Lights, Camera, Accolade:
Towards an Understanding of the Nature and Impacts
of the Nobel Peace Prize

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Media and
Communications) (Honours)

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October 2010
Abstract

The Nobel Peace Prize is more than a medal, diploma and monetary sum. This thesis investigates the nature and international impacts of this accolade. It traces the historical evolution of the media resources that underpin the Prize, and offers three ways of conceptualising it: as a meme, as a set of intangible and software assets, and as a tool of soft power. The study argues that these elements are all components of the award, and that they act as communicational tools that operate in various ways to disseminate specific messages to international publics. To substantiate these conceptualisations, selected media texts are analysed using a multi-method approach. The 2007 conferral of the Prize to the former U.S. Vice President Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (represented by Rajendra Pachauri) serves as the case study. The thesis concludes by suggesting that the Prize can have significant impacts on individuals around the world, in encouraging universal peacemaking.
Statement of Original Authorship

I certify that this work is my own. It has not, in part or whole, been submitted previously for assessment in the degree. Any help that has been received in producing it has been acknowledged. The sources of all materials that are not my own have also been acknowledged.

October 11, 2010
Acknowledgements

For his steady guidance, help, insightful feedback and encouragement, I thank my supervisor, Dr. Richard Stanton.

For their suggestions, advice and oversight, I thank Alana Mann, Dr. Steven Maras and Dr. Marc Brennan.

For their patience and support, I thank my wonderful parents.

For their thoughtfulness, humour and comments, I thank my friends, especially Bianca, Sandy and Adam.

For their understanding, cheeriness and optimism, I thank my Honours colleagues, Jess, Keeley and Melinda.

For their initial reflections and suggestions, I thank Dr. Benjamin Goldsmith, Dr. Peter Chen and Assoc. Prof. Michael Hogan from the Department of Government and International Relations.
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Introduction

They are some of the planet’s most glittering events. Every year, two Scandinavian countries host grand ceremonies, banquets, speeches, lectures and concerts. These functions are attended by some of the world’s brightest minds, political leaders, royalty, and entertainment stars. They, and the solemn announcements that precede them, attract the world’s media and secure prime space in news reports everywhere. They are, of course, the events connected with the Nobel Prizes, which recognise distinguished individuals and organisations.

This thesis concentrates on the Nobel Peace Prize, whose international impacts have only recently begun to be explored. The study builds on emerging literature that has found the Prize’s impacts on international peace-building to be minimal, if not adverse (Toole and Henning 2006; Krebs 2009a). Although one scholar suggests that the accolade’s effects are “too great to calculate and too complex and far-reaching to measure precisely” (van den Dungen 2001, p.510), that does not preclude a detailed attempt at determining them. Likewise, if the Prize’s conferral causes harm, then this must be properly assessed.

However, for its impacts to be properly understood, its nature must first be better comprehended, and the thesis focuses on this aspect. It asks the question: how is the conceptual nature of the Nobel Peace Prize operationalised? Hence, it not only proposes three explanations for the Prize’s modern state (its conceptual nature), but also suggests how those aspects function (its operational nature). As the research is inductive, no hypothesis is advanced (Trochim 2006). In this study, an impact is defined, in a variation on Sturm’s (2008) definition, as any change that affects actors, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from other actors’ activities, products or services. The nature of an entity also refers to the elements that
form its identity and contingent properties (Shapiro 2010, pp.11-14). It must be noted that the Prize does not generate any impacts itself; as an object, it has no power of its own, save metaphorical power. Hence, in the discussion, any reference to the Prize performing any action refers to actors who have been affected by the Prize’s conferral.

Using a range of theories – chiefly from the field of media and communications, but also from politics, economics and cultural studies – the thesis presents the Prize through three lenses. It suggests that the accolade can be understood as: (1) a meme, or memeplex, which is operationalised through publications, broadcasts and interpersonal communication; (2) a media enterprise founded on intangible and software assets, which function through media productions and symbolic politics; and (3) a tool of soft power wielded by the Norwegian Nobel Committee (the awarding body). It argues that all of these elements are informal prize components, which the laureates are awarded in addition to the formal Prize. They act as communicational tools through which specific messages are disseminated to international publics.

In determining the Prize’s impacts, only the circumstances of emerging or developing states have currently been considered. This is a fruitful, but limited, approach. This thesis therefore examines worldwide impacts. Its case study is the 2007 recognition of Albert Arnold ‘Al’ Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), represented by its Chairman, Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pachauri. This case has been selected because climate change is an international issue that transcends domestic contexts and affects all populations. It is also the optimum example of the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s attachment of a specific, normative issue to its choice of laureates.
This study is significant because it helps to understand the far-reaching impacts of an international icon. It builds on existing knowledge about a timely issue that has received little analytical attention. The Peace Prize has been selected because it is an acknowledged political prize, whose awarding is a political act (Tønnesson 1999; Sejersted 2001). Of all of the Nobel Prizes, it would therefore have the most extensive, discernible effects. It also embodies the greatest number of media assets. The intended stakeholders of the thesis include readers who are interested in, and familiar with, media and communications scholarship, but also anyone to whom international relations and the Nobel Prizes appeal. Several theories – including celebrity, cosmopolitanism, and positive peace – have had to be excluded from this work, as they exceed its remit.

The literature review will synthesise the existing formal and informal works about the impacts and nature of the accolade. A media history about the Prizes will then demonstrate the importance of their broadcast and publication components. In the next two chapters, the Prize will be re-conceptualised as a meme, or memeplex, and as a set of intangible assets based upon software resources. Through these elements, the subsequent chapter will demonstrate, the Committee is wielding soft power. The conclusion will align these three arguments to present the finding that the Prize is inspirationally impacting individuals, who are taking action independently or collectively in universal peacemaking ventures. The promotion of individual action becomes strongest in years such as 2007, when concepts upon which everyone can act – such as unplugging unused appliances and taking public transport – are communicated.

This thesis differentiates method from methodology, which respectively refer to “techniques for gathering evidence and … the theory and analysis that informs the
process of the research” (Guillemin 2004, p.274). Underpinning the methods used in this thesis is the methodology of textual analysis, which is located within a non-positivist research paradigm (Bertrand and Hughes 2005, p.173), and which involves “mak[ing] an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of [a] text” (McKee 2003, p.1). Because “there is no single or ‘correct’ answer to the question, ‘What does this [text] mean?’” (Hall 1997, p.9), the analyses are dominant interpretations that readers could be expected to make, “justif[ied] … in relation to the actual practices and forms of signification used” (ibid.).

Chapters three, four and five use three different methods to analyse various qualitative (written and visual) units of analysis. Chapter three will apply a framing analysis to the 2007 announcement press release. A social semiotic visual analysis will be employed in chapter four to examine 14 photographs from the Nobel website. In chapter five, the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Concert will be studied using a filmic analysis based on semiotic principles. Each method will be explained before each analysis, and justifications for the selection of the texts will also be presented.
Chapter 1

Literature Review

Most scholarly works about the Nobel Prizes fall into several, specific areas: biographical profiles of Alfred Nobel and the laureates, historical accounts of the Prizes and their inception, ‘behind-the-scenes’ studies of the awarding institutions, and theoretical analyses of laureates’ thoughts and work. Appendix One provides a selection of the literature from these categories in relation to the Peace Prize. It should be noted that many of these writings are celebratory or laudatory.

Scholars have recently begun to investigate the Prize’s impacts and nature. The authors of the latest studies contend that these elements – particularly impacts – have never been “carefully investigated” (Krebs 2009b, par.4). However, this is not entirely correct. Although the existing literature in this area is limited, it does exist: in its own right, as part of other studies, or as anecdotal or informal discussion.

This review aims to overcome the fragmented nature of the current research on this topic by assembling a detailed, synthesised body of information, from scholarly and non-scholarly sources, from within multiple fields. To achieve this unity, the existing literature on the Peace Prize (and other Prizes, where necessary) has been grouped into two areas: scholarly works supplemented by non-scholarly works about the impacts of the Prize, and scholarly and non-scholarly works about its nature.

The Prize’s Impacts

All accolades affect individuals positively and negatively, helping to motivate and inspire, but also to harm. Some Olympic gold medallists have experienced post-competition depression; some lottery winners have become suicidal; and some
Academy Award and Pulitzer Prize-winners’ careers have declined (Rivenburg 1996, p.A5). The Nobel Prizes can also be “both a blessing and a curse” (ibid.). From one standpoint, they guarantee recognition and greater access to seats of power. From another standpoint, as the Literature laureates discovered, some winners become so deluged by calls and requests that their work grinds to a halt; others “become paralyzed by a ‘What do I do for an encore?’ mentality”; and some face resentment and envy from colleagues (ibid.). The individuals who assist the laureates are also “written out of history” by the awarding bodies, which overlook their contributions (Damadian in Weed 2003).

The Nobel Prizes’ effects should come as no surprise; their creator designed them that way. Leonard Hwass and R. W. Strehlenen, two witnesses to Alfred Nobel’s will, gave sworn testimony that his “wish was not to reward work that had been done”, but to give “dreamers” the opportunity “to devote their whole energies to their work” (Hwass and Strehlenen 1914 in Abrams 1984, p.3). In other words, Nobel wanted his funds to give momentum to laureates’ work, to “facilitate, rather than to reward achievement” (Abrams 1984, p.3). Of course, the accolades go beyond impacting the individual laureates, and this is particularly the case with the Peace Prize.

Since it was first awarded, the Prize’s efficacy at encouraging peace has been viewed with either hopefulness or scepticism. Some have suggested that it acts as a “beacon of hope” in bleak situations (Ferrand 1956, p.E10). Others have contended that: “It is like fighting a city fire with a gilt-tipped bottle of rose-water” (Thompson 1914 [1906], p.221). One scholar has even argued: “The story of the Nobel peace prize is … not one of success, but of failure” (Lipsky 1966, p.18).
Yet, as the Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Geir Lundestad, reminds us: “If the purpose of the Nobel Peace Prize had been to establish peace all over the world, it would clearly have failed” (1999, par.10). The Prize itself does not produce peace (Lundestad 2009, par.3). Evidently, intentions must be considered against outcomes, though this does not preclude mismatches between the two, or the emergence of unexpected consequences. Although the testator’s intentions are met every year – with the Committee justifying its choices (even with the most controversial of laureates) – the outcomes of the Prize’s conferral are varied.

A well-documented, positive consequence of receiving the Prize is the laureates’ ability to gain access to elite-level actors, particularly political leaders. Pagnucco’s (1997) study details how the 1980 laureate, Pérez Esquivel, discovered that he was able to meet prominent individuals in the United States, including members of Congress, officials from the State Department and the United Nations Secretary-General (p.136). After the festivities, Esquivel visited high-ranking government officials in various European countries, including Pope John Paul II (ibid.). This finding is corroborated by other laureates. The 1984 awardee, Desmond Tutu, remarked that the “prestigious prize possessed the remarkable powers of an Open Sesame” (2005, p.6). For the 1997 laureate, Jody Williams, the Prize provided her and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines with “access”, as the honouree reflects: “When we travel now, we meet with the foreign minister or the president. Before, we used to meet with second secretary twice removed on my ex-cousin. … Now, people want to meet with us. So, it’s helped a lot” (1999, par.9).

The Prize also helped the International Campaign to Ban Landmines to generate funds. Before its win, the Campaign received an average of $64.75 million per year between 1992 and 1995; in 1998, this amount increased to $189 million and
$309 million in 2002 (Krebs 2009a, p.600). Although the Norwegian Nobel 
Committee “might plausibly claim credit for drawing resources to the Campaign” 
( ibid.), bickering occurred between coordinators over who deserved the Prize, how 
the win was handled, and how the winnings were spent (Murphy 1998, p.F01).

Regarding Pérez Esquivel’s campaign in his homeland of Argentina, the Prize 
also widened the scope for transnational activism. Mobilising structures were 
strengthened and expanded, and many international non-government organisations 
(INGOs) and national government officials became more accessible and supportive 
of the work being undertaken (Pagnucco 1997, p.137). In combination with other 
factors – including press coverage and a critical 1979 Inter-American Commission 
on Human Rights report – Esquivel’s receipt of the Prize “added to the growing 
disintegration of the [country’s] dictatorship” (ibid.) and, more broadly, 
“strengthened the human rights movement in Argentina and Latin America and 
contributed to the process of democratisation” (p.123). However, limitations were 
encountered by the laureate and his group, Paz y Justicia¹. The United Nations did 
not react significantly to a 1976 International Campaign for Human Rights, 
structured a special convocation of the General Assembly in 1978 differently to the 
Campaign’s wishes, and made no progress in establishing an office of High 
Commissioner on Human Rights (p.135).

Another positive consequence of receiving the Prize is that laureates become 
objects of inspiration and, potentially, emulation. Abrams (2001a) argues that it is 
best given to individuals (rather than institutions), as people can instil hope through 
their model lives. This inspiration is manifested at an interpersonal level: “When I … 
tell about the lives of certain laureates … I can see eyes shining and sense that

¹ Peace and Justice Service or SERPAJ.
hearing about those lives might be making a difference” (p.529). Kim Dae-jung – the 2000 laureate and former President of South Korea – is considered by Abrams to be an individual “whose life can inspire the rest of us to do better with our own” (1997, p.17). Likewise, the life and peace work of the trade union leader and 1951 prize-winner, Léon Jouhaux, could “set a young person dreaming of bringing about social justice in the world” (Abrams 2001a, p.529).

This “pantheon of contemporary heroes and heroines” can constitute a stimulating set of role models for younger generations in particular (van den Dungen 2005, p.37). Cobban (2000) adds that the laureates’ life histories acquire a deeper significance because many are social actors who seek to craft a “moral architecture” for peace (p.14). The case for individuals being inspired by the laureates and then realising their dreams is sound (as this thesis’s conclusion suggests). However, the extent of this inspiration is debatable. It must be asked whether today’s cynical audiences perceive the laureates in this idealistic manner, or if they regard them as political actors who win a political accolade.

