

(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION,
RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:



THE ROLE OF MEDIA
IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

24 October 2015

INFOCORE Working Paper 2015/07

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: JOURNALISTIC TRANSFORMATION

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How to cite this paper: Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K., Baden, C., & Gonen, Y. (2015). Methodological Framework:

Journalistic transformation, INFOCORE Working Paper 2015/07. Online available at http://www.infocore.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Methodological-Paper-WP7_final.pdf

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METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: JOURNALISTIC TRANSFORMATION

(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

WP7 examines conflict news coverage, focusing in particular on the unique contribution of the professional news media to conflict discourse. Using INFOCORE's relational, diachronic and comparative design within an integrative conceptual framework, it addresses two main types of journalistic transformations: a) Inter-textual transformation: the ways in which journalists mold other available texts into news, including cultural, political, professional, evaluative, emotive and structural transformations; and b) Discourse-level transformation: the ways in which conflict news discourse evolves in a self- and other-referential manner, over time, focusing in particular on processes of polarization and radicalization. We examine these transformations in relation to the journalistic coverage of six conflicts – Israel-Palestine, Syria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Burundi, and DR Congo – over a period of multiple years.

The methodological procedure is based on a mixed-method approach, which combines the respective strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis, and proceeds in three main stages. First, a preliminary qualitative phase lays the conceptual and operational foundation for the automated analysis. It consists, on the one hand, of a shared endeavor by INFOCORE's content analytic WPs to identify a wide range of conceptual categories relevant to the conflicts and to construct a multi-language ontology for the automated analysis; and, on the other hand, of a pilot study, which analyses the journalistic inter-textual transformations applied to key source texts during an escalation period in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second main analytical stage is based on an automated content analysis of a vast number of news texts in 69 news outlets within and outside the respective conflict areas. Based on an analysis of the construction and evolution of specific interpretative frames and agendas for action in news discourse, this phase identifies patterns of discourse-level transformations, most notably processes of polarization and radicalization. Based on the findings of the large-scale automated, quantitative analysis, a final stage of in-depth qualitative analysis targets key moments in the evolution of news discourse in the different conflicts. The range of journalistic transformations that characterize these moments are analyzed in depth, drawing also on data from other WPs, in particular the content analysis of strategic-communication source texts (WP6) and the interviews with journalists and political actors (WP1).

This multi-layered procedure is aimed to shed new light on the unique contribution of the news media to conflict news discourse, and to provide comprehensive understanding of the contextual conditions that shape the multifaceted roles played by journalistic transformation in violent conflicts.

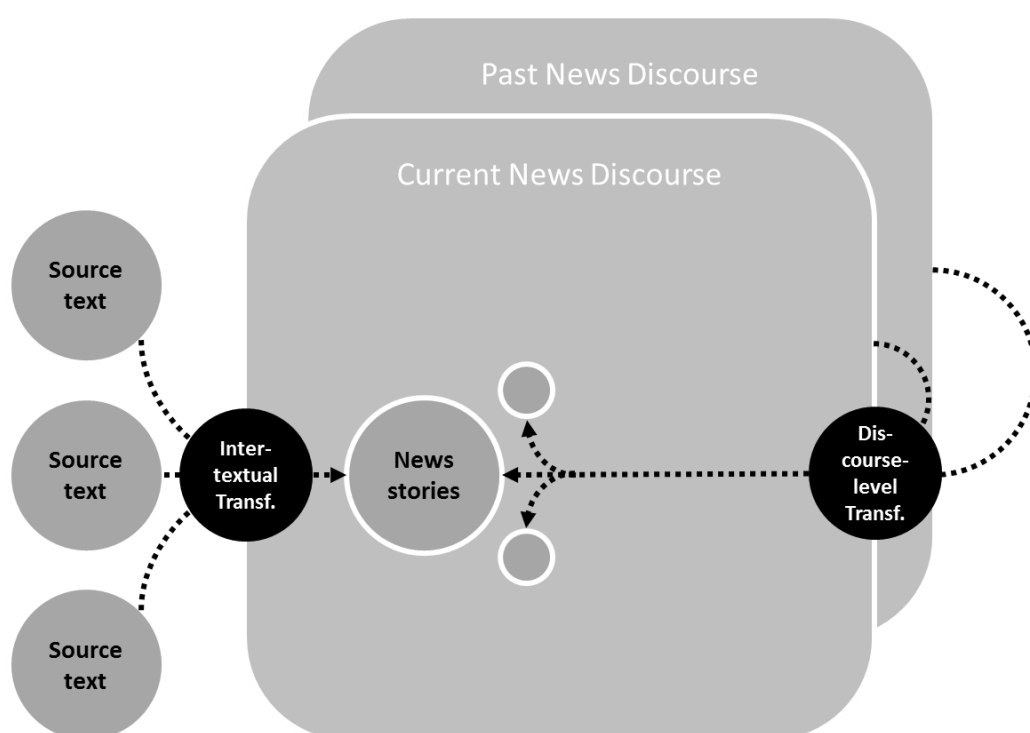
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METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: JOURNALISTIC TRANSFORMATION

