

Rules of the Journalistic Game, Autonomy, and the Habitus of Africa Correspondents

In my interview with an Africa correspondent of a prominent Western newspaper, the respondent said of his paper's editor-in-chief that he "thought one does not need a great political analyst for Africa, but someone who travels to countries and is capable of writing reports."

This editor's viewpoint certainly does not tell the full story of journalistic work on Africa. Yet it does reflect an important aspect of contemporary journalism: the relative marginality of Africa in the consciousness of Western media. What are the implications of this marginal place for the communication of information about mass violence in an African region such as Darfur to a broad segment of Western societies? What does this relative marginality mean for the chances that criminal justice, humanitarian, and diplomatic actors have to get their at times competing messages across to the world public? Any satisfying attempt to answer these questions requires that we explore the nature of the journalistic field—its autonomy, its relationship to other fields, the habitus of Africa correspondents, and of course the observed patterns of reporting that emerge in this context.

I address these tasks in two chapters. In the current chapter I examine the nature of the journalistic field, the relative autonomy of the segment of this field under consideration here, and the habitus of Africa correspondents who reported about Darfur. The following chapter lays out the relationship between the journalistic field and others, including

the judicial, humanitarian, and diplomatic fields, and it analyzes the actual trends and patterns of reporting on Darfur.

For purposes of the current chapter I draw primarily on my interviews with twelve journalists from seven Western countries who reported on Darfur, and on supporting ethnographic notes from a conference of war correspondents and from the Bellagio conference on representations of Darfur, where correspondents engaged with actors from different fields. As I do in previous chapters for the spheres of criminal justice and human rights, humanitarianism, and diplomacy, in this chapter I use field theory, which Pierre Bourdieu (1998) and his followers have explicitly and successfully applied to journalism (e.g., Benson 1998, 2006). I supplement the Bourdieuan approach with insights from more recent work on boundaries between the journalistic and political fields (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Revers 2014; Strömbeck and Esser 2014), from work on journalism that draws on cultural approaches (Dayan and Katz 1992; Hannerz 2004; Zelizer 1993), and from recent writings on the journalism of mass violence in Africa (Allen and Seaton 1999; McNulty 1999; Thompson 2007). In keeping with my comparative approach, I also add to insights from still-rare internationally comparative studies of journalistic work (e.g., Benson 1998, 2013).

THE JOURNALISTIC FIELD, MASS VIOLENCE, AND DARFUR

Bourdieu, in his little book *Television and Journalism* (1998), sought to “show how the journalistic field produces and imposes on the public a very particular vision of the political field. This vision is grounded in the very structure of the journalistic field and in the interests of journalists as they are produced by their field” (2). The picture Bourdieu paints is not pretty. He reveals media preferences for celebrities over profound knowledge, polemics over reason, political tactics over substance, and a predisposition to overstatement, all of which, he argues, fosters a “cynical view” (Bourdieu 1998:5) of politics on the part of the receiving public, a view simultaneously “dehistoricized and dehistoricizing, fragmented and fragmenting” (7). Bourdieu speaks specifically to media depictions of mass violence:

Zaire today, Bosnia yesterday, the Congo tomorrow. Stripped of any political necessity, this string of events can at best arouse a vague humanitarian interest. Coming one after the other and outside any historical perspective, the unconnected tragedies seem to differ little from natural disasters. . . . As

for the victims, they're not presented in any more political a light than those of a train derailment or any other accident. . . . Journalism shows us a world full of ethnic wars, racist hatred, violence and crime—a world full of incomprehensible and unsettling dangers from which we must withdraw for our own protection. (7–8)

Admittedly, Bourdieu directs his scathing critique primarily at television, but he also targets the broader journalistic field. Subsequent critiques of the mediatization of politics have supported Bourdieu's notion that such journalism affects political views and even political practice (e.g., Strömbeck and Esser 2014). But is Bourdieu's depiction of journalism confirmed by our data on Darfur? The media reports on which my empirical evidence is based are, after all, not collected from television but from the most sophisticated newspapers in the respective countries.¹

Still, several features of the journalistic field apply irrespective of media type, and I am interested in their shape and in consequences they hold for the representation of mass violence. These features include, prominently, the relative autonomy of the field, in which actors follow specific rules of the game (and are guided by institutional logics); the particular habitus of journalists; the journalistic field's relationships with other fields, as shaped by power relations, available communication channels, and (in)compatibilities of language and logics applied in these fields; and the media field's globalization in interaction with persisting national traits. The following sections and chapter 9 address each of these features of journalism in turn and show, based on diverse types of data, how they apply to the case of journalism focused on Darfur.