Naturally, the Prize need not inspire everyone; affecting particular groups or social cross-sections can suffice. In addition to stimulating ‘elite publics’, which include opinion leaders and attentive publics, the Prize can influence members of ‘mass publics’ (Rosatti and Scott 2007, p.353). Monshipouri (2004) argues that the 2003 selection of Shirin Ebadi galvanised various Iranian publics. It became a morale boost and victory, “not only for Iranian women and the democratic and peaceful reform movement in Iran but also for Muslim feminists throughout the world” (p.5). The Prize empowered the honouree to “further expose the inherent contradictions of Iran’s conservative ideology” (p.9) while strengthening Islamic feminism in the state (p.4).
Upon returning from Norway, Ebadi encountered enthusiasm and hopefulness among Iranian women (pp.10-11), and received “gender-blind support” from many individuals (p.11). The conservative establishment was unable to deny “neither the actual impact of th[e] award nor the importance of legitimacy and the worldwide support that it … generated” (p.5). Monshipouri believed that the sense of pride and optimism among Iranians would increase opposition numbers (ibid.), and declared that: “Muslims throughout the world must seize this moment and build on it” (p.7). Specific details about any concrete actions or measures that ensued from this momentum are absent from the author’s account, though it was published shortly after the events in Norway.

Ebadi’s case highlights the importance of identifying the short- and long-term impacts that stem from the selection of the laureates, and whether the effects are propelled by the momentum of the Prize. Figure 2.1 depicts this idea. The illustration is naturally simplified, as there will always be contributing factors that go unrecorded (such as agreements made at closed, high-level meetings). Years after laureates receive the Prize, the challenge is to determine whether (and, if so, how much) it stimulates later events. However, this type of investigation falls beyond the remit of this study.
In addition to inspiring and galvanising individuals, the Prize provides laureates with the opportunity to shape global trends. Alford (2008) argues that the awardees become ‘international norm entrepreneurs’ who shape the course of international law. The author’s analysis is informed by the constructivist theory of international relations, which regards the world as a social construction that is “mutually constituted through shared meanings and intersubjective understandings” (Dannreuther 2007, p.40). In creating norms – “standard[s] of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, p.891) – entrepreneurs “create” or “frame” issues in particular ways “by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them” (p.897).

The laureates, Alford argues, have helped to create dozens of international norms, fostered states’ acceptance of new laws and institutions, and helped to change the international community’s attitude towards appropriate state behaviour (p.63). For example, the majority of laureates between 1901 and 1913 belonged to the organised peace movement, and this period concentrated on “realizing the dream of the abolition of war and the pacific settlement of disputes” (p.76). Laureates such as
Elie Ducommun, Charles Albert Gobat, Bertha von Suttner, Klas Arnoldson, Frederik Bajer and Alfred Fried helped to normalise non-compulsory international arbitration and codify international law (p.77).

However, not all laureates are norm entrepreneurs. For instance, Desmond Tutu, the 1984 laureate, only helped South Africa internalise the norms of opposition to racial discrimination and apartheid that had already been developed by Albert John Lutuli and Martin Luther King Jr. As Alford notes, Tutu’s selection was not “an attempt to convince the world of the evils of apartheid; on that score, South Africa had already judged itself guilty” (pp.116-117). Gordon and Kjelling (2008) are also right to ask: “What about the Norwegian Nobel Committee (NNC)” (par.9). As the body that ‘endorses’ recipients’ causes, the Committee would seem to be an entrepreneur itself (ibid.). It must be noted that it would be impossible to determine what the laureates’ impact on international issue definition would have been had they not won the Prize.

Recently, studies have begun to examine systematically the effect of the Prize’s conferral on developing or emerging countries. In two cases studies, Shafqat (2006) found that Burma’s (Myanmar’s) pro-democracy movement, led by Ang San Suu Kyi, gained little leverage under the state’s military junta, but Iran’s reformist movement may have secured some political capital thanks to Shirin Ebadi’s win (par.1). In the latter instance, the author stresses that this may also have generated a backlash among Iranian conservatives. Overall, the recipients of such prizes must negotiate “many different contending forces” to be able to gain any political capital (ibid.). Unfortunately, this study cannot be assessed fully, as it no longer exists (Shafqat, S. 2010, pers. comm., 22 July).
Toole and Henning’s (2006) comparative analysis of the Prize’s impact on Burma and East Timor asks “how much, if at all, the Prize encourages authoritarian regimes to liberalise when awarded to dissident democratic activists” (p.415). The Prize is defined as an altruistic “instrument of moral suasion” (p.416) and “an appeal or exhortation rather than a set of specific policy instruments” (p.419). The study is underpinned by the assumption that the Prize would encourage liberalisation in three ‘stages’, whereby “the awards increase attention, the attention changes international policies, and the changed international policies then alter regime behaviour” (p.432).

However, the authors do not explain in whose hands the Prize acts as a tool of moral suasion. This, in turn, raises the question of whether its effectiveness in stimulating change increases when wielded by actors other than laureates. Also, it is too straightforward and linear to suggest that international attention will change policies, which will change regimes. Complex processes of negotiation and compromise by many political stakeholders at different levels of governance must occur before any changes can be enacted. Jody Williams provides an example of such individual decision-making:

[The Japanese] Foreign Minister Obuchi said very clearly that, because of the peace prize, he was going to re-think the contradictions in Japanese policy [on landmines], contradictions being that they give a lot for aid for mine victims in clearance. At the same time, they weren’t going to sign the treaty [the Mine Ban Treaty\(^2\)]. And, he ended up signing. And, they’ve already ratified. So, it’s had a huge impact (1999, par.8).

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\(^2\) This is formally known as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.
To measure international exposure (the first stage), the authors search the online archives of five newspapers “of global or regional importance to Burma and East Timor” and tally hits for various searches (p.423). They find that the Prize does generate international attention (p.431). It helped to reinforce growing concern about Burma, and triggered unease about military rule in East Timor (p.426). Yet the selection of newspaper articles is incongruent with the authors’ initial association of “international media coverage” with “[t]wenty-four-hour international satellite news channels such as CNN International, BBC World, and Sky News” (p.422). Indeed, McDermott (2010) finds that President Barack Obama’s 2009 Prize speech was “a subject of comment throughout the day and into the [American] prime-time big money shows” (p.29).

Regarding changes in policies (the second stage), international sanctions and economic aid cuts are examined, with many found to have been implemented before the accolade was awarded. This leads to the conclusion that the Prize announcements had little impact in this regard. The overall ineffectiveness of this second stage precludes the realisation of stage three; in other words, the Prizes “could not have altered regime behaviour because they failed to clearly alter international policies” (ibid.). Naturally, this is not the only way to determine international reactions; the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s Permanent Secretary argues that the recognition produced other results:

The United Nations, till then unable to adopt a resolution condemning Burma’s military regime, proceeded to do just that. Several countries, the United States, major EU countries, even Japan, began placing greater emphasis on human rights in their policies towards Burma (Lundestad 1999, par.12).
The study’s conclusions might suggest that the Prize was largely ineffectual. Yet East Timor did become a democratic republic, and some (Lundestad 1999; Abrams 2001a; Niemczura de Carvalho 2010) have pointed to the Prize as a key assisting factor. As the regime “changed dramatically after Belo and Ramos-Horta received the Prize” (Toole and Henning, p.422), other explanations are offered for the outcome, including a transition to democratic rule in 1998, which increased the legitimacy of the fledgling nation’s demands before Indonesia (p.433). Indeed, the authors concede that the study’s leading assumption is only one of several possible options (p.432), and that some analytical tools need to be developed through further research.

Following in this vein, Krebs (2009a) analyses the consequences of the Prize’s conferral on democratisation in Tibet (after the 14th Dalai Lama’s win in 1989), Burma and Iran. The empirical study is ‘realist institutionalist’ in orientation (p.594), indicating that it “marr[ies] the belief that institutions matter with a skepticism as to their effects” (Krebs 1999, p.344). Naturally, this position limits the enquiry’s potential explanations; interpretivist scholars would argue that there is no measurable, objective world “out there”, and no “structures that are independent of social action” (Marsh and Furlong 2002, p.31). The study argues that the Prize’s awarding often produces negative results, hindering non-violent liberalisation and causing dissidents to be punished (2009, p.594). The research is notable for differentiating outcomes and intentions, as its author explains: “The Nobel Committee’s intentions are often noble, but the noblest of intentions can result in tragic consequences” (p.622). Whilst effects are well addressed, the suggestion that the Prize “might be seen as a kind of international institution” (p.594) is a simplistic definition.
Krebs finds that authoritarian regimes treat the Prize gravely. Concerned that their authority could be undermined, the leaders become anxious and brutal, because “regimes desperate to hold on to power are more sensitive to threats to their rule than to the good opinion of the international community” (p.601). In the Dalai Lama’s case, a sense of galvanisation among Tibetans compelled the Chinese Government to undertake vicious crackdowns, particularly in 1989 (p.612), and to “tighten the screws” on Tibetan nationalism (p.613). After Aung San Suu Kyi’s win, the Burmese regime became fearful of international encirclement, struck at the pro-democracy movement (p.615), and potentially compelled the laureate to adhere to an uncompromising position (p.617). Shirin Ebadi and her followers – some of whom appeared to silence themselves (p.620) – had to “weather a relentless conservative assault” (p.618) and witness the weakening of the reform movement (p.619). The Prize was perceived by some Iranian hard-liners as an electoral interference, and may have contributed to, or even sparked, a 2004 crackdown, although the regime may have pursued this path regardless (ibid.).

Krebs acknowledges that not every effect is negative. For the Dalai Lama, the Prize “opened the White House’s door … in April 1991 and led the U.S. Congress to recognize Tibet as an occupied country” (p.599). It also ignited popular interest in the Tibetan cause and rekindled a global movement through “familiar faces, like Robert Thurman, along with fresh converts drawn from the ranks of celebrities, musicians and students” (Roberts and Roberts 2009, p.191). Krebs notes that the Prize aided Andrei Sakharov, the 1975 awardee, but only until his exile to Gorky in 1980 (p.609). However, he does not mention that, after his return to Moscow in 1986, Sakharov became a key figure in Gorbachev’s reformist USSR and led major organisations (Center for History of Physics 1998). During a crackdown on Soviet
dissidents, the Prize also helped to protect the honouree (Krebs, p.609), a situation shared by Pérez Esquivel (Pagnucco 1997, p.136) and the winners of other peace prizes. For instance, Lida Yusupova, the 2004 laureate of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, stated that her prize was “a guaranty of security for my activities and my life” (in Thoolen 2004, par.10). It might be suggested that the Prize helps to keep laureates such as Aung San Suu Kyi alive, even if it means a decrease in their quality of life.

In other instances, the Prize seems to have had no or negligible effects. For Guatemala’s 1992 awardee, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, the Prize neither increased violence nor positively affected negotiations, proving, “from the perspective of the peace process, irrelevant” (Krebs, p.609). Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk’s 1993 selection “worked with state power, rather than against it”, as change in South Africa was already underway (ibid.). However, by recognising the men’s virtuous actions, the Norwegian Nobel Committee may have sent a didactic message to other countries’ citizens and to future generations. Even the Committee does not claim that the Prize alone helped to abolish apartheid; its Permanent Secretary states: “The prize was part of the wider international support that built up and sustained pressure on the white minority government” (Lundestad 2008 in Gunawardene 2008, par.22). Krebs acknowledges that certain states’ repression of laureates and supporters may be part of the “winding, long-run, and always uncertain path to liberalism” (p.610). Equally, the Prize is not the primary reason why states repress activism (p.609).

Although the author notes that the Prize “is always accompanied by a media frenzy” (p.621), he finds that it does not “substantially boost[] international media coverage of the recipient and his or her cause” (p.621). This somewhat contradictory
perception is reached through a digital content analysis of articles in “major world newspapers” in the LexisNexis database (p.605), searching for mentions of laureates in connection with their causes. In a multimedia and digital age, this choice of publication to investigate coverage is extremely narrow, given that newspapers target certain readerships and can dedicate only a limited amount of space to the Nobel Prizes every year. Nonetheless, Krebs finds that media attention did increase for some laureates, such as the IPCC and Gore, though not specifically thanks to the Prize (p.608). For others, such as Belo and Ramos-Horta, the coverage remained constant. However, the latter example contradicts Toole and Henning’s (2006) finding, and signifies the inconclusiveness of this method. Cobban (2000) also notes that the Prize’s “spotlight of recognition” shines on those who “might otherwise have gone underacknowledged” (p.12). Hence, not all media coverage has to be titanic; for some causes, even an ‘injection’ of global attention is sufficient and desirable.

It may be surprising to learn that the Norwegian Nobel Committee is aware of the Prize’s different impacts – including its potentially ‘perverse’ effects – and has been since World War One (Andersen 2006). One of its chairmen, Francis Sejersted, acknowledged that “in some cases the prize has in fact provoked conflict in the short term” (2001, par.17). Yet, at the same time: “The committee also takes the possible positive effects of its choices into account” (par.6). Lundestad (2005a) explains that “we must never, ever be afraid to stand on principle. This is crucial and then we will just have to take the consequences, whatever they are”. Following this review, a more comprehensive picture of the different types of impacts can now be painted (Table 2.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Impact</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Generating media exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Contributing to the elimination of injustices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Galvanising individual laureates and supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Provoking in-fighting among laureates and co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Prompting condemnation by regimes and governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>Rousing international activists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Encouraging monetary donations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>Fostering international awareness of particular issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended</td>
<td>Inspiring laureates to do more and better work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintended</td>
<td>Prompting crackdowns on laureates and movements</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 2.1 Categories of impacts and examples of each

Naturally, these categories overlap. For example, monetary donations to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines could be classed as international, short- and long-term. There are also effects, as Figure 2.1 demonstrated, that can be motivated totally or partially by the Prize’s conferral, or not at all. The classification of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ has been excluded from this table, as it can be a subjective conception.