The central role that the news media play in violent conflict is derived not only from their functioning as conveyors of information originating from other actors and sources, but also from their unique contribution to the shaping of this information over the life cycle of the conflict. WP7 focuses on conflict news content – in particular evidential claims, interpretive frames and agendas for action¹ – as it is selected and molded by the professional news media, and as it evolves over time. Using INFOCORE's innovative design within an integrative conceptual framework, it aims to contribute to the large body of literature on conflict news coverage, by examining the unique contribution of the news media to conflict discourse as achieved by two main types of transformations: a) Inter-textual transformation: the ways in which journalists mold other available texts into news; and b) Discourse-level transformation: the ways in which conflict news discourse takes shape and evolves in a self- and other-referential manner, over time. This working paper lays the methodological framework for addressing these two types of interrelated journalistic transformations. Figure 1 presents a simplified schematic representation of the two levels of transformation.

Figure 1: Inter-textual and discourse-level journalistic transformation



¹ A frame is defined in this study as a contextualization that situates a specific claim within a selective, coherent, purposeful interpretative context (Baden, 2010); Agendas for action as prospective discursive constructions that postulate specific goals which must still be achieved (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013); and evidential claims as ontological assertions about key concerns in the conflict, with variable epistemic certainty. For a detailed discussion of these three building blocks of INFOCORE's content analytic perspective, see Baden (2014) and Baden and Stalpouskaya (2015).

Conceptual Background

In analyzing discourse, including news content, we can distinguish between internal and external relations of texts (Fairclough, 2003). Whereas internal relations refer to semantic or grammatical relations between elements within a specific text, external relations refer to the text's relations with other elements in the social world, among them other texts. The text's relation to these external texts is captured by the notion of inter-textuality (Ibid., see also Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2009; Baden, forthcoming). The notion of inter-textual journalistic transformation is developed in this study as referring to the various content-based practices in which journalists incorporate, adapt and reconstruct other texts in conflict news stories, in ways that fit specific constraints, interests, values and norms. In the following, we distinguish between inter-textual transformations in a narrow sense, concerning the journalistic practices involved in creating concrete news pieces from available source texts, and discourse-level transformations, which are also inter-textual but do not refer to specific source texts, but arise from the self-referential production of “new” news against the background of past news.