AUTONOMY AND THE RULES OF THE GAME

Bourdieu (1998) characterizes journalism as “a microcosm with its own laws, defined both by its position in the world at large and by the attractions and repulsions to which it is subject from other such microcosms” (39). He depicts these microcosms as fields, relatively independent or “autonomous,” by which he means that they follow their own laws or institutional logics.² Adherence to a specific set of rules is not unique to journalism, of course. Modern society is generally differentiated into semiautonomous fields such as politics, the economy, science, and religion, each governed by its own rules of the game, each demanding acceptance of those rules by actors who seek to participate (Benson 1998).

My examination of the fields of criminal law and justice, humanitarianism, and diplomacy in the preceding chapters illustrates how field-specific rules do not just govern the actions but even color the worldviews of participants and their knowledge or perception of Darfur.

Thus, like other fields, journalism is not determined by external criteria. As its agents follow journalism's own rules, its depiction of the world cannot be read, for example, as a reflection of economic interests—even if pursuit of such interests is indeed of vital interest to the operation (and survival) of a newspaper. The portrayal of events instead reflects the rules of journalism. Bourdieu (1998) illustrates these rules for television journalism: there has to be conflict, involving “good guys and bad guys,” but exchanges have to be “clothed by the model of formal, intellectual language” (35). By creating excitement in viewers, such confrontation commands their attention (and thus high ratings), while the media gain legitimacy by following the rules of democratic procedure. Further, irrespective of the specific medium, journalists confront space limitations and intense time pressure. These constraints, too, demand adherence to particular genres (Bourdieu 1998:28). Applied to our case of mass violence, journalists may be inclined to simplify stories and to portray the contending sides in a conflict in overly streamlined ways—as representatives of reified primordial ethnic or racial groups, for example. Such oversimplification is a central target for critique in the literature on African civil wars (e.g., Allen and Seaton 1999; McNulty 1999), including works written by Africa correspondents themselves (Crilly 2010; Thompson 2007). Foreign correspondents face further challenges in that they cannot easily resort to strategies used by domestic reporters—for example, by focusing on “actions and statements of those claiming to represent the nation . . . [in order to] help impose unity on what is otherwise a congeries of individuals and groups acting inside a set of geographic and political boundaries” (Gans 2005:297). The task for international journalists is certainly more complex. Which authorities will they rely on to achieve this unity?

Writing specifically on mass violence, historian Devin Pendas (2006) examines the application and consequences of journalistic rules in the context of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial of the early 1960s. Focusing on elite newspapers, as I do, he finds that here too the hectic pace of events colors journalistic work. One day's report rarely makes reference to the previous day's. Yesterday's information will be disregarded in subsequent reporting, when new events will have occurred. In other words, journalistic reporting is episodic. Shifting uses of the crime frame in

the Darfur case confirmed this pattern: journalists may have frequently cited this frame after court interventions, but then neglected it in subsequent periods in which court action moved from the front to the back of the stage (see analysis in chapter 9).

Another journalistic rule is that of objectivity.³ Facts are supposed to speak for themselves, and interpretation is to be provided only sparingly. Consumers of media-generated information have grown to appreciate and, in fact, demand this feature of journalism. Yet the case of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial shows problematic consequences. Application of the objectivity rule meant that the logic of the criminal court was directly transmitted to the reader. As the trial was conducted under German criminal law, with its focus on individual intent, the trial (and subsequent media reports) highlighted those cases in which malicious intent was in full display, especially the instances of atrocities and torture. The reports, reflecting the trial proceedings, paid less attention, however, to the bureaucratized mass-murder machine of the gas chambers (e.g., transport, selection at the ramp, gassing, administration), where the “banality of evil” came to full display. Pendas (2006) summarizes the court and media’s approach to the trial:

What might be termed the characterological style in objective newspaper reporting thus entailed both a concern with personality and a tendency to reduce it to monadic types. And in this, a strong homology existed with the judicial emphasis on the subjective dispositions of defendants and the assumption of a causal nexus between motivation and action. The court’s tendency to privilege atrocity over genocide, the juridical requirement for excessive brutality, the reduction of mass killing to a form of aiding and abetting rather than murder—all of these were reproduced in the characterology of the daily press. The “why” of the murder, as a matter of personal character, became the predominant theme, and the historical event of genocide was reduced to the psychodrama of the courtroom suspense thriller. (262)