The Prize’s Nature

Today, a plethora of prizes exists around the world. They form an unprecedented “economy of prestige” that has major ramifications for geo-cultural relationships (English 2005). They have become globalised, cosmopolitan and entertainment-based (ibid.). The Nobel Prizes are no different. Although news reports annually define the Peace Prize as “a gold medal, a diploma, and 10 million kronor” (ABC News 2008, par.15), analysts acknowledge that it is “a lot more than a medal” (Carmichael 2007, p.16). The Committee labels it a ‘megaphone’ that allows
previously unnoticed utterances to receive media coverage (Lundestad 2005b, p.20). In describing the accolade as a “loud speaker” that amplifies laureates’ voices and causes, it argues that the Prize helps awardees to have their message cut through enormous amounts of information (Lundestad 2008 in Gunawardene 2008, pars.5-6). Indeed, Desmond Tutu found that it turned him into an “oracle”, as he explains: “Things you said before you got the Nobel Peace Prize, and not too many people paid attention – you say the same things, and people think it’s pearls from Heaven!” (2000, p.47). Coleman (2010) believes that the Prize allows Shirin Ebadi to “amplify her message in a way that never would have without” (par.66).

It is worth subjecting the ‘microphone’ notion to greater scrutiny. The chairperson of the Committee always communicates first by announcing the Prize; the laureates follow afterwards. In both of these instances, it is international media – external, uncontrolled agents – that primarily provide the “loud speaker”. Nobelprize.org – the official website, a controlling agent – publishes details after the announcement, but (for now, at least) the international media’s coverage probably remains the primary source of information for most people. This process can also be explained in terms of ‘signal’ and ‘noise’ (Eco 1979, p.142). The announcement, the laureate’s first interview and the Nobel Lecture rise above other, distracting information. Yet, because the first signal (the announcement) is stronger than the second (the interview) and third (the lecture), it might be argued that it is a ‘super signal’. Although some scholars (Köck 1973; Chen et. al. 2010) would view all of the signals as a composite ‘super signal’, the first is the most attention-grabbing and important. Figures 2.2 to 2.4 illustrate this idea.
One of the communicational keys to these signals is speech. Abrams (2001a) argues that the Prize is “a way to speak to the conscience of the world” (p.538), while Salazar (2009) defines it as “a rhetorical event” that lasts from the announcement to the laureate’s lecture (p.374). As an “incident that produces and reproduces the identities of subjects and constructs and reconstructs linkages between them” (Bisecker 1999, p.243), this ‘rhetorical event’ features a ceremony
characterised by epideictic rhetoric that celebrates “an individual’s achievement in terms of a set of testatory prescriptions and a redemptive if indirect laudation of the purported nobility of another individual, industrialist Alfred Nobel” (Salazar, p.377). He also suggests that the Prize, through international media, “inaugurate[s] global publicness” (p.382), which is manufactured by providing “exemplars” of peace work that provide hope for humankind (p.381). Although the author suggests that the Prizes attract growing media interest in an age characterised by publicity (p.380), and transform a laureate’s name into “a global ‘brand’” (p.374), these statements are not explored further.

Narratives are an important means through which laureates can communicate persuasively. Kirkscey’s (2007) investigation of the narrative and rhetorical strategies in Wangari Maathai’s 2004 Nobel Lecture proposes that narrative can be “a valuable instrument for sustaining any social movement” (p.13). The honouree’s employment of certain rhetorical strategies – including brevity, consistency and addressing multiple audiences – reinforced her persuasive arguments (p.14). The use of the African ‘dilemma tale’, which teaches values and ethics through an open-ended discussion without a pre-determined solution, permitted the audience to imaginatively engage with a situation (p.15). These universally recognised strategies aided Maathai in calling on audiences worldwide to support her movement. It must be asked to what extent narratives figure in other laureates’ addresses, which audiences have consumed them, and whether they have subsequently inspired or motivated any audience members.

By similarly examining laureates’ lectures, Kinnier et. al. (2007) arrived at an understanding of “humanity’s most cherished values” (p.581). This quantitative, ethnographic content analysis of 50 randomly selected speeches determined that the
most frequently extolled values were: peace (100%), hope (92%), security (86%), justice (85%), responsibility (81%), liberty (80%), tolerance (79%), altruism (75%), God (49%) and truth (38%) (ibid.). The communication of these values by admired world leaders is important because the speeches have widespread appeal. Despite potential cultural bias in the study’s random selection, and some awardees’ controversial natures (p.582), the research underscores the significance of the universal values disseminated through the speeches (p.586).

For Greco (2007), Al Gore and the IPCC’s win rewarded “public science communication” (p.i). As the Prize followed Gore’s Academy Award for the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, it signalled the recognition of public communication’s vital role in addressing climate change (ibid.). The educational nature of this communication, which impacts shareholders (decision-makers) and stakeholders (individuals involved in the processes), has been influential in constructing global public opinion on the issue. The subsequent popularisation has resulted in awareness “spilling from the experts’ field” (ibid.).

The resonance of the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s messages derives from numerous factors, central to which is the amount of ‘capital’ that it, and the Prize, has accrued over time. The notion of capital was expanded beyond its material, economic nature by Pierre Bourdieu (2004 [1986]), who argued that it also takes the “immaterial form” (p.46) of cultural, social and symbolic capital. The Prize embodies a complex interplay of these and other capitals, including political, intellectual and human capital. Currently, Lovell (2006) has undertaken the most comprehensive investigation of the cultural capital of the Nobel Prize in Literature, arguing that it confers economic and cultural capital on laureates (p.71), nations (p.9), and has been steadily amassed by the awarding body (p.60).
A detailed exploration of the Peace Prize’s capitals lies beyond the scope of this thesis, though some elements can be briefly outlined here. Symbolic capital, which refers to the “[r]esources available to a social actor on the basis of prestige or recognition” (Calhoun 2002, par.1), helps to define actors’ positions, by “being taken for granted as authority figures and perceived as natural claimants to status or recognition” (Hancock and Garner 2009, p.180). This authority has developed, over time, through multiple factors: the immensity of Alfred Nobel’s bequest, the Nobel committees’ secrecy, their members’ high-ranking statuses, and the prestige of the official events. In the last case, these are partly dictated by tradition (by being annual commemorations of Nobel’s death), and partly by invention (by being more august than they might otherwise have been, or perhaps need to be). Such invention is evident in the events’ presentation, with reports annually highlighting the elaborateness of the preparations: 37,000 flowers imported from San Remo to decorate the main venues; a menu for 1,300 guests that is kept secret until the banquet; a “shopping list” of ingredients including 2,692 pigeon breasts, 475 lobster tails and 45 kilograms of lightly smoked salmon; and more than 7,000 porcelain pieces, 5,000 glasses and 10,000 silverware pieces destined for 470 metres of linen on 65 tables (TT and West 2009, pars.3-12).

These aspects of the Nobel Week in Stockholm help to augment the Peace Prize’s capital, as all of the Prizes belong to the Nobel ‘family’. However, Oslo has developed its own, distinct style, as Lemmel explains: “The Nobel Banquet in Norway is a dignified formal occasion, but much less pretentious than the Banquet in Stockholm” (2007 [2000], par.45). Although members of Norway’s royal family are present at the events, it is the chairperson of the Norwegian Nobel Committee who presents the diploma and medal to the laureate(s); in Stockholm, by contrast, the
King of Sweden executes this role. These elements of symbolic capital are influential, with the laureate Jodi Williams stating, “we’re convinced that it was the prestige and the impact of the Nobel Peace Prize that made many governments rethink their position [on the Mine Ban Treaty]” (1999, par.7). Al Gore (2007a) similarly found that:

In the weeks that have passed since the decision on the award was made, I have seen everywhere in the world the enormous respect the Nobel Peace Prize met with both politicians and industry leaders. Whether they basically agree with me in my views on climate change, they say that they should look at the case again (par.4).

Symbolic capital also functions reciprocally. The laureates’ status grows by receiving the Prize, and so does the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s. This situation was evident in 2009, with the Committee “invest[ing] the Prize’s authority in President Obama, speculating that over time his historical profile would make that authority grow” (Cleveland 2009, par.8). Symbolic capital ‘rewarding’ symbolic capital was also apparent in 1988, when the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces’ “symbolic capital was so high that peace operations were collectively awarded the … Prize” (Rubinstein 2008, p.142).

Interlinked with this is political capital, which refers to “a person’s reputation and relationships at work” (Badaracco 2002, p.72), or the connections that individuals “mobilize to seek support, solve problems, and accomplish goals” (Cowan 2006, p.249). Because the Committee – taken (in totality) as the formal prize-giving body – remains detached from international politics, it can strategically mobilise its acquired capital on specific occasions to heighten the resonance of its messages. For instance, in 2009, when Aung San Suu Kyi was transferred from
house detention to Burma’s Insein prison, the Committee issued a rare statement of protest, “urg[ing] that she and other political prisoners be immediately and unconditionally released” and “demand[ing] that she be given the necessary medical assistance without delay” (Jagland 2009, p.1).

Like symbolic capital, political capital also returns dividends, growing if it is invested well (Lichtman 2010, par.9). The Nobel Foundation acknowledges that: “The Nobel Laureates, their contributions to mankind, and the meaning the prize has had in their lives constitute the basis for the Foundation’s enormous goodwill-capital” (Ramel 1999, par.3). The recipients have also attempted to enhance this “goodwill-capital”; for example, the 1958 laureate, Georges Pire, declared:

I would like to use the moral credit of the Nobel Peace Prize in such a way that, at my death, this credit will return to you, not only whole and intact, but enlarged, increased by the way in which I will have used it, so that your successors may later offer, through the … Prize, an even greater moral credit because your 1958 candidate will have borne it well (1958, par.12).

Other factors have also contributed to the pre-eminence of the accolade and its awardeer. Van den Dungen (2001) provides a number of reasons: the Prize’s emulation by imitators, its immense monetary value and regular awarding; its recognition of different peace categories and international nominees, a steady growth in nominations, and the laureates’ often high-profile statuses; its membership in the Nobel ‘family’, which maintains a strong brand, and the dignity of the official events; the Committee’s autonomy, its (generally) respectable record, and the objectivity of the selection process, which is aided by the Norwegian Nobel Institute; and the unrivalled media attention (and controversy) that it attracts, as well as
international publics’ fascination with fame and desire for peace. These factors have made it “the only award that the world believes it has a stake in and claims as its own” (p.521).

This list can be expanded further. The Prize’s high desirability has increased its symbolic rectitude. For Armand Hammer, who expended vast sums of money to obtain it, the accolade was “an honor so brilliant it would obscure all his past offenses: his money laundering for Soviet intelligence, his bribing of government officials, and his personal use of corporate funds” (Epstein 1996 in Abrams 2001a, p.540). The secrecy surrounding the Committee and each year’s announcements drive international publics’ curiosity, as do lasting puzzles, like why Alfred Nobel did not entrust Sweden with the Prize. As Figure 2.5 illustrates, Norway’s irenic nature and engagement with peace work also make the country a model setting for the accolade (visitnorway.com 2010). Oslo furthers this image by being one of the world’s ‘cities of peace’ (van den Dungen 2009).

![Norway and Nobel: entities with strong links to peace and to each other (visitnorway.com 2010)](image)

For many, Norway is also perceived as an ‘exotic’, faraway part of the world, and this might heighten interest in the Prize, as may the fact that the Committee is
composed of politicians and not academics, like the other Nobel committees. Andersen (2006) also argues that, thanks to the Committee’s independence, its international legitimacy as a non-government organisation has increased over time.

The high-culture traditions of Nobel Week (such as the ceremonies and banquets) are also alluring and augment the events’ elite nature, as does the ‘exclusion zone’ drawn around the festivities. For instance, at the Peace Prize Ceremony: “The rows of seats behind the Royal Family are occupied by representatives of the Government, the Storting, the Corps Diplomatique and other specially invited guests” (Njølstad n.d.a, par.1).

Finally, the Prize has been defined and used as a ‘teaching tool’. It should be clarified that the laureates’ life-stories are the actual ‘tools’, which can “offer significant gateways” for teaching peace, particularly in history courses (Abrams 1994, p.83). Students could be inspired by the same things as their teachers (van den Dungen 2005, p.39), particularly after the announcement or ceremony, which is “always a teachable moment” (Shapiro 2007, par.1). Clark (2010) widens the use of this ‘tool’ beyond the classroom, arguing that the Nobel recipients’ behaviour should be adopted everywhere, as it can “shake us out of our collective mental ruts” to lead better lives (par.3). These ideas, though valuable, point to the prize-winners’ stories being used in the hands of external agents; they do not show how the Prize itself is configured to present these “teachable moments”.

Conclusion

This review has synthesised the existing literature – formal and informal – about the Prize’s impacts and nature. With regard to the former, it has demonstrated
that domestic impacts are better understood than international ones. Also, it has shown that the accolade’s effects have always been viewed sceptically. Through this appraisal, a typology of different impacts has been (inductively) developed. With regard to the accolade’s nature, the review has determined that its use by external agents is currently better understood than its modern elements, which have never been comprehensively analysed. These limitations consequently restrict the understanding of its impacts.
Chapter 2

Communicating the Prizes: A Media History

Every year, in October and December, the Prize announcements and conferrals attract worldwide attention. For this reason, Levinovitz and Ringertz (2001) argue that: “The history of the Literature Prize [and the other Prizes] is also the history of its reception in the press and other media” (p.186). However, this is only one dimension of the communication process. The various awarding bodies, along with the Nobel Foundation, have steadily been developing their own strategic communication assets. Hence, the history of the Prizes is as much about their communication to and through mainstream media as their increasing, direct communication to international publics through their own media. As this historical account will demonstrate, the Nobel organisations’ media assets expanded substantially late last century.

This is not a historical overview of the Nobel Prizes, the Nobel Foundation or the Norwegian Nobel Committee. For detailed studies of these entities, please consult the works listed in Appendix One. This is a history of the Prizes in relation to media, focusing particularly on how the Peace Prize has been communicated over time.

Small Steps

When the Prizes were to be first awarded in 1901, newspapers published details from the relevant Scandinavian institutions. England’s The Times carried several column inches in March, notifying readers that: “The Board of Education
have now received through the Foreign Office a copy of the provisional special regulations for the award of the Nobel Prize” (Times 1901, p.11).

In December, American newspapers relayed short reports by cable dispatches from their correspondents (Chicago Daily Tribune 1901a, p.5), who wrote, for example: “Peace Prize Applied to the Benefit of Two Men, One of Whom is Poor” (Chicago Daily Tribune 1901b, p.5). Longer profiles appeared after these initial summaries, with a description of the laureate Frédéric Passy being re-quoted from the French Temps in a “special cablegram” (New York Times 1901, p.1). Of course, local newspapers, such as the Aftenposten and Morgenbladet, also reported the events.