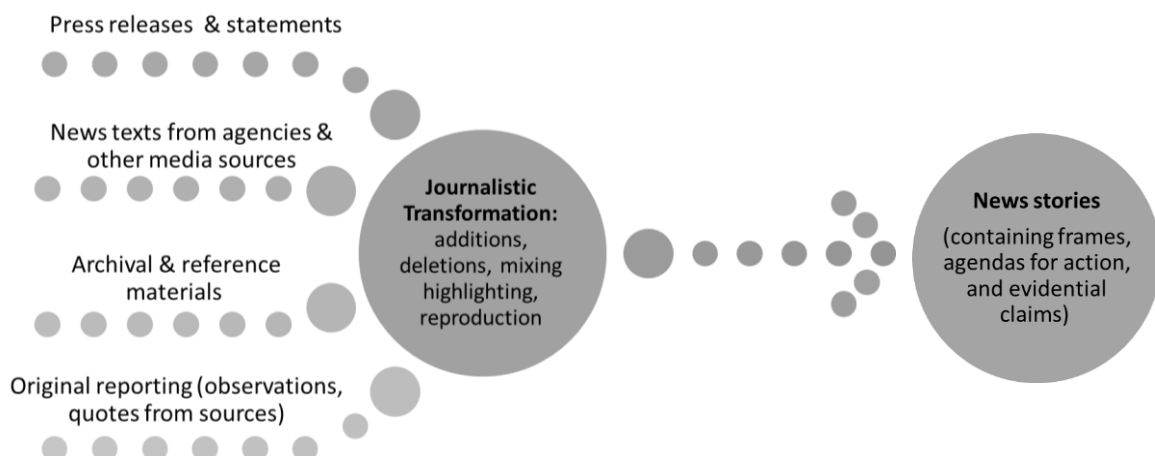
Inter-textual transformation

News reports, as other types of media texts in the contemporary information environment, are not created in isolation from the wider textual environment in which a particular news organization is located. Rather, news are created against the background of a wide variety of input materials – from PR reports and official statements, via news agency reports and texts created by online, non-professional media actors (bloggers, social media contributors, etc.), to actively collected input and original reporting (see figure 2). The key task of journalism, which is in many ways constitutive of its social function, is to transform these raw reports into news: Extracting the essential information from selected news sources, and adding further background through research and the collection of relevant commentary, journalists arrange texts obtained from a variety of sources to present accounts that are relevant for a journalistic audience (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Baden, 2015). There is some controversy as to the amount of transformation applied by journalists to the texts provided by interested communicators: As a result of time pressures (the need to produce more news in less time), technological developments (allowing access at any point in time to the vast universe of digital content), and attempts to cut costs (resulting in less original reporting), and also the professionalization of strategic communication (presenting source texts already in a fashion suitable for publication as news), journalists increasingly apply only limited transformation: Often, available source materials – most notably public relations materials and texts arriving from news agencies or published by other news media – are presented as news with only minor changes (Boczkowski, 2010; Davies, 2008; Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008). In other cases, elements taken over from available source texts are primarily arranged, but otherwise largely unchanged. While the transformation achieved by journalists becomes in many ways more limited and mechanical, practices of complex and widely resourced transformation persist and have arguably become more important to defending the unique contribution of journalism in the context of automated “news” aggregators and the growing phenomenon of “churnalism” (i.e., the practice of merely repackaging

press releases or materials from news agencies, with little to no transformation; see Davies, 2008). However, the amount and manner of inter-textual transformation that source texts undergo during the journalistic production process toward the creation of a news text has received little attention in the existing literature.

In the context of conflict coverage, the transformations that journalists apply to press releases and political statements is particularly interesting in relation to political elites' and other strategic actors' attempts to shape conflict discourse (see Fröhlich, 2014; Wolfsfeld, 2014). Examining the ways in which journalists mold these press releases and statements into news can shed new light on the important question regarding the news media's reliance on- and adoption of the government's discourse and frames in times of conflict (e.g., Althaus, 2003; Bennet, Lawrence & Livingston, 2006). At the same time, the transformation of other news texts as a source for journalists is particularly relevant in the context of transcultural inter-textual transformations, such as the use of materials originating from the news media of the other side to the conflict (see Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2011), or the localization of transnational news content (Clausen, 2004; Cohen et al., 1995). These two categories, with particular emphasis on materials originating from strategic actors, are the focus of WP7's investigation of inter-textual journalistic transformations.

Figure 2: The process and sources of inter-textual journalistic transformation



In transforming these raw materials into news, discursive elements in the original texts are added or excluded, amended or replaced, truncated or elaborated, foregrounded or downplayed, fused, juxtaposed or separated, to create reconstructed claims, interpretations, and agendas. While multiple devices can be included in a single transformation of a specific content, transformation can also be minimal (e.g., an almost exact reproduction of a press release). The resulted news stories contain frames, agendas and claims that range from being close reproductions of the corresponding elements in the original texts to overall transformations of these elements. Typically, we would expect to find both replications and new textual elements in news stories that rely on other available texts.

Based on a broad literature review (see Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Gonen, 2014) and a qualitative pilot (see details below), we identified six types of inter-textual transformation, which will be examined in relation to conflict coverage:

1. *Cultural transformation*: The (re)construction of information in ways that connect to a culture's myths, values, symbols and collective memories, or through other manifestations of national/ethnic identities.
2. *Political transformation*: The (re)structuring of information in ways that advance a particular ideological or political perspective.
3. *Professional transformation*: The journalistic (re)formulation of information and claims in accordance with professional standards and norms, such as accuracy, balance and multi-perspectivity, as well as scrutiny of the actions and claims of the government and other officials (the watchdog role).
4. *Evaluative transformation*: Additions or amendments that establish the authority and credibility of the information presented in the news (epistemic truth status of evidential claims), or its importance (the significance of the news story).
5. *Emotive transformation*: Tuning the level of affect or appeal to audiences' emotions in news texts.
6. *Structural transformation*: The adjustment of news texts to conventional journalistic storytelling formats, as well as to specific spatial, temporal and technological constraints within different types of media and news organizations.²