My work with Ryan King (2011) found that media reporting about the My Lai massacre, committed by Charlie Company, a unit of the 20th US Infantry, during the Vietnam War, was similarly constrained by the logic of the courts-martial in which the case was tried. Instead of basing estimates of the number of people killed on a report by the army’s Peers Commission or on a Pulitzer Prize-winning book by renowned journalist Seymour Hersh, media reports in subsequent years (as well as history textbooks) were more likely to cite those numbers for which the defendants were charged. Further, instead of attributing responsibility to a diversity of actors, including the military hierarchy, in

line with the assessment of the Peers Commission, news reports focused on the responsibility of Lieutenant William Calley, the single person convicted and sentenced in the trial (Savelsberg and King 2011:34–52).

In short, strictures such as the objectivity rule are not just guarantors of relative autonomy but also constraining forces. In situations where journalists lack autonomy, the constraints of journalistic rules are replaced by others that govern neighboring fields such as the economy or the world of politics.⁴ Media in authoritarian systems that practice censorship are an extreme example. In capitalist systems, some media obviously place more emphasis on economic forms of capital (such as circulation, advertising revenues, and audience ratings) than on cultural capital (such as literary skill or awards such as the Pulitzer Prize). The former media are closer to what Bourdieu calls the heteronomous pole, where criteria external to the field dominate, while the latter approximate the autonomous pole, ruled by criteria unique to the journalistic field (Benson 2006:190). Given the prestige of the newspapers under study here, the journalism we encounter is closer to the autonomous pole. It differs decisively from TV, especially privately owned or market-driven TV, and from tabloid journalism. This distinction is in line with the composition of its readership, as Benson (2006) observes: “At elite newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (data for the *Wall Street Journal* are not publically available, but one can presume the results would at least be equivalent), readers are twice as likely, or more, than the average American adult to have a college degree, to earn more than \$75,000 per year, and to hold managerial positions” (191). Very similar readership patterns can be assumed for all newspapers included in this analysis.⁵

And yet, despite the closeness of the journalists in this study to the autonomous pole, all interviewees were mindful of declining subscription rates and growing economic pressures on their papers. The dramatic situation is well captured in one respondent’s account of the history of his paper’s representation in Africa: “The office in Johannesburg existed throughout. But then, with the big newspaper crisis, which started in 2002 and really hit in 2004, Johannesburg was closed down. Then Abidjan was the last remaining office. I was responsible for the entire continent as of 2004, and that comes with a lot of travel. [JJS: And today too you are the only Africa correspondent?] Yes, I am the only one, yes” (author’s translation).

Assigning no more than one correspondent on the ground to the entire African continent was a practice common to almost all the newspapers I

examined. The *New York Times* is a major exception. One of the Paris-based newspapers in fact no longer has journalists stationed in Africa.⁶ One of the interviewees attributed this omission to the fact that Africa is a “niche subject.” Another journalist told me that it takes “extraordinary” events for Africa reports to get on the front page. Whatever the causes may be, massive journalistic underrepresentation—intensified by economic constraints that increasingly weigh on newspapers—restricts reporting from the African continent. Economic pressure is yet more intensely felt by independent journalists. One correspondent, now a freelancer after years working for one of the newspapers under study, wrote in a personal communication in the summer of 2014: “I’d love to travel to Darfur again, but the media interest is so low that I would have to expect a major financial loss. I am now a freelancer [*unabhängig*], and I have to make sure to make a profit. That is not even always easy in Syria” (author’s translation). He had just delivered a prime-time TV news magazine report from the latter country.

In short, the media under study are relatively close to the autonomous pole of the journalistic field. Their work is driven by the rules of journalism more than by external forces. Yet even these journalists are subject to external pressures, including economic ones.