While the international press annually covered the goings-on in Sweden, Norway and the laureates’ home countries, the Nobel institutions were preparing their own publications. Since 1901, the annual, multilingual Les Prix Nobel book series has presented reports from the award ceremonies, honourees’ biographies and Nobel Lectures (Nobel Foundation 2010a, par.1). Although the books could never compete with newspapers’ ubiquity, they still appeared in libraries around the world. Their accessibility increased significantly in 1988, when they began to be published mostly in English (ibid.) and could thus be accessed by larger audiences. Additionally, in the 1960s and 1970s, Elsevier – on behalf of the Foundation – produced a collection about each prize (van den Dungen 2005, p.32). The Words of Peace (developed by the International Management Group in cooperation with the Foundation) and The Nobel Prize Annual also form part of the assortment, with the latter being a ‘popular’ version of the official series, featuring “lavishly illustrated stories … reports and color photographs of the award ceremonies” (p.38).
Media coverage began to grow from 1906, when President Theodore Roosevelt was honoured. The controversial selection “in some ways constitute[d] a breakthrough in international media interest in the … Prize” (Levinovitz and Ringertz, p.168). This interest increased again with the advent of broadcasting. Gustav Stresemann’s 1927 lecture was transmitted to audiences in Norway, Sweden and Denmark (Nobel Foundation 2010b, par.35). Four years later, Nicholas Murray Butler – unable to attend the ceremony – gave a radio address that was broadcast over New York’s WEAF radio station and a National Broadcasting Company (NBC) chain (New York Times 1931, p.1). When Carlos Saavedra Lamas was selected in 1936, the news “took precedence over reports on the Spanish Civil War and the impending visit of President … Roosevelt” in Argentina (Nobel Foundation 1936, par.1). Lamas was also unable to receive the Prize in person and, instead, the NBC invited him to deliver a special radio address to American audiences from Buenos Aires (ibid.).

In the first decades, prize-winners’ names remained secret until the day of the presentation ceremony in December (Henschen 1976, par.3). This may have changed in 1935 because of a newspaper leak the previous year, when the Norwegian broadsheet Dagbladet reported – three days before the announcement – that Arthur Henderson had won (New York Times 1934, p.24). Thereafter, laureates’ names were revealed earlier: in October and November from the late 1930s to 1962, and in October from 1963 onwards (except for September in 1950 and 1972) (Manly 1950, p.1). Apart from assuring the secrecy of the prize-winners’ identities3, this gave the Committee a greater ‘lead time’ to develop media content.

3 This secrecy has not always been perfectly preserved. Confidentiality was breached in 2004 when that year’s laureate, Wangari Maathai, informed Reuters 23 minutes before the prize announcement that she had won (Doyle and Acher 2008).
For nearly seven decades, the announcements were also brief, guarded and verbal. Newspapers annually reported that the Committee ‘announced’ the laureate (or lack thereof); for example, the director of the Nobel Foundation, August Schou, was quoted as saying: “There will be no further information nor comments from the committee” (Chicago Tribune 1966, p.E1). Equally, the press lamented that the Committee “as usual gave no reasons for its choice, nor did it reveal how many candidates had been suggested” (New York Times 1963, pp.1-26).

However, this approach changed somewhat in 1967, when the number of candidates began to be disclosed (Wiskari 1967, p.32). A year later, the Committee justified its selection of René Cassin “in a statement” (New York Times 1968, p.1) and, three years later, ‘citations’ for prize-winners became a key part of the announcement process (Chicago Tribune 1971, p.5). The Committee also increasingly replied to media questions from 1971, with newspapers quoting Aase Lionæs – its Chairwoman since 1968 – in particular (ibid.). These moves helped to legitimise the choice of laureates and potentially increased the Committee’s transparency.

Apart from transformations in announcement times and procedures, the development of film expanded the Prize’s reach. Short, silent, black and white footage of several honourees, filmed by the Pathé Brothers in 1912, may be the first, filmic record of the Nobel activities (Pathé Frères 1912). A full recording, with sound, of the Peace Prize Ceremony was made in 1934 (Veckorevy 1934). Although these films probably served primarily as visual records, they also reached wider audiences. For instance, in 1930, American audiences watched an interview with the literature laureate Sinclair Lewis in a Newsreel Theatre (New York Times 1930, p.16).
Large Strides

The small screen began to play a significant role in the 1950s. Television broadcasting in Sweden began in 1956 (SVT 2005, p.5) and Swedish Television first covered the Nobel festivities in 1959 (SVT 2009a, par.1). Norway began broadcasting in 1960 (NRK 2007, par.7) and the first Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) transmission of the Peace Prize Ceremony was in 1978 (Dambråten 2010 pers. comm., 22 June). Sweden expanded the Nobel television palette in 1961 with the launch of Nobel Minds (SVT 2009b, par.2), a relaxed, roundtable discussion between laureates (SVT 2009a, par.4). Although the Nobel Foundation hesitated at first, it acquiesced and the show became a Nobel Week tradition (SVT 2009b, par.2).

Global telecasts of the ceremonies began in 1964. The American producer Walter Schwimmer obtained television rights for them from the Director of the Nobel Foundation, Nilhs Stahle (Adams 1964, p.71). Although “the Nobel ceremony [had] been filmed before and shown in Britain”, it needed “showmanship to make it more acceptable to millions of viewers in America” (Wolters 1964, p.SB6). The hour-long telecast to the U.S. and two dozen other countries was described as “a daring and unique television venture”; Schwimmer was so confident it would be a hit that he made arrangements to do the show every year (ibid.).

In the 1990s, international television networks began to transmit Nobel Minds and other programs. CNN broadcast Nobel Minds in 1994, with its news anchor, Jonathan Mann, chairing the discussion (New York Times 1994, p.TV9). A year later, he began to record The Prize for Peace, an hour-long interview with that year’s peace laureate(s) (Philippine Daily Inquirer 2000, p.F2), which still occurs every
December (CNN 2010, par.3). Three years later, the BBC became the key collaborator on the programs and BBC World broadcast the prize ceremonies, a profile of that year’s peace laureate and *Nobel Minds* (Brown 1999, p.4). The broadcaster continues its transmissions and *Nobel Minds* now reaches 98 territories and 276 million households worldwide (Nobel Media 2006, par.7).

Music was also embraced in the 1990s. The Nobel Prize Concert, which was established in 1991 and features classical music “of the highest international standard”, is arranged annually by Nobel Media in cooperation with the Stockholm Concert Hall (Nobel Media 2010, par.1). A TV recording is broadcast live in Sweden and distributed internationally, while a radio transmission reaches around 20 countries (par.4). In Oslo, the Norwegian Nobel Committee organises the annual Nobel Peace Prize Concert. First held in 1994, the show is staged in the Oslo Spektrum arena, in front of a crowd of thousands, and is broadcast in 100 countries with an estimated audience of more than 400 million (Jordan and Sullivan 2007, p.C01). Hosted by international celebrities (usually film stars), it features popular musicians.

In the digital age, the Internet has offered the Nobel institutions new options for content creation and information dissemination. In 1994, Dr. Hans Mehlin and the then Secretary of the Nobel Committee for Physiology or Medicine, Professor Nils Ringertz, published the first press release online (Nobel Web 2010a, par.1). The following year, the awarding bodies and the Nobel Foundation created the Nobel website (Nobel Foundation 2001, par.7), which was initially named the Electronic Nobel Museum (Nobel Web 2010a, par.2), before becoming Nobel e-Museum, and finally Nobelpize.org in 2004 (par.5). By 1996, all press releases began to appear online (par.2). The website’s content also expanded, with live webcasts of the
ceremonies in 1998, and laureates’ lectures a year later (par.3). In 2000, the number of visitors had reached 2.5 million: a leap from the 12,000 recorded in 1994 (ibid.).

Realising that much of the website’s information was quite technical, the Foundation developed educational programs for younger users. With financial support from the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation, it enlisted the aid of educators, writers, illustrators and interactive technology experts, who collaborated on teaching resources that were launched in 2001 (par.4). Five years later, the first e-newsletter was dispatched (Nobel Web 2010b). As the rich collection of free multimedia content continues to grow, so too does the number of visitors, with over 37 million recorded in 2008 (Nobel Web 2010a, par.6). The Foundation has not shied away from social networking, either; the first Twitter ‘tweet’ was created in 2008 (Nobelprize.org 2008) and the first Facebook message was posted in 2009 (Nobelprize.org 2009).

Online videos have also become critical communication tools. In 2008, Nobelprize.org launched a new media player, which increased the accessibility of its vast video and audio archive (Waymaker 2008). That accessibility was amplified a year later when the Nobel Foundation and Google Inc. collaborated to deliver prize announcements and laureates’ lectures on YouTube (Sonne 2009, p.A14). The official Nobel-branded YouTube channel also became the first to stream events live from Europe (PR Newswire 2009, par.1).

These moves formed part of a wider initiative to build the Nobel brand and manage the Foundation’s intellectual property assets. As Sonne (2009) notes, the Foundation “was for years shrouded in secrecy because its legal structure prevented it from funding modern media projects or partnering with private corporations” (p.A14). To overcome this impediment, the non-profit Nobel Foundation Rights
Association was established to manage the institution’s rights. The Association now oversees four units: Nobel Web AB (established in 2004), Nobel Media AB (also created in 2004), Nobel Museum AB (inaugurated in 2001), and the Nobel Peace Center Foundation (opened in 2005) (Nobel Foundation 2009a). These entities are all externally funded through educational organisations, government subsidies, corporate sponsorship and philanthropic donations (par.16). The structure represents a shift to ‘horizontal specialisation’ in media industries, with independent contractors clustered together by an integrator, instead of a vertical consolidation of in-house talent (Noam 2009, p.442).

However, some attempts at controlling rights have proven controversial, particularly the tight restrictions placed upon Barack Obama’s 2009 Peace Prize Lecture. The speech was recorded exclusively by the NRK and distributed by Nobel Media, which disallowed independent media to record the first five minutes of the ceremony as they usually did (MacDougall 2009). Media outlets that wanted to play an excerpt were limited to three minutes, which had to run consecutively and uninterrupted, and all footage was emblazoned with the Nobel Media logo (ibid.). The company’s bid to retain exclusivity also led it to bar websites from streaming the ceremony live; this limited the online coverage to nobelprize.org (ibid.). However, its CEO defended the actions as an attempt at determining whether more traffic would be driven to the Foundation’s website, explaining that it did not do this for profit, but “in order to know where the material is spread” (Hyltén-Cavallius in MacDougall 2009, par.8).
Conclusion

Such developments highlight the growing importance and use of media by the Nobel organisations, in communicating information about the Prizes to international audiences. As this media history has demonstrated, the avenues for communicating concepts related to the accolade grew significantly towards the end of the last century, in step with technological advancements. The awarding bodies are now able to employ multiple media forms to provide audiences with diverse messages.
Chapter 3
The Nobel Replicator

A useful way to understand the Prize and how it functions is to conceive it as a meme, or memeplex. Although memetic theory is multi-dimensional, the elements discussed in this chapter have been selected for their significance and relevance.

The Nature of Memes

The term ‘meme’ – coined in Richard Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene* (1976), a popular science book about Darwinian evolution by natural selection – refers to “a unit of cultural transmission” that replicates itself through imitation (p.206). Memes, like human genes, propagate themselves by passing from one brain to another through imitation. Examples of such replicators include “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches” (ibid.). This process can be likened to a virus: “When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme’s propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell” (ibid.).

The definitions of ‘meme’ are now legion, but every variation fundamentally refers to a “unit of cultural information that represents a basic idea that can be transferred from one individual to another” (Flake 2002, par.168). Some memes’ life-spans are short; others endure long after individuals have died. Consequently, Dawkins suggests that “if you contribute to the world’s culture, if you have a good idea, compose a tune, invent a sparking plug, write a poem, it may live on, intact, long after your genes have dissolved in the common pool” (p.213). Like the memes...
created by Socrates or Copernicus, Alfred Nobel’s philanthropic idea continues to thrive, more than a century after his death.

However, another aspect of this theory presents an unresolved tension. On the one hand, memes are perceived to replicate ‘selfishly’; as Blackmore (2008) explains: “They’re using you and me as their propagating, copying machinery.” On the other hand, they are characterised as being dependent on humans, who do the replication and propagation (Klepper 2009, par.9). Hence, memes are either viewed as living organisms or as non-living entities that ‘acquire’ life through human action. This thesis accepts the latter position and dismisses the “meme’s eye view” (Blackmore 1999, p.37), in line with the understanding that objects have only metaphorical power. Jerz (2006) suggests that Dawkins introduced memes’ agency as a “scholarly metaphor” to explain “our own apparent powerlessness when memes seem to inhabit our brains against our will (as may be the case with an annoying song)” (par.5).

**Expanding the Nature of Memes**

Evidently, the Nobel Prizes are much more than ideas stored in brains. From the complex structures of the various organisations to the intricacies of the individual ceremonies, the memes are embodied in real-world objects and events. This may seem like a theoretical incongruity, but Dawkins suggests that certain memes achieve durability through formal institutionalisation. He offers the example of Jewish religious laws, which are propagated for centuries “usually because of the great potential permanence of written records” (p.208). The Nobel memes might be termed ‘institutionalised memes’: ideas that have lasted for decades by virtue of being
enshrined in state laws and organisational protocols. Furthermore, it is necessary to
differentiate between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ memes. The former represent
information that is transmitted between, and resides in, human brains; the latter refer
to physical objects, to any “man-made cultural artefact” (George 2007, par.1), and
can include money, books and artwork. Hence, the Nobel memes are internal (and
ideational), as well as institutionalised and external; they exist in the form of objects
(medals, diplomas) and rituals or events (ceremonies, banquets) that are wholly or
partially replicated annually, and often enshrined in formal codes.