Discourse-level transformation

The second major set of transformations investigated by WP7 concerns the ways in which conflict news discourse emerges not from individual source texts, but in constant reference to its own past as well as news discourse elsewhere: Journalists produce news texts against the backdrop of what is currently known in a public debate, while at the same time referring to other debates both for legitimation (e.g., through co-orientation) and distinction (e.g., by criticizing debates taking place elsewhere, or applying foci they perceive to be missing in the debate; see also Baden, forthcoming). Such discourse-level transformations do not necessarily take place in a consciously reflected manner and often do not require explicit references to past or other discourses; however, from the ways in which news discourse evolves over time, aligning or distinguishing itself relative to other (sub)discourses in the media, important conclusions can be drawn about the role of journalists in shaping news discourse: Through the over-time aggregation and self-reflexive adaptation of multiple individual journalistic decisions regarding inter-textual transformations, important dynamics in news discourse arise. Specifically relevant in the context of WP7 are two interconnected processes which have been argued to derive from intrinsic “media-logics”: polarization and radicalization. Polarization occurs if increasingly disconnected views of some conflictual issue are held by different groups within a society (e.g., religious/ethnic groups, political factions, majority and minority), or between different societies that have a common object of concern (such as two societies in conflict with

² While structural transformation is part of the range of journalistic transformations we identified, it is of lesser relevance in the context of our research questions. It thus plays a minor role in the project and is also excluded from the operationalization of WP7's major constructs, as presented in table 2 below.

one another). Radicalization is a process whereby individuals and groups increasingly adopt uncompromising, absolute views upon social reality, including the construction of the social environment in increasingly essentialist, Manichean terms (Sageman, 2007). Polarization is considered a prerequisite for the escalation of conflict (Sunstein, 2003; Shmueli et al., 2006), while radicalization is by definition conflict-oriented. It should be emphasized, however, that although radicalization goes hand in hand with polarization, these are not identical processes: first, whereas polarization is relational, in that it concerns the distribution of beliefs and stances among different groups, radicalization can also occur within one group/individual. Second, polarization does not necessarily involve radical positions on each side. Both polarization and radicalization are reflected in the range of (shared/distinct, negotiable/extreme) concerns and interpretations advanced in the debate as well as in the specific agendas derived therefrom. The news media can contribute to such interpretive and positional processes of polarization and radicalization not only by disseminating the agendas and frames advanced by specific individuals and groups to the larger group/public, but also by reshaping and reinforcing these agendas and frames through practices of journalistic transformation. Through the reflexive nature of news discourse, the privileged selection and supportive inter-textual transformation can initiate a self-reinforcing process: Where journalistic transformation patterns align, news present a systematically biased representation of a conflict, which is then appropriated by the public and political actors and reinserted into the news. In consequence, deviant ideas and agendas appear increasingly irrelevant and are de-selected and discounted during transformation, while highly idiosyncratic or very radical contributions appear acceptable and consonant within the context of current news discourse (Motta & Baden, 2013).

Transformation practices

Both for individual, inter-textual transformations and the aggregate patterns of discourse-level transformations, news stories are shaped by a variety of transformation practices and routines, following different and often contradicting ideals and purposes, impulses and loyalties. Nowhere is the tension between these different orientations more pronounced than in conflict situations (see also Zelizer, 2005). According to a dominant line of argument in scholarship on media and conflict, early stages of violent conflicts are marked by “rallying around the flag” tendencies, while professional impulses regain force in later stages of the conflict, particularly when political consensus breaks down (e.g., Hallin, 1989; Neiger & Zandberg, 2005; Wolfsfeld, 1997): Journalistic transformation practices are highly contingent and vary profoundly over time, resulting in very different patterns and qualities of news coverage. However, research that integrates different types of content-based practices and systematically examines diachronic patterns across different types of conflicts and different stages in the evolution of these conflicts is still missing. We address this challenge by following the evolution of the different types of journalistic inter-textual transformations and discourse-level transformation patterns over the life cycle of the examined conflicts (e.g., are cultural transformations more prevalent in earlier stages of conflicts/during escalation periods, giving way to professional transformations later on?).