THE HABITUS OF AFRICA CORRESPONDENTS

Field theory draws attention to the actors who inhabit a field and the habitus that guides their actions. Journalists, like all actors in social fields, are carriers of such a habitus, defined earlier (following Bourdieu) as a set of relatively fixed dispositions that reflect actors’ trajectories and their position within the field (see also Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). Bourdieu liked to refer to jazz musicians or basketball players for an illustration. Both follow rules, but they would be incapable of playing their music or game successfully were they not skilled improvisers. The same should apply to journalists in their line of work. Accordingly, Bourdieu speaks of “cognitive, perceptual and evaluative structures” with which journalists must deal. He attributes these to a “common social background and training (or lack thereof)” (Bourdieu 1998:36). It thus seems necessary to understand the habitus of our Africa correspondents if we hope to make sense of how journalists report about Darfur. What is their demographic and educational background? How did they enter journalistic careers? How were they selected for their work in Africa? What is their position vis-à-vis the papers they work

for? And finally, how do their life and career trajectories and positions shape “durable dispositions”? In short, what kind of habitus emerges and how does it color their reporting about mass violence?

Trajectories

A few demographic characteristics of the twelve interviewees are illustrative. All but one of the journalists had grown up in the Global North. The one exception is a native South African. Another correspondent is a second-generation immigrant from Sri Lanka. The likely significance of his background is suggested by his comment that “it possibly increases my sympathy [for Darfur rebels], because the Sri Lanka conflict is a conflict that was with rebel actors against the center. It possibly strengthened my sympathy for a group that was seeking to extract concessions from the political center, and a group that had felt itself discriminated against.”

All but two interviewees, and all who had reported from the ground in Darfur or Chad or both, were males. One of the two female journalists reported from the United Nations in New York; the other, a specialist on international relations, from her country’s capital city, a seat to many international organizations. Among the male journalists, only one had written about Darfur from his home base as his paper’s foreign affairs columnist. All others had worked from their posts in Africa. Most interviewees wrote for newspapers in their country of origin. The exceptions were a Belgian working for a German paper, a German employee of an Austrian paper, the South African who wrote for a British paper, and a freelancer with British-Irish roots who reported primarily for British, American, and Irish papers.

The journalists I interviewed were generally of middle-class background. Several had at least one parent who had been a journalist. All had some kind of academic education. Only one had attended journalism school, while others held university degrees in fields as varied as political science, English literature, German studies, economics, history, philosophy, and genetics.

Speaking about their paths to journalistic careers, interviewees revealed some of their dispositions. A British correspondent told me: “My father was a journalist. So, I guess, it was always in my blood even though I tried to do other things. . . . I enjoyed writing. So it was the obvious thing to do.” A senior British journalist and former foreign editor reported a similar background: “Both my parents were journalists. . . .

If I was going to fulfill my ambitions to see the world, then I needed to get someone to pay for that. And, because my own talent was the ability to write well, it just seems that journalism was an obvious outlet for me.” Several interviewees had made journalistic forays before entering into their professional careers. An Austrian journalist of German descent, for example, had written for newspapers during her high school (*Gymnasium*) years. She then studied political science in Berlin and Paris (with a focus on Africa), before she moved to Vienna for personal reasons and entered her professional career there. Similarly, one interviewee who tried to enter journalism right out of high school realized that “[i]t was not quite easy for a nineteen-year old without an academic degree. I understood quickly then that I had to do university studies. I did that [Islamic studies and political science] parallel to my travels to Afghanistan and later to Angola and other crisis regions in Africa. That’s really how I earned my living. And that also predestined me for the Africa post with the [newspaper name]” (author’s translation).

One last example must suffice: “Journalist was always my dream of a profession [*Traumberuf*]. I have to say I got there via detours. I worked for many years as a truck driver to finance my studies. But I never lost sight of my goal to become a journalist” (author’s translation).

In short, all interviewees evidenced a relatively high level of education and a joy of writing, some showed a sense of adventurism and desire to travel, and all demonstrated a profound dedication to the journalism profession. Such a habitus should work toward a relatively high level of journalistic autonomy, a strong desire to stick to journalistic rules and to avoid giving in to heteronomous pressures.