Memes also differ in size. As Dawkins (1999) asks: “Is the whole Roman
Catholic Church one meme, or should we use the word for one constituent unit such
as the idea of incense or transubstantiation?” (p.xiv). Blackmore (1999) suggests that
“there is no right answer to the question – ‘what really is the unit of the meme’”
(p.54; original emphasis). Four notes in a musical score – if they are transmitted and
remembered by others – can constitute a meme, as can the whole symphony (pp.54-
56). Memes can also aggregate, and this is termed a “co-adapted stable set of
mutually-assisting memes” (Dawkins 1976, p.211), or simply ‘memeplex’ (Speel
1996 [1995]). The memes inside these groups “can replicate better as part of the
group than they can on their own” (Blackmore 1999, p.20). Hence, the Nobel Prizes
can be perceived as a meme or a memeplex. In the latter case, for example, various
logos can be replicated and transmitted better by being part of the Nobel meme-
group, as Figures 3.1 to 3.3 illustrate.

Figure 3.1 The logo of the Nobel Prize website (Nobelprize.org 2008)
Once memes are recognised as human creations, the Prizes can be understood through another aspect of this theory: memetic engineering. This notion refers to “crafting good memes that improve society … that may neutralize and even eliminate the bad memes” (Godwin 2003, p.53). It might be argued that the Norwegian Nobel Committee (and the other Nobel institutions) is doing just that. Some engineered memes include: Prize citations, ceremony speeches, Nobel Symposia, lectures, seminars, fellowships for visiting scholars and publications (Njølstad n.d.b).

One other aspect of memes is vital to understanding the Prize. Memes can be replicated vertically and horizontally; they can travel “longitudinally down generations” or through populations, “like viruses in an epidemic” (Dawkins 1999, p.ix). Crazes among schoolchildren exemplify both aspects. Students can copy a meme (such as a paper-folding technique) from each other; this is then taught to their peers, and is passed on horizontally. Years later, someone from that cohort of students will teach the craze to a member of a younger generation, who, in turn, will transmit the meme vertically to another generation (ibid.). The external Nobel Prize memes are largely vertical; thanks to institutionalisation, objects and events have been replicated consistently down the decades. For example, although the artwork in prize-winners’ diplomas varies each year, the text “has always followed the same
pattern in the Swedish and Norwegian languages” (Lemmel 2009, par.4). Figures 3.4 and 3.5 illustrate this continuity.

Figure 3.4 The 1997 diploma awarded to Jody Williams (Nobel Foundation 1997)

Figure 3.5 The 2007 diploma awarded to the IPCC (Nobel Foundation 2007)

For the Peace Prize, horizontal replication is more important. Like the spread of popular neologisms – such as ‘shovel-ready’ or ‘tweet’ (Macquarie Dictionary 2009) – the ideas engineered by the Norwegian Nobel Committee can be replicated across populations. The transmission can be media-based or inter-personal: “If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and his lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain” (Dawkins 1976, p.206). In this sense, the definition of a meme as “a communicable unit of cultural information” (Gaugler 2009, par.105; emphasis added) becomes important. When it reveals the laureate(s) each year, the Committee provides a citation that draws attention to a
particular peace cause. In 2007, the Committee created a meme with a universal mission: to highlight the significance of climate change to each individual on the planet.

Evidently, the best moment to identify the meme’s exact nature is during the Prize announcement, when the Committee releases information that is transmitted globally. The significance of this moment is undeniable: “In world media, the prize announcements in October are a bigger event than the Nobel Festivities on December 10. Journalists around the world write detailed presentations of the prizewinners and their contributions” (Froman 2005, par.15). To identify this globally transmitted information, a framing analysis will be conducted.

**Method and Analysis**

Framing refers to the process of shaping a story so that it correlates with a particular perspective or perspectives (Stanton 2007, p.xiii). This analysis will adopt Van Gorp’s (2007) constructionist framing analysis as its method. The approach is a sophisticated one that integrates culture: a factor that is significant for the Committee, as chapter five discusses. Following Goffman (1974), Van Gorp emphasises that frames are a part of culture, and, as such, are outside of individuals and texts (pp.62-63). When media producers employ cultural frames, they invite audiences to read stories in particular ways, using the frame(s) that they select (p.63). This is made possible by the existence of a “shared repertoire” – or stock – of stable, common frames in a culture (p.64). When a producer applies a frame from this common pool to a text, he or she creates a ‘frame package’ that consists of three elements: manifest framing devices (factors that are readily evident, such as word
choice, metaphors and descriptions); manifest or latent reasoning devices (explicit and implicit statements that deal with justifications, causes and consequences); and an implicit cultural phenomenon (such as a value, a mythical figure or an archetype) (pp.63-64).

These factors will be determined in the unit of analysis: the 2007 Prize announcement press release (a copy of which is provided in Appendix Two). Excerpts from this text, which is a copy of the announcement made by the Committee’s chairman, are replicated in mainstream and non-mainstream media. The Committee, as the ‘frame sponsor’ – the actor that provides media producers with strategically pre-prepared frames (Van Gorp, p.68) – uses this opportunity to guide journalists’ reporting.

Naturally, the value of peace (an implicit cultural phenomenon) underpins all of the Committee’s frame packages. A human interest theme is also provided; Al Gore and the IPCC are denominated as the laureates in the solemn opening phrase, “[t]he Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 is to be shared, in two equal parts, between…” (Norwegian Nobel Committee 2007a, par.1). The issue in the frame package is then introduced as a statement of recognition, “for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change” (ibid.).

This issue is elaborated through several manifest framing devices. Superlatives, such as “must be treated with the utmost seriousness” (par.2) heighten the gravity of the statement. The use of the collective first person in “with the precautionary principle uppermost in our minds” (ibid.; emphasis added) unites the world’s people against the potential environmental threat. Equally, the repetition of key phrases,
such as “may alter and threaten … living conditions”, “may induce large-scale migration” and “[t]here may be increased danger” (ibid.), emphasises the risk.

Indeed, the statement: “There may be increased danger of violent conflicts and wars, within and between states” (ibid.) causally links climate change to international conflict, and is the manifest reasoning device that underpins the frame package. It is even more explicitly re-stated in the concluding paragraph, in which the Committee iterates that it is highlighting “the processes and decisions that appear to be necessary to protect the world’s future climate, and thereby to reduce the threat to the security of mankind” (par.5). Therefore, the event has two bivalent frames (two stories existing simultaneously) (Stanton, pp.21-22): namely, the announcement, and the issue of climate change contributing to conflict.

Van Gorp notes that ubiquitous frames become difficult to contradict (p.69). For this reason, the Committee notes the “ever-broader informed consensus about the connection between human activities and global warming” (par.3). The archetype of the expert is used to introduce the IPCC as “[t]housands of scientists and officials from over one hundred countries” (ibid.). Al Gore is presented through the archetype of the underdog, “strengthen[ing] the struggle against climate change” by heroically being “probably the single individual who has done most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted” (par.4). Although Van Gorp’s analytical framework treats culture in national terms, the Committee creates an international frame package designed to counter its Norwegian identity. The global scope of its message is conveyed through the repetition of “the earth’s future climate” and “the earth’s resources”, as well as “the security of mankind” and “much of mankind”.

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As memes, the elements of this frame package can travel quickly and effectively around the world. The interpersonal, microcosmic impact of the Prize is potentially limitless, as the information passes from person to person. After the announcement, how many millions of individuals would have discussed the Prize and climate change’s connection to unrest? How many dinner-time conversations would have featured these ideas? How many friends chatting on buses or students in university tutorials would have slipped them into their discussions? It is impossible to know. Yet, whether mentioned negatively or positively, in full or in part, the Committee’s ideas were replicated by individuals everywhere.

Conclusion

Conceptualising the Prize as a meme, or memeplex, provides an enhanced understanding of its characteristics and operation. This chapter has argued that it is a meme by nature – with diverse internal and external components – and is operationalised through vertical and horizontal replication. The last factor is significant for the expansion of the Prize’s communicational reach, as the concepts that the Committee attaches to its annual choice of laureate(s) can be transmitted interpersonally by individuals worldwide.
Chapter 4
A Prize Built on Thin Air

This multi-faceted accolade is dynamic, and can be understood as a set of intangible assets based on software resources. Not only does this help to explain the Prize’s modern nature, it also expands our understanding of what the laureates are actually awarded.

From Tangible to Intangible

When Alfred Nobel was dealing with dynamite in the nineteenth century, he was operating with tangible resources, with “assets that … have physical existence” (Cruz 2002, p.2). Factories, equipment, vehicles and land: such tangibles formed the basis of his industrial-era empire (Lundström 2010). At the end of the twentieth century, other types of resources became significant in the post-industrial world. Intangible assets, “which have no material substance” (Hahn and Sporleder 2006, par.31), emerged as key components in economic life. The world was simultaneously becoming ‘weightless’: economic value began to be embodied in dematerialised items such as services and technologies (Coyle 1998, pp.1-3), as well as patents and trademarks (Godfrey et. al. 2006, p.37).

Intangibility extends beyond economic resources. Bauman (2000) argues that the world has entered a “liquid modernity”, leaving an “era of hardware, or heavy modernity” (p.113; original emphasis) and embracing “the era of software, of light modernity” (p.118). Leadbeater (2000) similarly asserts that the modern world relies on “thin air”: ideas, knowledge, skills, talent and creativity (p.18). Exemplifying this
situation for Leadbeater is the British Royal Family and Diana, the Princess of Wales. The Royal Family’s value lies neither in land nor money, but in its brand: “Its power and influence stem entirely from the ephemeral world of gestures and symbols” (p.19). Its most precious assets – public popularity, loyalty and affection – are also intangible. However, it was also “weighed down by tradition, trapped by protocol [and] encumbered by physical assets” (ibid.), which were challenged by Diana. The Princess exploited her ideas, image and communication skills to speak directly to the people; through her popularity, celebrity status, personality, and even flaws, she became a compelling “creature of the modern communications revolution” (p.20).

So it is with the Nobel Prizes. Thanks to Alfred Nobel’s endowment, the Nobel institutions are well-financed; however, their modern value derives from other factors. The tangible assets – particularly the medal, diploma and monetary reward – are now only tokens or artefacts, albeit highly emblematic ones. The true value of the Nobel Prizes lies in intangible assets: branding, media resources, ideas, and the annual pomp and pageantry of the festivities, among others. As van den Dungen (2001) notes, the ‘brand recognition’ of this enterprise is enormous. The name ‘Nobel’ itself represents “an amalgam of achievement, prestige, and respectability” that is “synonymous with excellence” (p.518). The Nobel Peace Prize is particularly marketable, as its title is more memorable than, for example, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

The Nobel brand, like all others, has a robust visual identity. Most of the Nobel organisations have incorporated the gold medals\(^4\) into their logos, as illustrated on pages 41-42. This is, perhaps, the brand’s most vital component. A simple search for

\(^4\)The medal designs vary. The organisations in Stockholm – except the Foundation – use the obverse of Erik Lindberg’s medal in their logos; the Norwegian Nobel Committee uses Gustav Vigeland’s design.
“Nobel Peace Prize” in Google almost exclusively generates images of the medal on the first results page (Figure 4.1). The simplicity of this token heightens its memorability, and the Nobel organisations have capitalised on this asset, reducing the detail of the medal in their logos to make them more recognisable (as Figure 4.2 demonstrates). This rendering is maximised on the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia, on which the key elements are even further distilled (Figure 4.3).⁵

![Images for Nobel Peace Prize - Raport images](image1)

**Figure 4.1** The high association of the Nobel Peace Prize with the Nobel Medal, as generated by the Google search engine

![Nobel](image2)

**Figure 4.2** Most of the Nobel logos feature a simplified medal (Nobel Museum 2008)

![Nobel](image3)

**Figure 4.3** The simplest rendering of the medal on *Wikipedia* (Utente:Gusme 2006)

The organisations have acknowledged the importance of such intangible elements. The Nobel Foundation, for example, describes itself as “an ‘investment company’ with rather unusual facets. Every year this investment company moves into show business by organizing the Nobel Festivities and numerous related

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⁵ These popular, online sources are useful in illustrating the ideas above; however, from an academic perspective, their value needs to be measured.
arrangements” (Lemmel 2007 [2000], par.33). The announcements and ceremonies are no longer just “major international events that receive worldwide coverage” (Nobel Foundation 2010c, par.4). They have become ‘sustained events’ that maintain high levels of public interest over time (Grainge 2008). Perhaps Alfred Nobel would indeed be “horrified by the fuss and global media circus his prizes now awaken” (Froman 2005, par.3). Or perhaps he would be delighted that the organisations – otherwise formal, mostly academic bodies – have learned to harness the most vital assets in the new economy. However, the approach is not faultless. In addition to the unified logos presented on pages 41-42, the Nobel Foundation uses its own (Figure 4.4), which appears, confusingly, at the Norwegian Nobel Institute (Figure 4.5).

![Figure 4.4](image1)

Figure 4.4 The logo of the Nobel Foundation (Nobel Foundation 2009b)

![Figure 4.5](image2)

Figure 4.5 The logo at the Norwegian Nobel Institute (Larsen 2006)
The expansion of intangible assets has continued beyond the official events. The Stockholm-based Nobel Museum presents exhibitions, short films and original artefacts designed to educate and inspire visitors (Nobel Web 2010c). These goals are echoed in the cultural events and exhibitions of the Oslo-based Nobel Peace Center (Nobel Peace Center 2010), which features sophisticated, interactive installations (Figure 4.6). The Nobel Peace Prize Concert also testifies to the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s recognition of the importance of strengthening its brand, capitalising on the appeal of laureates and other celebrities, and communicating directly to international publics.

Figure 4.6 The Nobel Field installation at the Nobel Peace Center (McConnico 2005)

Clearly, though, not all of the Nobel organisations’ resources are made of “thin air”; concerts and museums require ‘hardware’. Hence, it is worth clarifying the concept of intangibility, especially in relation to media resources. Above all, intangibility actually relies on something tangible: wholly or partially, particularly in the case of objects, but also services. In ICT terms, all software depends upon a ‘platform’, and the same can be said of these resources. To use the example of the Nobel logos again, the medals in them came from the original gold discs (the hardware). After becoming electronic images (software), the logos acquired intangible value. Even at this stage, though, they were never fully impalpable, as
objects were required to display them (software platforms). Consequently, the process actually ends with hardware, as Figures 4.7 and 4.8 illustrate.
Figure 4.7  The Peace Prize medal (Duncan 2009), which is the initial hardware, is rendered electronically as software and, over time, acquires intangible value in the logo of the Nobel Peace Prize Concert (Oslo Spektrum 2006). To be displayed publicly, the software relies on a platform, such as a press conference banner (Kalnins 2007b).