Research agenda

Beyond the shared agenda for the content-analytic Work Packages (see Baden & Stalpouskaya, 2015), WP7 aims to examine the particular contribution of the news media to this discourse, through an analysis of the patterns of inter-textual and diachronic journalistic transformation over the life course of different conflicts. While specific elements of these transformations were examined to greater and lesser degrees in scholarship on journalism and on media coverage of conflict, they were not investigated within an integrative framework that addresses the various types of transformations in journalistic practices (i.e., cultural, political, professional, evaluative, emotive and structural), and the detected transformations were usually assumed based solely on the analysis of the final journalistic product (not in comparison to the transformed information). Furthermore, these studies mostly focused on a few western media systems within limited time frames. Using INFOCORE's relational, longitudinal and comparative design, WP7 will focus on the following main areas of investigation:

1. Identifying the range of journalistic practices associated with inter-textual transformations in conflict coverage, with a primary focus on the journalistic transformation of statements and press releases by strategic actors/political leaders. In addition to identifying the various dimensions and attributes of different kinds of transformations, we will also examine their interrelationships and the patterns underlying the manifestation of the different types of transformations in different types of conflicts, news outlets and stages of conflict.
2. Identifying patterns in discourse-level transformations, focusing in particular on polarization and depolarization processes within and across national/ethnic groups, as well as processes of radicalization. As the news media have often been blamed for fueling conflict, when polarization and radicalization are detected in news discourse, we will examine which practices of journalistic transformation are associated with these processes. In addition, both polarization and radicalization processes will be examined in relation to escalation and de-escalation processes in the conflict itself, in order to theorize the relationship between the evolution of news discourse and the evolution of conflicts: how, on the one hand, interpretive frames and agendas for action in news discourse are changing in reaction to developments in the conflict, and how, on the other hand, news discourse contributes to- or forebodes these developments.
3. Identifying the contextual conditions that contribute to the identified journalistic practices, based on a systematic comparative analysis of the manifestations of the various journalistic transformations in different kinds and stages of conflicts, within different media and political systems, and across different types of media located within and outside conflict areas.
4. Finally, the content-based practices of journalistic transformation will also be linked to the overall process of news dissemination (as investigated by the content-analytic and audiences WPs), as well as to the actors who produce the news and provide the materials for journalistic transformation (as investigated by WPs 1, 2 and 3). We will address journalists' views and explanations of transformation

practices in the production of conflict news, as well as political actors' perceptions and strategies in relation to these practices.

Design

The examination of conflict news coverage is based on a mixed-method approach, which combines the respective strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches to discourse analysis, and further develops the applied tools and their integration (see Baden & Stalpouskaya, 2015). While both inter-textual and discourse-level journalistic transformations are studied using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, over-time dynamics are examined primarily using large-scale automated content analysis, whereas the study of inter-textual transformations relies more heavily on qualitative/manual approaches. The methodological procedure consists of three main analytical stages: a preliminary qualitative phase, quantitative discourse analysis, and in-depth analysis of key cases.

Qualitative pre-study

The goal of this stage is to lay the conceptual and operational foundation for the content analysis of conflict news coverage. It consists of two main components:

1. A shared endeavor of the content analytic WPs to identify a wide range of conceptual categories and larger semantic structures (evidential claims, interpretative frames, agendas for action) relevant to the conflicts, and to construct the multi-language ontology for the automated analysis (see details in Baden & Stalpouskaya, 2015). In the first stages, sampled news texts in the different languages are read by native speakers of the respective languages, with the purpose of identifying all meaning carrying concepts whose omission or replacement in the texts would alter the meaning constructed. This yields a corpus of texts with highlighted contents, and a long list of words or expressions in the relevant languages that have been found important to record. The identified words are then mapped onto semantic concepts, involving processes of abstraction, instantiation, and hierarchical ordering of the concepts. Subsequent steps will include comparative integration of the concepts identified in different languages and contexts, and additional processes of indicator completion, disambiguation and validation.
2. A specific pilot of inter-textual journalistic transformations. The pilot is based on following the transformations applied to key source texts that were picked up by the Israeli, Palestinian and international news media during the escalation leading to the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict and the beginning of the Israeli military operation (June 15-July 15, 2014). Focusing on textual sources that were picked up by more than one Israeli/Palestinian newspaper for the front page, we obtain the original source and examine the ways in which it was incorporated into news stories of nine news outlets. The selected news outlets represent the Israeli and Palestinian media spheres (three leading newspapers on each side), as well as leading third-party newspapers (the New York Times, The Guardian, and Süddeutsche Zeitung). The textual sources we follow range from official statements and press releases by Israeli PM Benjamin

Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, to speeches at a rally for three kidnapped Israeli teens, interviews by Hamas leaders on al-Jazeera, and news agency stories. We examine which discursive elements in the original texts are reproduced, highlighted, amended or excluded by the different news outlets, which textual elements are added by the news media (e.g., additional points of view, evaluations of the reported claims, cultural references, etc.), and in which context the original sources are embedded. The purpose of this pilot is to refine the core categories of journalistic transformation (cultural, political, professional, evaluative, emotive, and structural transformations), map the various practices and dimensions associated with each type of transformation as well as their interrelationships, and identify suitable indicators as well as initial patterns of transformation characterizing different types of news outlets with varying positions vis-à-vis the conflict during an escalation phase (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Baden, 2015).

Automated content analysis

This analytical stage consists of a large scale automated content analysis which measures the presence of all contents, which have been operationalized theoretically or identified in the previous stage, in an immense number of news texts. Besides the range of content-related codes applied by all four content-analytic WPs, this measurement also includes those indicators specifically designed to detect inter-textual journalistic transformations (see below). Both the general dictionary and the WP7-specific dictionary of transformation markers are applied to all, or as much as possible, of the news reports relevant to the six studied conflicts: The coverage in all 69 selected news outlets (below), within and outside the conflict area over an extended period of time – from three years for the DR Congo conflict to more than³ nine years in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – yields a total of more than a hundred thousand news texts that enter the analysis (see Annex I and the sampling strategy below for details on the news outlets selected for the automated analysis and the time range we cover for each conflict). The vast amount of relevant news texts, obtained through broad keyword searches in the archives of the selected news outlets,⁴ are fed into an auto-coding software environment developed based on the AmCAT package (van Atteveldt, 2008), along with the multi-language ontology that contains all concepts and indicators found relevant to the measurement of conflict-related news content.

The subsequent steps of the analysis are based on the foundation laid out in Baden (2010) and are further developed in INFOCORE in ways that significantly advance the state of the art in the field of automated content analysis (see Baden & Stalpouskaya, 2015, for the full description of these stages and developments). In general, the analysis proceeds on a very low level of abstraction initially, representing the texts as semantic networks that remain as closely as usefully possible to the original texts; only thereafter,

³ In addition to the time ranges specified in the common methodological framework (Baden & Stalpouskaya, 2015), WP7 includes also data from the first half of 2015. Thereby, it accounts also for more recent escalations, such as the military coup in Burundi.

⁴ In some cases, where a keyword search is not possible, such as in many of the African news outlets, the full available archive will be fed into the auto-coding software.

an analytic search for characteristic patterns, systematic developments, and key moments and texts identifies higher order semantic structures and discourse dynamics in the data. These also include the diachronic processes of polarization and radicalization in news discourse, which are captured by identifying patterns in the development of the higher order semantic structures of interpretative frames and agendas for action within the different news outlets: polarization and de-polarization processes are marked by interpretative frames and agendas for action that become increasingly distinct or overlapping, whereas radicalization processes are marked by an increase in specific agendas for action and an excluding discourse.

Cultural, political, professional, evaluative and emotive transformations are detected in this stage primarily at the discourse level (rather than dyadic, as in the pilot study), based on a select set of textual indicators which can be automated. We first look at patterns of these indicators over time and in different comparative contexts (conflict/news outlet) within the corpus of news discourse, and in later stages compare the news corpus to the corpus of strategic communication (gathered by WP6). To facilitate further analyses of the chain of inter-textual transformations, the automated coding also records references in news texts to other textual sources that the news stories refer to, in particular those that are included in INFOCORE's sample (e.g., a reference in a Palestinian newspaper to an article from the Israeli newspaper Haaretz or to a story from Wafa news agency).