But more questions must be asked. For example, how prepared were our journalists for their assignment to Africa? How were they selected for work on that continent? Answers to such questions further advance our understanding of these Africa correspondents’ habitus. One French journalist moved from the national to the international section. He was young (“twenty-four or twenty-five years old”), but he told me about others who had started working on Africa at even a younger age: “New reporters start with Africa, usually. . . . It is kind of traditional. Maybe because it takes a lot of time in Africa, and young people normally have no kids, no wives, no lifeline.” A British journalist also moved to Africa shortly after beginning his career. One of his first posts was in Nairobi, where he arrived in 2003, the year in which mass violence began to unfold in Darfur and the year before he visited Sudan for the first time to report about Darfur. Other respondents had some previous experience,



FIGURE 18. Journalist Rob Crilly in the field in Darfur.

but no Africa-specific training. “I’ve been a journalist for ten, eleven years,” one said. “I have been working in the UK and did a number of trips during that time to Africa to work. So I decided it was quite an adventure, and it was the sort of journalism I wanted to do. There was no burning ambition to be a human rights journalist or war correspondent or anything like that. It was really for a bit of adventure. And that is what took me to Nairobi as a freelancer.” Similarly, the South African correspondent for British newspapers had previous journalistic experience. Yet, while he benefited from having acquired knowledge of Africa previously, he too had no training to be a foreign correspondent for the African continent. Biographical knowledge, though, gained through life experiences, can be a strong motivator, as the following example of a journalist for a German paper shows. He too did not have formal training regarding Africa when he took over as an Africa correspondent. He

had started as a young man, working on local news for a major city's newspaper. "Then," he told me,

a national paper opened a position for someone for Africa, specifically francophone Africa. That was at a time when the paper was still doing financially quite well. We were able to afford that. And I applied for the position and I was selected. Francophone, because at the time there was no continuous reporting from this part of Africa. I then opened up the office in Abidjan. And yes, I have been traveling on the continent for ten years now. Why Africa for me? That has family reasons. I am Belgian, as you know. My entire family on the paternal side tried their luck in the Congo at some point. . . . Congo was a topic at our dinner table. I also spent much time there because my godfather lived his entire life down there. Yes, that's the source of my affinity for the continent. (author's translation)

Indeed, this journalist's affinity proved to be enduring. When I interviewed him in 2011, he had already dedicated ten years of journalistic work to Africa. He had experienced exceptional challenges, including days of captivity in the hands of child soldiers. His reports continue, at the time of this writing, to be among the most informative and analytic ones in the international press. This interviewee's long-term dedication to Africa, however, is exceptional. Several of the other Africa correspondents expressed a desire to move on after having covered Africa for an extended period. The following example is instructive:

No, I did this for seven years, and it was an extremely intensive time, also with great experiences. I made fantastic journeys there and met great people; my daughter was born there; I got married there, but to a German woman. So I really had the entire spectrum of feelings. I was so exhausted in 2006, however, that I first had to take a half-year off from work. . . . I was at acute risk of death, three times, mostly in Congo and I also had a severe accident in Nairobi etc. So it wears on your psyche and also on your body, so that I was finally totally exhausted. I then wanted nothing to do with Africa any more, initially. . . . See, we lived for five years in Nairobi, and then for two years in Cape Town. We left Nairobi because the security situation was so catastrophic and one felt the psychological impact. When I was in Congo, I was shot at there for hours, together with colleagues, and when we could then escape to the airport and fly out, then we were relieved, having put this behind us again, because that is not my primary task, being a war reporter, but it happens at times; then I sat in the airplane and thought to myself, "When I now return to Nairobi, then I am not certain that my wife is doing well, that my daughter is doing well, and if they may not have been attacked." This permanent state of alarm, it does not serve one well in the long run. (author's translation)

A look at journalists' entry into their careers as Africa correspondents thus sheds further light on their habitus. Many are young, in the



FIGURE 19. Journalist Rob Crilly after interview with SLA commander Ibrahim Abdullah al “Hello” and a rebel in En Siro, North Darfur.

earliest stages of their careers.⁷ Most have biographical knowledge about Africa at best (the quotation at the beginning of this chapter speaks to this theme). Many consider Africa an episode in their career path, not a long-term commitment. We may assume that these features have an effect on journalistic autonomy opposite to that of features found above such as high level of education, developed writing skill, and dedication to journalism. They are likely to create dependencies and to weaken journalistic autonomy.

Position in the Field

In addition to their trajectories, the dispositions of Africa correspondents are also shaped by the journalistic environments in which they work. These reporters operate at great geographic remove from their employers. Meetings between editors and foreign correspondents in the latter’s home countries are rare. Foreign editors to whom they report provide them with relative discretion. Reporting from Africa is nonetheless expensive. Much travel is involved, and staying in capital cities where journalists wait for visas and travel permits requires considerable resources. Most interviewees told me that projects need to be approved by the foreign editor before they can be started. Only one correspondent reported a substantially greater degree of freedom. Referring to himself as “the last Mohican,” he did not need to apply to his foreign editor whenever he wanted to take trips. He decided independently which topics and events to report on. Also, his paper had provided him



FIGURE 20. Journalist Thomas Scheen interviewing rebels in Darfur.

with a five-year contract up front so he could build up the repertoire of knowledge and local ties crucial to good journalistic work. It was this journalist who had spent the longest time reporting from Africa. But, again, this model is more the exception than the rule.