Figure 4.8  The original hardware, the medal (Siegel 2008), becomes software that gains intangible value (Nobel Museum 2008); it then returns to being hardware as a software platform with intangible value (Sardone 2010).
Some might suggest that intangible assets only serve to promote identity or particular values. This is certainly one, but not the only, function. As chapter three demonstrated, they can be communicated between individuals as memes. The hardware may not be replicable *en masse*, but software (such as ideas) is. Blackmore (1999) identifies these different modes of transmission as “copy-the-product” and “copy-the-instructions” (p.61). The latter is replicable because it is ‘explicit knowledge’ that “we can, and have articulated, or codified” (Berente 2007, par.1), as opposed to ‘tacit knowledge’ that is difficult to communicate.

These assets also gain importance in symbolic politics. Far from referring to ineffectual communication that does not focus on substantive governance or policy issues (Williams 2009, par.10), symbolic politics is actually the “strategic use of signs to meet society’s requirements of political orientation” (Sarcinelli 2008, par.2). Verbal and non-verbal rituals and symbols comprise this sense-making feature of political communication (Edelman 1964) that serves four functions: to overcome noise as a signal; to decrease complexity; to identify and arrange political perspectives; and to address individuals’ rationality and emotions (Sarcinelli 1987). Symbolism has always been a necessary element of politics, and “a ‘pure’ politics … based on ‘principal values’ without dramaturgy and without additional symbols cannot exist” (Tenscher 2007 [1998], par.4).

The importance of symbolic politics has increased in an era of global communication, in which: “Images cross geographic and social borders far more easily than words” (Leadbeater, p.20). This correlates with the recognition that we now live in a ‘visual culture’ pervaded by visual forms of media, communication and
information (Irvine 2009, par.2). The Nobel organisations are certainly mindful of this. In addition to press releases, online ‘speed reads’ – short summaries about the laureates – are published for the modern, harried reader. The official website, redesigned in 2010, now features a very accessible ‘Video Player’ tab in the title bar; previously, videos were located elsewhere, and less easily reached.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is also aware of the importance of the visual. After the annual announcement, the chairperson is photographed with an enlarged print of the laureate (Figure 4.9). The honouree is immediately and visually associated with the Prize’s intangible prestige in a way that will speak to individuals worldwide. Furthermore, the laureate is aligned with past recipients in the Nobel Institute (Figure 4.10). It might also be argued that visual communication has been vital to the Prizes from the outset, with the *Chicago Daily Tribune* even publishing laureates’ portraits after the first announcements (Figure 4.11).

![Figure 4.9 The Norwegian Nobel Committee Chairman holds up a photograph of the laureate after the announcement (Poppe 2007b)](image)
In addition to images created by international media, the Nobel organisations take their own photographs. The official website is a veritable repository of images: official (from functions) and unofficial (from preparations). The shots not only commemorate significant events, but also capture brand elements and symbolic politics. Hence, the images warrant closer inspection.

**Method and Analysis**

The method of social semiotic visual analysis, developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), will be used in this examination. The method is an enhancement of semiotic analysis, which will be outlined in greater detail in the next chapter, but
which can be treated as both “an underlying philosophy and a specific mode of analysis” concerned with signs (Myers 1997, par.50). Social semiotics – introduced into linguistics by Halliday (1978) – extends semiotics in several ways. Principally concerned with the social aspects of sense-making, it deals with the production, interpretation and circulation of meaning in communication and its “implications in social processes, as cause or effect” (Hodge n.d., par.1). Hence, it “makes semiotics more broadly useful” through its social application (ibid.).

Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) explain that social semiotic visual analysis makes images “not only representational, but also interactional (images do things to or for the viewer)” (p.3). In this method, signs are never arbitrary (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, p.8), but are motivated by the sign-maker’s “subjectivity” and “interest” (p.12). Consequently, images express “subjective and ideological positions” and visually articulate power relations (Kaltenbacher 2007, p.293). This approach is underpinned by Halliday’s theory of ‘systemic functional linguistics’ (1985), and is also termed a ‘grammar of visual design’ or ‘multimodality’. It provides numerous “socially constructed resources” that allow individuals to create meaning and shape the subjectivities of others (Parkes 2009, par.8). The resources fall within three ‘metafunctions’, which are different modes of communication (adopted from Halliday). They are the ‘ideational’, the ‘interpersonal’ and the ‘textual’. The ideational metafunction involves relationships between objects in the (outside) world and how they refer to each other; the interpersonal metafunction represents social interactions (between the sender, receiver and object); and the textual metafunction accounts for how texts are created (Kress and van Leeuwen, pp.42-43). For a short, detailed overview of each metafunction’s resources, see Kaltenbacher (2007).
The units of analysis – 14 photographs from Nobelprize.org – will be analysed using this method. Two photographs appear on the information pages about the laureates, while the others are from a photo-gallery. The information page image (Figure 4.12) has been included because it is the first that audiences see in connection with the 2007 conferral, and the second (Figure 4.13) can be considered the ‘official’ photograph that appears prominently in newspapers worldwide. The photo-gallery has likewise been selected for its ‘official’ status. The images will be analysed in their published order, and related shots will be analysed together. Although the full set of images numbers 16, only non-concert photographs have been chosen, as the concert will be examined in the next chapter; the remaining images are included in Appendix Three. Naturally, these are only some of the (internal) photographs from the events, and Appendix Four provides a selection of publicly accessible, online image banks.

Visitors to Nobelprize.org wishing to learn about the 2007 laureates are first presented with the ‘official’ photograph⁶ (Figure 4.12). This portrait shot incorporates several interpersonal metafunctions, including a ‘demand’ gaze through which the viewer is asked to enter into a direct relationship with the subject. Like a participant in a conversation, Al Gore becomes approachable through the eye-level, frontal close-up. The frame, which excludes all other details except his head and shoulders, heightens this sense of intimacy, and helps to create the impression of supplication, as though he were peering into the viewer’s eyes, conveying his environmental message. The decolourisation of the image distances it from reality, neutralising Gore and creating a sense of timelessness, which is augmented through shallow depth of field (resulting in a blurred background).

⁶ On this webpage, the IPCC is represented by its logo and not a photograph. Consequently, Al Gore becomes more ‘personable’ because of his human nature.
This image is the only one that offers such a high degree of connection to the laureate. The posed photograph of both awardees at the ceremony (Figure 4.13) is the reverse. A low angle conveys their power over the viewer, who is also disconnected from them by their ‘offer’ gazes, which are not directed towards the camera. The other photographs in the gallery also feature such gazes (with two exceptions: Figures 4.21 and 4.23). The ceremony’s factualness – and thus the veracity of the situation – is established by the shot’s deep focus, full use of colour, and the high illumination of the room.
In Figures 4.14 to 4.16, the importance of intangible assets is readily evident, with the original hardware (the medal) becoming a value-laden software platform (a symbol of prestige mounted on a podium). The salience of this logo element strengthens the laureates’ alignment with the Nobel brand. The edges of the curtains, walls and decorations frame Gore’s and Pachauri’s figures against the window in Figures 4.14 and 4.15; the contrast between the warm tones of the interior and the dark, blue shades of the outside also suggest that they are part of the wider world, laureates of the globe. These two textual metafunctions are coupled with other interpersonal ones. ‘Offer’ gazes again convey the laureates’ venerability, rather than personableness. In ideational terms, the subjects’ speeches are conveyed as non-transactional actions, in which vectors emanate from the subjects, but are not pointed at other participants. Figure 4.14 is nearly eye-level, which indicates Gore’s closeness to ‘the people’; by contrast, Figures 4.15 and 4.16 are slightly low-angle and suggest the subjects’ power.
Figure 4.14 Al Gore delivering his Nobel Lecture (Opprann 2007c)

Figure 4.15 Rajendra Pachauri delivering his Nobel Lecture (Opprann 2007d)

Figure 4.16 Ole Danbolt Mjøs introducing the laureates (Opprann 2007e)
Although the viewer is positioned ‘among’ the officials in Figure 4.17, with a close-up accentuating this intimacy, the oblique, deep depth of field shot (blurring Mjøs and Gore) indicates that the relationship is close but still detached. Figure 4.18 also ruptures any such familiarity. The high-angle shot might suggest a degree of power for the viewer over the laureates; however, by being a long shot, the image also evokes their distance. In ideational terms, it features a narrative process with an Actor (Gore) transactionally explaining ideas to a Goal (Mann), who is connected by eye-line vectors. Mann is also positioned to the left of the image as the Given, while the honourees are on the right as the New. This placement establishes the journalist as the familiar component in the scene, and the laureates as recent, fresh additions.

Figure 4.17 Mjøs, Pachauri and Gore listening to the introductory speech (Opprann 2007f)

Figure 4.18 CNN’s Jonathan Mann interviewing the laureates (Opprann 2007g)
Figures 4.19 and 4.20 again establish intimacy by being close-up and frontal shots that involve the viewer. However, because neither laureate offers any sort of gaze, this closeness is diminished. Although Pachauri is presented at near eye-level, Gore is captured from a low angle, which conveys his superiority. The white window frames behind him also act as framing devices, which simultaneously locate him within and beyond the Institute. By virtue of filling the top half of the images, the honourees are the Ideal (having an information value of promise), while the open, gilt-topped book is the Real (conveying the value of actuality or ordinariness).

Figure 4.19  Al Gore signing the guestbook at the Norwegian Nobel Institute (Opprann 2007h)

Figure 4.20  Rajendra Pachauri signing the Norwegian Nobel Institute’s guestbook (Opprann 2007i)

In Figures 4.21 and 4.22 – also comparable shots of the same event – Gore and the Pachauris do not gaze at the viewer; only Tipper makes eye contact with the
camera. She becomes a ‘medium’, or conduit, through which the viewer can associate with the laureates, the ‘heroes’. Similarly, in Figure 4.22, Pachauri is the Reacter who smiles during the merriment, but makes no action himself; it is Saroj, the Actor, who makes contact with the crowd (the Goal). In contrast to Figure 4.18, the laureates are now the Given; the spectators are the New, with the public not having appeared in any of the previous photographs. The oblique angles in both images suggest intrusion: that this is the laureates’ world. By contrast, the frontal angle in Figure 4.23 conveys the photographer’s presence in the (posed) event, as something in which the viewer can be involved, too.

Figure 4.21  Al and Tipper Gore waving to the crowd outside the Grand Hotel (Opprann 2007j)

Figure 4.22  Rajendra and Saroj Pachauri greeting the crowd (Opprann 2007k)
The last photographs – Figures 4.24 and 4.25 – both feature unidirectional transactional actions, with the vectors from the laureates (Actors) connecting the banquet guests at table (Goals). Again, due to the subjects’ offer gazes, the viewer is excluded from the event, whose restrictiveness is also conveyed through low-angle shots (particularly for Gore, less so for Pachauri). Both images’ deep depth of field and contextualisation (or inclusion) of background – a feature common to 12 of the photographs – indicate high modality and, consequently, believability.
In these 14 images, everything is ostensibly presented for the viewer to see, to admire; however, not all of the elements are represented with equal status. The laureates in particular are distanced from, and elevated above, the viewer. These aspects demonstrate the operation of symbolic politics through numerous social and power relations, as well as the importance of intangible assets.

**Conclusion**

In an era of global communication, the Nobel enterprise has become a formidable one. This chapter has demonstrated that intangible assets now rest at its core. By employing various theories, it has also clarified that these assets depend upon software, which, in turn, depends upon (physical) platforms. These resources play a vital role in the political communication process, in which symbolic politics prominently operate through visual media. They also highlight that, in addition to (formal) Prize tokens, laureates now receive other (informal) award components: lasting association with a prestigious brand that connotes honour, and mass-consumed media texts that help to promote honourees’ peace causes.
Chapter 5
Beyond Recognition: Soft Power

The Nobel organisations have clearly advanced beyond simply selecting laureates and holding celebratory events. Their embrace of the media industry has significantly broadened the options available to them for communicating their ideas, and expanded the components of the award. The Norwegian Nobel Committee is using these resources instrumentally and, as this chapter will propose, the Peace Prize has become a tool of soft power. 7

Nobel Attraction

Organisations worldwide, particularly governments, have learnt that ‘hard power’ – using “inducements (‘carrots’) or threats (‘sticks’)” (Nye 2004, p.5) – does not guarantee the compliance of others. Consequently, it becomes more advantageous to co-opt rather than to coerce, to attract rather than to command, and to set agenda rather than to employ force. These elements are part of ‘soft power’ (Nye 1990), defined as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want” (Nye 2004, p.5). For states, the “primary currencies” of this power are attractive values, government policies, institutions and culture (p.32). For non-state actors – including non-government organisations, corporations and private organisations – the sources of attraction and co-optation also include their values and policies, credibility, popularity and (for some) universality (pp.90-95).

7 As the Committee has no ‘hard power’ assets, this thesis disregards the notion of ‘smart power’, which refers to the strategic combination of soft and hard power for the purpose of producing political and social legitimacy (Crocker et. al. 2007, p.13).
These factors are intangible assets (p.6) and the Norwegian Nobel Committee – as an international non-government organisation (Pagnucco 1997, p.134) – has an immense store of them. This thesis has already refined the notion of intangibility with regard to software and hardware. It is also worth examining another aspect of cultural difference: high and popular culture. Nye argues that popular culture is a vital source of soft power; for example, America’s movies, fast food and sports have helped it to export values such as openness, individualism and freedom globally (p.47). High culture is taken into account, too, and the activities of operas, theatres, universities and museums continue to be crucial (p.45). Other scholars suggest that all forms of culture, “low-brow or high”, are important (Joffe 2001). Yet it might be argued that organisations with an official mandate – award-conferring institutions such as universities, or law-making bodies like international tribunals – must employ or embody high culture elements to legitimise their soft power. Despite popularising some activities, the Nobel organisations’ authority and prestige will always depend upon, and be projected annually through, their high-culture establishments and events, such as academies and banquets, respectively.

