.

Commentator 3: yeah that's the same thing, I got stuck in traffic because of that search.

Commentator 4: well know his dead...you can't go on the street anymore.

These comments are referred to a news report that mentions the killing of a family outside their house.

Participant 1 : These guys are animals. What are the authorities doing about this?

Commentator 1 : I am afraid of going out. A couple years back you could walk in the park at night, go to dinner or a club in the weekend but know, not even outside your house is safe.

Commentator 2 : I think a friend of mine has his kids in the same school as they did. The uniforms look similar.

Commentator 3 : When will this stop. The city looks like a ghost town past dark. People are afraid of even going to the movies.

Commentator 4 : The car that parked next to mine was shot in the parking lot at the mall the other day that I went to the movies. Apparently, the driver hid under the car and didn't get shot but... man just to imagine that I could have been there.

Commentator 5 : Last night some guys got killed outside my house. The blood is in literally at our doorstep.

Commentator 6 : I told my daughter to come straight home after school. Parents do the same. God bless.

Commentator 7 : Has anybody not seen or heard something violent. I don't think someone is exempt of this mess.

These comments are referred to a news report that mentions the killing of several people in a bar downtown.

Participant 1 : No way... I was going to have a beer that day in that bar. Thank god I didn't.

Commentator 2 : I live a few blocks down the street of that bar. That was messed up...the shots were so loud I thought they were outdoor.

Commentator 3 : I live near that place. My brother I and had to throw ourselves on the floor. They were so loud the door shook.

Participant 2 : What about the windows did they shook as well?

Commentator 3 : I wasn't going to stick my head up to find out...

Commentator 4 : I suck's to be afraid in your own house.

As we can see in these conversations, we can tell that the violence brought by the conflict is perceived by these individuals as in an immediate proximity. In some way or another people have been a witness of the violence or live a constant state of fear. There is a sense of risk. As we see through the content of the conversations we can say that there is a constant thread that set everything together. People speak in and about their fears. The fears of not coming home after a daily routine, the fear of not doing the things that are given for granted like going out to buy milk or to park the car, fear of opening the door or to relax on a weekend. The way that individuals used digital news sites offered a well-needed escape valve that released pressure in a society that lived at risk.

Conclusion

The places or scenarios in which people carry on their daily lives have been transforming into crime scenes and former battle grounds of a proxy war that blurs the line between the confronting sides.

The relation between the conceptual framework and the empirical data has been stated. A reality has been described in a context in which society finds itself in a struggle. To conceptualize is to speak of what is being seen or known. We now know of the consequence of seeing and perceiving violence. Violence gave into fear and eventually, individuals were in a society that felt at risk of being stripped of their granted lifestyle.

When an individual is more familiarized with the social environment in which he lives and socializes, he knows, conceives analyses and ponders the many risks of the many social relations that he is going to initiate.

However, individuals in modern societies are presently learning a harsh and difficult lesson; new forms of networks are being crafted, no longer is the promise of modernity presents in the mindset of present day society. The once called forms of new communication are now becoming the only place of refuge where opinions, ideas, thoughts and meaning can be shared. This has been more evident, in a society that struggles to find its bearings and has felt at first hand the invisible hand that holds the smoking gun.

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