Given the geographic distance from their papers' headquarters, many Africa correspondents depend all the more on contacts with colleagues in the field, especially if they are the only correspondents for their papers on the continent. Such contacts are made easier by the fact that most American and European Africa correspondents are based in only a few places, such as Nairobi and Johannesburg. They are further eased by the pressure to join together for major investigatory journeys, as the following recollection of a British interviewee illustrates: "I suppose in Nairobi there is a sort of quite wide ex-patriot community, which is the European ex-patriot community. And the European journalist community, um, within that group, you would often first be alerted to a story by some discussion within that group. . . . So Darfur, in fact, it was a conversation at a party very early on. It was someone saying I think this is important." Such local information sharing sometimes leads to joint explorations into crisis regions. In the words of another journalist: "When I actually went to go to Darfur, I traveled with . . . journalists from another newspaper or with a photographer who was very experienced. . . . So often

you would share a kind of expertise or you would share information, and you sort of worked together to build up a picture.”

Collaborative ventures can be extensive, as the account of a German correspondent about his work on the Congo demonstrates:

In January of 2000 I again traveled with colleagues—the entire world press was part of it, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time Magazine*, etc.—into Northeast Congo, into the so-called Ituri District. Because a pretty courageous helper for the Christoffel Mission for the Blind had brought a video, on a VHS cassette, on which the massacre was to be seen, burning villages and mass graves etc. This was a very peripheral region that was normally hard to get to. There also were no flights into that place. . . . We then chartered a small plane and traveled there and moved about in the Ituri District for a week. . . . We really all reported prominently about it. I wrote a whole page in the [name of paper]. *Der Spiegel* [German weekly magazine] had several pages on it. The British and American media also reported about it in great detail. (author’s translation)

Collaboration in the context of field trips requires embeddedness in journalistic networks in everyday life. One correspondent described those networks:

Life in Nairobi has a kind of family atmosphere, and there is also no journalistic competition to speak of, and one sits down with colleagues and discusses certain themes and also wants to learn from someone who has just been in a region what things look like out there. So there is a lively exchange of experiences and information. That eventually also leads to some kind of opinion formation. [Collaboration at times also leads to coordination:] Yes, at times one even coordinates when what will be published. To give you just one example, if I travel with a colleague from the [name of weekly magazine] jointly into the Congo and we help each other, then I would destroy his [magazine] article if my article appeared on Thursday in [name of daily]. Then he’ll be kicked out on Friday [the day the weekly magazine is published]. . . . Because we share a lot and help each other, I can then tell my paper, “Publish this next Monday.” (author’s translation)

Such reports fall in line with scholarship that identifies journalists as favoring “horizontal over vertical management, and collegial over hierarchical authority” (Zelizer 1993:221). In addition to many contacts in informal settings, there are also formal institutions in which journalistic exchange unfolds: “There is this foreign correspondent club,” one interviewee explained. “There I was always happy to meet colleagues from Kenya or Zimbabwe, because otherwise the Brits are oriented toward other Brits, Americans to Americans, Germans to Germans. That can get a bit boring in the long run” (translation, JJS).

The foregoing comment thus confirms the notion of relatively dense social and professional networks among Western Africa correspondents, networks to which African journalists are primarily linked through formal institutions such as the aforementioned club.⁸ The statement further confirms and at once relativizes the international quality of the occupational lives of Western journalists in Africa. To encapsulate the local nature of these networks and the simultaneously international composition of their participants, I suggest the term “clustered local cosmopolitan media networks.” The networks are local and international, and thus cosmopolitan, a feature of foreign journalism famously highlighted by Ulf Hannerz (2004:82). At the same time, the term acknowledges national clusters within these networks. All the above comments and depictions at once confirm and give a specific meaning to Bourdieu’s assessment of the global nature of media operations: “The position of the national media field within the global media field would have to be taken into account” (Bourdieu 1998:41).