Lukes (2007) also highlights certain definitional difficulties in Nye’s theory, and argues that compliance, persuasion and attraction must be distinguished. It is important to avoid the ‘exercise fallacy’, in equating actors’ dispositional power (their capacities) with concrete outcomes (p.478). Bially Mattern (2007) also points out that soft power is ironically rooted in hard power where attraction rests upon coercion.

An actor’s soft power does not remain constant; it fluctuates and “varies by time and place” (Nye, p.44). For instance, China’s soft power declined after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, but has been rising since (Xuetong 2006, p.1).
Contrarily, the goodwill built by America during the Cold War has decreased after numerous, internationally unpopular actions in the last two decades (Hoey 2007, pp.79-87). A similar situation befell the Norwegian Nobel Committee in 2009 when it awarded the Prize to Barack Obama; commentators opined that the choice had either damaged the Nobel brand (Downer 2009; Tantillo 2009) or ruined it (Bayley 2009; Maddox 2009). However, similar judgements were expressed after figures such as Yasser Arafat, Henry Kissinger and even Mother Teresa won the Prize. It is a testament to the Nobel brand’s strength – and its amassed symbolic capital – that such criticisms are never permanently damaging.

The Committee also capitalises on other factors. In addition to Oslo being a city of peace, Norway has been perceived as a “peace nation exercising ‘soft power’ diplomacy, or reputational authority” (Perelstein 2009, par.4). Through its choice, the Committee can also “validate” a particular laureate’s country’s (or institution’s) use of soft power (Garcia 2009), or “enhance” that soft power (Reveron 2009). Consequently, soft power becomes a reward for soft power, benefiting the recipient and the awardee. Although Feaver (2009) recognises that the Prize “is not just a consequence of soft power. It is also a major soft-power asset itself” (p.5), he does not mention that the awarding body is wielding soft power.

**Nobel Peace Power**

The channels available to the Committee for wielding this power have increased over time. Numerous resources provide it with ways to encourage others to admire its ideals and to share the same goals (Nye 2004). These assets reach
international publics through various modes and means, which are presented in Table 5.1. Naturally, some resource types overlap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft Power Resource Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Institutions</td>
<td>The Nobel Institute Library, open to the public since September 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Productions</td>
<td>Documentaries produced in conjunction with Nobel Media AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>The Nobel Peace Prize Concert, hosted by the Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Books such as <em>Our Purpose: The Nobel Peace Prize Lecture 2007</em>, published by Rodale Books (Gore 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>The Nobel Peace Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>Travelling exhibitions from the Nobel Peace Center (International Atomic Energy Agency 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Types of soft power resources

Other Nobel organisations are also wielding soft power. Like its counterpart in Oslo, the Nobel Museum’s exhibitions reach publics abroad. In 2001, the exhibition *Cultures of Creativity: The Centennial Exhibition of the Nobel Prize* visited twelve countries under the name *Beautiful Minds*, while in 2008, the globetrotting exhibition *Alfred Nobel: Networks of Innovation* was inaugurated in Dubai by Sweden’s Crown Princess. The 2006 Honeywell-Nobel Initiative, a global science education program, brought together students and laureates, or “Rock Stars of Science” (Gaudio 2006), to universities “by combining live on-campus events, interactive content and broadcast programming” (PR Newswire 2006, par.1). Similarly, since 2008, the AstraZeneca Nobel Medicine Initiative has been building global interest in physiology or medicine through “lecture events, interactive educational content, and broadcast documentaries” (Nobel Media 2008, par.1).
The laureates themselves have been extending this soft power by “network[ing] with one another on collaborative ventures” (Cobban, p.13). Van den Dungen (2005) notes that the honourees, “aware of their international standing and also of the responsibilities and opportunities this honor entails”, have united to pen important statements on international issues, endorse global campaigns, or apply pressure to political situations (p.44).

The honourees have been holding an annual World Summit of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates since 1999, at which the Man of Peace Award is presented. In 2006, six female laureates – Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan Maguire – established the Nobel Women’s Initiative to strengthen women’s rights work worldwide (Nobel Women’s Initiative 2010). Laureates from different disciplines united in 2009 at Cambridge University to highlight the dangers of global warming at the St. James’s Palace Nobel Laureate Symposium, which built on the Global Sustainability: A Nobel Cause Symposium, held in Potsdam in 2007. Both gatherings concluded with the publication of memoranda signed by the prize-winners (Global Sustainability: A Nobel Cause 2010).

Furthermore, since 1951, the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings have been uniting young people with awardees from the fields of physiology or medicine, physics and chemistry. Nobel Laureates Beijing Fora, operating since 2005, have similarly been building inter-generational connections (Beijing Municipal Association for Science & Technology 2007). The PeaceJam initiative, an education and inspiration program, also encourages young people around the world to make service-based contributions to their local communities (PeaceJam Foundation 2010).
Some might dismiss such initiatives and resources as insubstantial or cultural trivialities. However, as Nye (2004) reminds us: “It is not smart to discount soft power as just a question of image, public relations and ephemeral popularity … it is a form of power – a means of obtaining desired outcomes” (p.129). Evidently, it must be asked what “desired outcomes” the Norwegian Nobel Committee seeks. Its chief purpose is evidently to honour the laureate(s) (Njølstad n.d.c). The Nobel Peace Prize Concert also shares this aim, but additionally “help[s] spread the message of peace” (Norwegian Nobel Committee 2009, par.2). Because it features popular artists and (mostly) contemporary music, it “expand[s] the reach of the prizes … particularly among the young” (Jordan and Sullivan 2007, par.16). The aim of the Nobel Peace Center is to “focus attention on the issues of peace, war and conflict resolution” (Nobel Peace Center and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2005, par.4). Therefore, it becomes evident that the overall outcome desired by the Committee is the education of Norwegian and international publics about political and peace issues.

Critics might suggest that this educational soft power is simply propaganda. Two key reasons can be advanced to the contrary. First, propaganda is covert; both the true source and intent of communications cannot be discerned (Perloff 2010, p.20). Second, propaganda is disseminated by actors who totally control information, prevent questioning and disallow contrasting opinions (ibid.). In both instances, this is not the case with the Nobel institutions.

By awarding the Prize to Al Gore and the IPCC in 2007, the Committee sought to draw attention to climate change. Hence, its message of peace for that year, as part of its educational soft power strategy, carried a normative, cautionary message. In Nye’s words, the Committee was fostering “an attraction to shared values and the
justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values” (2004, p.7). The Peace Prize Concert, as a popular culture production seen by thousands of viewers around the world, is the best site to examine how this was executed.

**Method and Analysis**

This investigation will employ a filmic analysis based on semiotic principles. Although the early Greeks produced a theory of signs (Winn 2006, p.4), the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure developed a concrete science of signs known as ‘semiology’, while the American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce elaborated a different approach termed ‘semiotics’ (Nöth 1990); the latter term is “now generally used to refer to both systems” (Berger 2005, p.2). The key premises of this theory are that a sign is made up of the ‘signifier’ (the sound or image of a sign) and ‘signified’ (the sign’s concept or meaning), which is analysed at the levels of denotation (the basic meaning) and connotation (the range of associations) (Abercrombie and Longhurst 2007). As Selby and Cowdery (1995) highlight, “nearly everything you see [in a text] has been included because of its connotative meanings” (p.32) and this factor will be taken into account in this examination.

The unit of analysis is the concert (Norwegian Nobel Committee 2007b) as it was edited live during the broadcast to Norway (and then recorded on DVD). Due to the concert’s nature – a live show that is not as meticulously pre-planned as, for example, a motion picture, in which every frame is carefully arranged to convey meanings – the filmic analysis will not feature a narrative or genre discussion.

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8 Variants of the show are edited for broadcast in different countries, and these versions exclude particular artists or songs. The edition used in this analysis was produced for the American network E! Entertainment Television. Two pre-recorded conversations between Rajendra Pachauri and Kevin Spacey, and Al Gore and Uma Thurman, which were screened during the concert, were also excluded from this version.
Rather, important and relevant ‘moments’ from the show, which specifically convey the operation of soft power, will be analysed. Formal codes of construction (mis-en-scène elements such as stage components and non-verbal communication) and technical codes of construction (such as shot sizes, camera angles and lighting) (Selby and Cowdery, pp.13-22) will be studied.

The opening title – a computer-generated sequence of floating, three-dimensional, silver letters that, together, spell “Nobel Peace Prize” – establishes the grandeur of the Nobel brand. The reflections of past laureates’ faces in the letters, coupled with their names in a signature-like typeface, invoke the history of the accolade (Figure 5.1). An ethereal atmosphere is also created through the chiaroscuro of dark clouds and radiant light in the background, along with the single, piercing note of a high-pitched voice that leads into a short orchestral air. A trumpet features prominently in this prelude; because it connotes royalty, it may have been included to form an intertextual nexus with the Peace Prize Ceremony, which is opened by trumpeters from the Norwegian Royal Guard (Norsk Rikskringkasting 2007).

![Figure 5.1](image-url) The faces of Martin Luther King Jr. and Kofi Annan reflected in the letters O and E

Trumpets are used elsewhere to sustain the event’s regality. A Norwegian trumpet player, Tine Thing Helseth, continues the concert introduction by performing a classical fanfare. A trumpet rounds out the segue music performed by
the Norwegian Radio Orchestra as the hosts, Uma Thurman and Kevin Spacey, cross the stage. It also features prominently in the fanfare played when Al Gore and Rajendra Pachauri walk onto the stage, during which they are filmed with a low-angle tracking shot that signifies their eminence.

The others songs in the program are not classical, though, and this widens the concert’s appeal. The artists are also strategically selected. The organisers declared on October 19 – a week after the announcement – that Alicia Keys, Annie Lennox, Earth, Wind & Fire, Juanes and KT Tunstall had been chosen; Al Gore had also invited Melissa Etheridge, in line with each laureate’s ability to choose one performer (Amland 2007). On November 7, the Committee announced that the actor Tommy Lee Jones, Gore’s roommate at Harvard University, would co-host the concert (AFP 2007), although he withdrew and was replaced on December 6 by Kevin Spacey (Canadian Press 2007). The actress Uma Thurman was announced as co-host on November 14 (Indo-Asian News Service 2007).

The reasons behind these selections become clear once the backgrounds of the artists and presenters are investigated. Alicia Keys had sung earlier that year in one of the global Live Earth benefit concerts, founded by Gore and Kevin Wall (AAPBLT 2007). KT Tunstall was “a loyal supporter of Al Gore and his film, joining Global Cool along with other like minded musicians” (Tunstall 2007). Melissa Etheridge, an environmental advocate, wrote and performed I Need to Wake Up, which was the title song of Gore’s documentary An Inconvenient Truth. Annie Lennox was well-known for her humanitarian and environmental work.

Other participants were also purposively chosen, even if they were not specifically engaged in environmental activities. Apart from his socially conscious

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9 Some songs not featured in the DVD are available online. Appendix Five provides a full list of songs.
songs, the Colombian singer Juanes was involved in humanitarian work, particularly in the anti-land mine cause on his native continent (AP 2008). Junoon, a Pakistani rock band, worked for the World AIDS Campaign (UN 2001). The concert’s co-presenter, Uma Thurman, had become environmentally conscious through her children and stated that she was applying those principles to her daily life (WENN 2007a). Kevin Spacey was overseeing the Old Vic theatre in London and developing an eco-friendly project entitled Go for Green (Foxley 2007).

The concert’s hosts have been predominantly British or American. In this case, Thurman and Spacey’s American nationality became significant, as the U.S. was the world’s largest polluter, lacking an agenda for addressing climate change (Gore 2007b). The inclusion of Melissa Etheridge and Alicia Keys (both Americans) was similarly intentioned. Likewise, the selection of Kylie Minogue – announced by the organisers on December 1 (APRS 2007) – can be perceived as a criticism of Australia, which had not yet signed the Kyoto Protocol, although it did so under the new Rudd Government on December 3.

Some musicians actively use the concert to convey a direct, educational message. Melissa Etheridge (while gesturing at Gore, who is seated off-camera in the dignitaries’ box) congratulates “those who are doing everything they can, every day, to … lead us all into a better place, into a better world”. KT Tunstall similarly states, “I, for one, am very willing to be part of Al Gore’s future of a global community, where we realise that what we do affects others, and what they do affects us”. The hosts use the concert introduction and the intervals between performances to repeat the Committee’s citation, congratulate the laureates and convey messages about climate change. For example, a close-up of Thurman looking at the camera while
dramatically stating, “[t]his year’s Peace Prize acts as a warning, to us all, that we are
destroying our planet”, heightens the issue’s acuteness for the viewer.

These manifest messages are supplemented by many latent ones. The set
features a circular stage, behind which stands a central disk wreathed by ribbon-like
bands, and flanked by two, smaller stages, one topped with steel rings (Figure 5.2).
This metallic hemisphere represents the globe, while the central disk variously
connotes the earth (particularly when lit blue) or the Nobel medal (when lit yellow).
The circle is the “traditional symbol of eternity and the heavens” (Thompson and
Davenport 1982, p.110), while organic, curved shapes are generally associated with
the natural order, with a world “not of our making, [which] will always retain an
element of mystery” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, p.55). Digital, vertical light
screens are also employed meaningfully. For instance, although Morten Harket’s
song Letter from Egypt is ostensibly about peace, and not about the environment,
vertical screens that display falling snowflakes lend it a naturalistic tone (Figure 5.3).
During the concert, the set is predominantly bathed in different shades of blue, which could connote peace for some, or environmental elements such as the sea and sky for others (or both, at different moments). However, other colours are also used strategically. For instance, in Annie Lennox’s performance of *Sweet Dreams*, the set colours are initially pink and purple. During the refrain, they change to green; white lights flash among the steel globes; and the lights around the stage spiral across the audience. This higher degree of lighting energy, coupled with the naturalistic connotation of the intense green, underlines the song’s message of environmental activism. As this is the closing number, and the audience and viewer should be left on a galvanising note, Lennox yells the song lyrics “Hold your head up! Keep your head up!” twice, clenches her fist and flexes her arm in an ‘L’ shape: a symbol of determination. Similarly, during KT Tunstall’s song *Hold On*, the set is initially coloured green; it progressively becomes yellow, and brighter lights are used as the number reaches its crescendo, before returning to green.