In-depth qualitative analysis

Based on the results of the automated analysis, the final step consists in a manual in-depth analysis that targetedly addresses key texts and moments in the respective conflict news discourses. It draws upon a wide range of data and contextual information – from the other WPs, qualitative in-depth analysis of selected texts, knowledge about the conflict context, etc. – to interpret and validate the quantitative findings, and to provide further detail for theory building and the generation of practice-oriented conclusions. Patterns of discourse-level transformation identified in the automated analysis will be further examined through a reconstruction of specific inter-textual transformations that were used in key moments of the large-scale transformations. The analysis of inter-textual journalistic transformations at this stage will be based on in-depth analysis of textual dimensions that cannot be captured by the automated analysis (e.g., connotative cultural references), as well as on data provided by the other WPs, in particular WP6 (strategic communication), WP1 (journalistic production), and WP2 (political actors). Thus, key news texts will be compared to the original source texts produced by strategic communicators, and the inter-textual transformations will be contextualized using the input from INFOCORE's reconstruction interviews with journalists, as well political actors' accounts of their intended messages and interactions with the media in the relevant key moments of the conflict/debate.

Sampling Strategy

Selection of news media

INFOCORE's media sample for the content analysis includes news outlets in the relevant conflict areas (Israel-Palestine, Syria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Burundi, DR Congo), as well as in Serbia (which is constitutive to the Kosovo public debate, as the Serbian minority in Kosovo largely relies on Serbian media) and in four public spheres outside these conflict regions (Germany, France, UK, and the transnational sphere, including also the European Union). The selection of news outlets is based on a combination of the following considerations:

1. *Influence*: we focus on leading news outlets, which have a larger role in shaping the public discourse in the relevant public spheres, either due to their popularity (circulation/reach) or their status as elite/opinion-leading media, which other media and decision makers rely on. We attempt, as much as possible, to include in each country both types of influence (by popularity and elite status).⁵
2. *Representation*: within a country/area's leading news outlets, we aim to represent the broadest possible range of relevant political orientations and group affiliations. When the elite or most popular news outlets do not cover the full range of perspectives, we also include in the sample news outlets that represent the missing groups/sub-discourses (most notably minority groups). Given our research questions, across countries, a greater emphasis is given to the representation of media from the conflict areas. Thus, while the Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian, Macedonian and Kosovar public spheres are each represented by five media outlets in the sample, Germany, France, and the UK are each represented by three major news outlets.
3. *Pragmatic considerations*: given the centrality of computerized content analysis in our study, we include only news outlets where we can obtain their coverage in a digital, written format (either through public archives or through access given to INFOCORE). Thus, a much greater emphasis is given to written news outlets (newspapers and news websites) over audio-visual media. However, the sample also includes a few influential television channels, particularly transnational ones (e.g., Al-Jazeera, CNN, Euronews), where we rely on available transcripts of the coverage. In the African countries, where radio plays a central role in the information landscape, we include several major radio stations in the sample; in some cases we use transcripts of newscasts, as prepared by media monitoring organizations, and in others we use the texts in the radio stations' news sites. In addition, because the available African archives are not complete and the average number of available relevant news texts in each news outlet is somewhat lower than in other conflict countries, we partly compensate by including a larger number of news outlets from Burundi and the DRC in our sample (up to ten outlets from each country).

⁵ In some cases, most notably in Africa, the Balkans and Syria, there is limited circulation/exposure data. In these cases, we relied on available information in combination with expert knowledge on which are the most influential news outlets.

In addition to the regular news outlets, the corpus for the automated analysis also includes six news agencies – two international (AP, AFP, and Xinhua) and three national (in Burundi, Syria and the Palestinian Authority). These are included in the sample due their centrality as a source of information for other media outlets and in order to better investigate mechanisms of inter-textual journalistic transformations (e.g., how do local news outlets transform conflict-related information originating in international news agencies?). In total, 69 news outlets are included in the sample for the automated content analysis. Based on developing theoretical and empirical needs, coverage from additional news media may be included in the subsequent in-depth qualitative stage. Table 1 presents the list of sampled news outlets and their main characteristics (including the criteria for which they were selected for the sample).