The two journalistic interviewees who reported from international centers in the West also provide lively accounts of collaboration with colleagues across nations. In the words of the French correspondent who reported from the UN headquarters during the height of the Darfur conflict: “At the UN you have some kind of, I call that the security council for journalists. . . . If you want to know what actually the Russians are thinking, you will find a Russian journalists who is going to tell you.” And a French journalist who covered the African continent from Paris reported: “Because I am based in Paris, I don’t have a lot of journalists calling me, except my friends calling me and saying, ‘Hey, are you doing this place?’ We are going to travel together or share some of the cost.” This interviewee highlights collaboration with *Radio France Internationale*, which employs a substantial number of Africa correspondents.

Media do not just feed on media via journalistic networks. In line with Bourdieu’s observation, “a daily review of the press is an essential tool” (1998:24) for our journalists. Yet the motivation behind reading other media is not primarily the desire to avoid being beaten by them—as Bourdieu suggests—but the need to use them as essential information-gathering tools in a world in which one journalist has to cover an entire continent for his paper. Not all of the other news media are considered equal, though, as potential sources of information. One interviewee used the category of “*Leitmedien*” (literally, “guiding media”) and referred to the BBC and the *NYT* as examples. Indeed, correspondents mentioned these two as sources most frequently. Other media sources

cited by my interviewees include CNN, the *Guardian*, *Radio France Internationale*, and *Le Monde*. Some interviewees referred to broader categories (e.g., news media, radio), to press agencies (e.g., Reuters, DPA), or to local newspapers and journalists.

In short, journalists are discursively aware of each other and they collectively construct images of the world, including images of mass violence. They thus constitute an “interpretive community” where “narratives and storytelling” (Zelizer 1993:221) reign supreme, a community that in this branch of journalism is simultaneously locally and internationally organized and oriented—a cosmopolitan interpretive community.

CONCLUSIONS

Data gleaned from interviews with Africa correspondents who reported on Darfur seem to confirm Bourdieu’s central thesis: journalists are directed by their field’s rules of the game. These rules secure the field’s relative autonomy, but they also constrain its participants. Autonomy of course is not absolute. In capitalist systems, media markets affect what is reported and how, even if the degree varies to which diverse types of media emphasize economic as opposed to cultural types of capital. The media analyzed in this book are relatively close to the autonomous pole of the journalistic field. As a consequence, those criteria dominate that are specific to journalism. And yet, even prestigious newspapers examined here experience economic pressures. And journalists are aware of them and perceive them as constraints. Such constraints increase correspondents’ dependency on some external sources of information (supplementing independent journalistic investigation) and on the community of (mostly Western) journalists within the field. A dispute erupted at the Bellagio conference pitting critics among activists and scholars against journalists. While the former group challenged journalistic reliance on UN and UNAMID sources in a report by Jeffrey Gettleman of the *New York Times* on Darfuris returning from camps into the villages, the latter defended the practice as unavoidable and legitimate. Economic constraints may at times certainly prevent the execution of some investigatory projects and increase reliance on organizations that pursue their own material or legitimatory interests. Again, journalistic autonomy is relative.

The habitus of Africa correspondents, those relatively stable dispositions that color their understanding of the world and their reporting

about situations of mass violence such as that in Darfur, is shaped by their specific position in this semiautonomous field and by the trajectories that brought them to their current positions. Most interviewees showed a high degree of identification with journalistic work, an appreciation of the writing process, a high level of education in diverse fields (albeit a lack of education about Africa), some degree of adventurism, a relative degree of independence from their editors (but mindfulness of resource shortages that may stall promising projects), and a substantial degree of dependency on other sources of information, including IO and INGO reports, as well as other news sources, especially guiding media (“*Leitmedien*”) and networks of colleagues in the field. In fact, most interviewees clearly speak to what I term clustered local cosmopolitan media networks—cosmopolitan despite the weight of national clusters. This mix of features obviously entails elements that enhance and others that weaken journalistic autonomy, the correspondents’ orientation toward journalistic rules of the game.

Given this habitus of our Africa correspondents and the semiautonomy of the segment of the journalistic field in which they work, how do other fields make themselves noticed in journalistic production? What input do they provide that is processed by our Africa correspondents according to the rules of the journalistic game? The following chapter examines interactions between the journalistic field and external forces and shows how these interactions color the patterns and trends of reporting about Darfur.