The song is probably not related to the environment; however, thanks to the polysemic nature of signs, and their ability to generate multiple meanings, the lyrics – “Hold on to what you’ve been given lately ... ‘Cause the world will turn if you’re ready or not” – can signify the globe, taking care of it, and being cautioned that it could be destroyed unexpectedly. Likewise, Kylie Minogue’s song *Can’t Get You
Out of My Head could be perceived as a comment on the haunting warning about climate change or the memorability of Al Gore, particularly as the lights overhead flash and the background becomes pink when Minogue sings “can’t get you out of my head”. Such multiple meanings are partly confirmed during Alicia Keys’ song No-One, at the end of which the artist points towards the back of the stadium while singing “No-one can get in the way, can get in the way of what I feel for you”. Because Gore is previously shown sitting in the dignitaries’ box (at the back), the audience would recognise the direction in which her arm is pointed, associate the edited shots together, and connect them to the laureate.

International media reports following the concert indicate that the popular, musical approach was successful in garnering attention, though the environmental message was ignored by some outlets. WENN (2007b) reported that Kylie Minogue “wowed” the crowd, a view shared by other sources that emphasised the event’s ‘star power’ (Birmingham Mail 2007; Daily Telegraph 2007; Sydney MX 2007). Other reports focused on the artists, too, but gave space to the environmental protection message (Jordan and Sullivan 2007; Kitchener-Waterloo Record 2007). However, these are only reflections from mainstream newspapers. The concert was also covered by other media, including broadcasters, non-mainstream print outlets and websites, which often generate more vibrant discussions. The audience members would also have had their own reactions. This underscores the multiplicity of ways in which international publics could have received information and generated their opinions.
Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Prize (taken as numerous cultural and media resources) is being employed by the Committee as a tool of educational soft power. The laureates and other actors are also partaking in initiatives that are extending this soft power. Van den Dungen (2001) states: “While the only purpose of the … Committee is to award its peace prize, for virtually all other bodies that award peace prizes it is an instrument, among others, for the pursuit of the particular objectives of the founders” (p.510). However, the Prize’s instrumental use is not necessarily a negative quality, as the Committee is forthright about all of its activities, which seek to encourage good in the world. If anything, the awarding body could extend these resources.
Chapter 6

Conclusion: Towards an Understanding of the Prize’s Impacts

The modern Nobel Peace Prize is a multifaceted entity whose awarding bears numerous consequences. By tracing the historical development of the media resources that underpin it, this thesis has presented the accolade in three ways. It has conceptualised the Prize as a meme, or memeplex, which is operationalised through horizontal and vertical replication. It has also shown that the Prize is underpinned by intangible assets and software, which convey symbolic politics in the political communication process. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that the Norwegian Nobel Committee is using these resources to wield soft power with an educational objective. These three aspects need not be mutually exclusive; as Boyd (2008) demonstrates, memes and soft power can jointly shape publics’ attitudes towards themselves and various issues.

Consequently, the thesis has argued that the award can be understood as now including the (formal) Prize elements, as well as many (informal) ones that aid the awardees and their peace causes. The three elements serve to transmit specific messages – fashioned by the Committee and the laureate(s) – to publics around the world. When aligned in this way, the Prize’s extensive microcosmic impact on individuals worldwide, and its promotion of universal peacemaking, can be revealed.

Socialisation, Participation and Universal Peacemaking

The communication of messages between individuals can help them to identify and engage with problems around them. This process is a part of political
socialisation, in which knowledge about, and attitudes towards, politics are shaped directly and indirectly by various agents, including the family, peer groups, media, and political and community groups (Vromen and Gelber 2005, p.289). Hence, the communicational reach of the Prize can constitute everything from videos on the YouTube website to conversations between friends or colleagues. When a specific, normative issue is attached to a given year’s laureate(s), this socialisation acquires even greater strength, as it did in 2007 when the message of climate change action was relayed worldwide.

The IPCC is an excellent example of this process. Although the individual scientists on the panel did not (each) win the Prize, they have been titled ‘co-laureates’ when being introduced in media reports (Taylor 2007), speeches (What Makes a Champion? 2008) and lectures (SURF 2010). Thanks to their alignment with the Prize – or, in Nye’s terms, “the soft power of corporate brand names” (p.90) – these laureates continue to command individuals’ attention. That recognition extends to grassroots environmental organisations such as The Climate Project, which supports volunteers dedicated to educating the public. It uses the word ‘Nobel’ twice on the homepage of its website: for example, in its introduction, “…volunteers worldwide who have been personally trained by former U.S. Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore” (The Climate Project 2010).

In this sense, it is important to recognise that: “We need many kinds of peacemakers” (Carter 2008 [1990], p.ix). This includes those who work across borders, as well as local-level actors: in other words, individuals. As Cobban (2000) underscores, one of the Nobel Prizes’ key contributions “has been an affirmation of the agency and creative power of the individual” (p.231; original emphasis). This call to universal peacemaking, in which everyone can build peace around them and
become “the servants of all” (Dostoyevsky 1876, p.47), also bears fruit in public life. Individuals – collectively or independently – can participate in political processes such as electoral politics and group voting, and thereby foster the Nobel messages in their immediate and national contexts. In 2007, they were encouraged to take steps such as extinguishing unnecessary lights, using public transport, buying environmentally-friendly products, etc.

As the literature review found, political leaders respect the Nobel brand, and have changed their minds on policy as a result of it. The same applies to individuals. A simple search on Google for “was inspired by Nobel” yields more than 300 hits, including: a politician who joined a Gaza aid ship after being inspired by Desmond Tutu (ENI 2010); at least two micro-loan organisations established after their founders were inspired by the Grameen Bank and Muhammad Yunus (Agarwal 2008; Beahm 2010); an international campaign seeking an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which was inspired by Nobel laureates in general (Control Arms 2009); a singer, inspired by Al Gore, performing songs about the environment in Kashmir (Raina 2009); and a UNEP campaign, inspired by Wangari Maathai, to plant millions of trees in areas of human displacement (Billion Tree Campaign 2007). The list goes on.

These cases are all examples of the operation (and successfulness) of persuasion, which refers to “a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviours regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice” (Perloff 2010, p.12). Some songs from the Nobel Peace Prize Concerts on YouTube have persuaded viewers. A video of Yusuf (formerly Cat Stevens) performing Peace Train in 2006 prompted more than 2,000 comments, most being greetings from specific
places, such as “Peace from Germany” (HartaberFakt 2010), but also more personal greetings such as “im Muslim sharing a house with a jewish, Christian and a Hindu we live perfectly in peace. its all possible” (prednisolon 2010). One responder even commented: “I believe in peace now” (Poppyflower66 2008). Such reflections correlate with the findings of a collection of essays edited by Urbain (2008), which emphasises the role of music in promoting peace-building. At the same time, some artists (The Kamkars 2003) sparked vigorous debate; others generated no reaction. This is because, as Miller (2002 [1980]) suggests, communications can shape and change responses, but also reinforce them, in which case, they simply ‘preach to the choir’. More research would be needed to determine which songs and messages were most persuasive.

The rhetorical nexus that can be established between individuals and laureates – through the telling of the prize-winners’ life stories – can also be tremendously impactful. Archbishop Desmond Tutu found that, during South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “just in the telling of the story, people have experienced a catharsis, a healing” (2000, p.100; original emphasis). For this reason, some of the exhibitions at the Nobel Peace Center, which feature “powerful” life stories” (Marcus 2010), have affected visitors tremendously. This is because vivid ‘case histories’ – such as personalised stories or narratives – evoke strong mental images, are more compelling than factual information, easier to access from memory, and more likely to influence individuals’ attitudes (Perloff, p.190). Some visitors to the Peace Center have written about their experiences online. Mannalie (2006) reported being “very touched by the pictures” (par.1); the exhibition From King to Obama was “very moving” for Mullen (2010, par.7); Dianne (2006) reported that she “cried seeing the images of humanity” (par.1); and Daniel (2008) wrote, “when I went into
a room with blue lights and hundreds of images of those who have helped create peace in our world, I could not stop crying, I have never felt anything like it” (par.6). Of course, the backgrounds and subsequent actions of these visitors would need to be examined.

The political participation of individuals is particularly important in representative liberal democracies, in which electoral accountability ensures governments’ liability to voters. Through different forms of political participation – including letter-writing, signing petitions and protesting (Vromen and Gelber, pp.301-310) – individuals can communicate their views.

In 2007, Australians voted in a federal election in which climate change was a key issue. Parliament was prorogued on October 15, three days after the Prize announcement. Did the conferral of the Prize help to place climate change at the top of the electoral agenda? Did it augment voters’ desire to elect a government that would respond to the issue? Did it act as a ‘primer’, placing certain issues prominently in the news agenda, which then influenced the public’s perception of issues facing the nation and their attitudes towards political leaders (Iyengar 2008)? Would it have been given as much priority anyway, simply because of Australians’ “thirst” for action on climate change (Tulloch 2008)? Did it have a similar resonance in America, which held its election on November 4, 2008?

Evidently, it is beyond the remit of this thesis to answer such questions. The Prize’s conferral may not significantly affect some parts of the world. In others, it might have different impacts. By breaking open this complex accolade, a wellspring of different effects is also unsealed.
Appendix One

Additional Literature about the Nobel Prizes

These academic and non-academic works cover a range of topics that relate to the Nobel Prizes, but not directly to this thesis’s topics. The list is not exhaustive and includes works only in English. The categories overlap at times. Also, in line with the scope of the thesis, the list excludes literature that relates to Nobel Prize categories other than Peace.

The categories below, into which the works have been grouped, are:

1. Works About Alfred Nobel
2. Works About the Nobel Prizes
3. Works About the Nobel Peace Prize
4. Works About the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates
5. Works About the Nobel Peace Prize Institution
6. Works About Peace Theories Relating to the Nobel Peace Prize

1. Works About Alfred Nobel


2. Works About the Nobel Prizes


3. Works About the Nobel Peace Prize


4. Works About the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates


5. Works About the Nobel Peace Prize Institution


6. Works About Peace Theories Relating to the Nobel Peace Prize


Appendix Two

The Nobel Peace Prize 2007: Press Release

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2007

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 is to be shared, in two equal parts, between the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Albert Arnold (Al) Gore Jr. for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change.

Indications of changes in the earth's future climate must be treated with the utmost seriousness, and with the precautionary principle uppermost in our minds. Extensive climate changes may alter and threaten the living conditions of much of mankind. They may induce large-scale migration and lead to greater competition for the earth's resources. Such changes will place particularly heavy burdens on the world's most vulnerable countries. There may be increased danger of violent conflicts and wars, within and between states.

Through the scientific reports it has issued over the past two decades, the IPCC has created an ever-broader informed consensus about the connection between human activities and global warming. Thousands of scientists and officials from over one
hundred countries have collaborated to achieve greater certainty as to the scale of the warming. Whereas in the 1980s global warming seemed to be merely an interesting hypothesis, the 1990s produced firmer evidence in its support. In the last few years, the connections have become even clearer and the consequences still more apparent.

Al Gore has for a long time been one of the world's leading environmentalist politicians. He became aware at an early stage of the climatic challenges the world is facing. His strong commitment, reflected in political activity, lectures, films and books, has strengthened the struggle against climate change. He is probably the single individual who has done most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted.

By awarding the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 to the IPCC and Al Gore, the Norwegian Nobel Committee is seeking to contribute to a sharper focus on the processes and decisions that appear to be necessary to protect the world’s future climate, and thereby to reduce the threat to the security of mankind. Action is necessary now, before climate change moves beyond man’s control.

Oslo, 12 October 2007
Appendix Three

Additional, Unexamined Photographs from the Nobel website

These photographs were excluded from the social semiotic visual analysis conducted in chapter four. They are presented here in their published order.

Figure 9.1  The dignitaries’ box at the Oslo Spektrum (Opprann 2007o)

Figure 9.2  Kevin Spacey and Uma Thurman hosting the concert (Opprann 2007p)
Figure 9.3  Kevin Spacey, Annie Lennox, Uma Thurman and Melissa Etheridge dancing on stage (Opprann 2007q)

Figure 9.4  Morten Harkett performing at the concert (Opprann 2007r)
Appendix Four

Free, Online Photographs from the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Events


http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.3752724 [August 10, 2010].


Appendix Five

Songs Performed at the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Concert

The songs are listed in order of performance.

An asterisk (*) denotes an item not included on the DVD (but available online).

1. Fanfare, Tine Thing Helseth
2. Can’t Get You out of My Head, Kylie Minogue
3. 2 Hearts, Kylie Minogue
4. Letters from Egypt, Morten Harket (with Sølvguttene)
5. Movies*, Morten Harket
6. I Need to Wake Up, Melissa Etheridge
7. What Happens Tomorrow*, Melissa Etheridge

A pre-recorded conversation between Rajendra Pachauri and Kevin Spacey* was screened at this point.

8. Minas Piedras*, Juanes
9. Me Enamora, Juanes
10. No-One, Alicia Keys
11. Human Nature*, Alicia Keys
12. Fallin’, Alicia Keys
13. Head to the Sky*, Earth, Wind & Fire
14. Shining Star*, Earth, Wind & Fire
15. Fantasy, Earth, Wind & Fire
16. That’s the Way of the World*, Earth, Wind & Fire
17. *September*, Earth, Wind & Fire

18. *Hold On*, KT Tunstall

19. *Suddenly I See*, KT Tunstall

A pre-recorded conversation between Al Gore and Uma Thurman* was screened at this point.

20. *Lal Meri Pat*, Junoon


22. *Dark Road*, Annie Lennox

23. *Little Bird*, Annie Lennox

24. *When Tomorrow Comes*, Annie Lennox

25. *Sweet Dreams*, Annie Lennox
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Opprann, K. 2007g, *Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Rajendra K. Pachauri (representing the IPCC) and Al Gore are interviewed by Jonathan Mann of CNN.*, Photograph, December 10, The Norwegian Nobel Institute, Nobel Web


Opprann, K. 2007q, *Kevin Spacey, Annie Lennox, Uma Thurman and Melissa Etheridge dancing on stage at the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Concert.*


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