Table 1: Media sample for the automated content analysis

Country/ Conflict area	Name of News outlet	Print	On line	AV	Style	Influence/ Relevance	Political/Group Affiliation
Israel	Ynet	-	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Center
	Israel Hayom	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Right-leaning
	Yedioth Ahronoth	Daily	-	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Center
	Haaretz	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Elite	Left-leaning
	Arab48	-	+	-	Hybrid	Group-specific	Israeli-Arabs
Palestinian Territories	Al-Quds	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Pro-Palestinian Authority (East- Jerusalem)
	Ma'an	-	+	(+) ¹	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated ² (West Bank)
	Al-Hayat Al- Jadidah	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Official outlet	Palestinian Authority (West Bank)
	Al-Resalah	Weekly	+	-	Hybrid	Group-specific	Pro-Hamas (Gaza)
	Felesteen	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Group-specific	Pro-Hamas (Gaza)
Syria	DP News	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Pro-government
	Tishreen	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Official outlet & Popularity	Government
	Baladna	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	---	Non-affiliated
	Enab Baladi	Weekly	+	-	Hybrid	Group-specific	Rebels
	Souriatana	Weekly	+	-	Hybrid	Group-specific	Rebels

Country/ Conflict area	Name of News outlet	Print	On line	AV	Style	Influence/ Relevance	Political/Group Affiliation
Macedonia	Dnevnik	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Pro-Government; Right (Macedonian language)
	Utrinski Vesnik	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Group-specific	Center-left (Macedonian language)
	Vecer	Daily	+	-	Popular	Popularity	Pro Government; Nationalist (Macedonian language)
	Koha	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Center-right (Albanian language)
	Lajm	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Center-right (Albanian language)
Kosovo	Koha Ditore	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity & Elite	Center-left (Albanian language)
	Telegrafi	-	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated (Albanian language)
	Gazeta Express	-	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated (Albanian language)
	RTK1	-	+	(+)	Hybrid	Popularity & Elite	Public service; pro-government (Albanian language)
	RTK2	-	+	(+)	Hybrid	Popularity & Elite	Public service; pro-government (Serbian language)
Serbia	Vecernje Novosti	Daily	+	-	Popular	Popularity	Pro-government; Right (Serbian language)
	B92	-	+	(+)	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated (Serbian language)
	Politika	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Elite	Pro-government (Serbian language)

Country/ Conflict area	Name of News outlet	Print	On line	AV	Style	Influence/ Relevance	Political/Group Affiliation
Burundi	Iwacu	Weekly	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity & elite	Non-affiliated
	Le Renouveau	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Official outlet	Government (pro-Hutu)
	Actualité Burundaise	-	+	-	Popular	--	Government
	Arib	-	+	-	Hybrid	--	Non-affiliated
	Radio Publique Africaine (RPA)	-	-	+	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated (foreign support)
	Bonesha FM	-	-	+	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated (foreign support)
	Radio Insanganiro	-	+	+	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated (foreign support)
	Rema FM	-	-	+	Hybrid	Group- specific	Pro-opposition
	Radio Nationale (RTNB)	-	-	+	Hybrid	Official outlet	Public service; Pro-government
DRC	Le Phare	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Group specific	Opposition
	Le Potentiel	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity & Elite	Non-affiliated
	L'Avenir	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Elite	Pro-government
	Congo Tribune	-	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Non-affiliated
	Digital Congo	-	+	(+)	Hybrid	Popularity	Pro-government
	Media Congo	-	+	-	Hybrid	Elite	Non-affiliated
	Radio Okapi	-	+	(+)	Hybrid	Popularity	UN station
	Radio Kivu One	-	+	(+)	Hybrid	Group- specific	Non-affiliated (Goma)
Germany	Der Spiegel	Weekly	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity & Elite	Left-leaning
	Die Welt/Welt am Sonntag	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Popularity & Elite	Right-leaning
	Süddeutsche Zeitung	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Popularity & Elite	Center-Left
France	Le Monde	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Popularity & Elite	Center-Left
	La Figaro	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Center-Right
	L'Express	Weekly	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Center

Country/ Conflict area	Name of News outlet	Print	On line	AV	Style	Influence/ Relevance	Political/Group Affiliation
UK	The Guardian	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Elite	Center-Left
	The Daily Mail	Daily	+	-	Popular	Popularity	Right-leaning
	The Daily Telegraph	Daily	+	-	Hybrid	Popularity	Right-leaning
Transnational media outlets (TV & radio)	Al-Jazeera	-	+	(+)		Popularity (Middle East)	Qatar-based
	CNN International	-	(+)	+		Popularity	US-based
	Radio France International	-	+	+		Popularity (Africa)	Public service
	Deutsche Welle	-	+	(+)		Popularity	Germany-based
	Euronews TV	-	+	+		Elite	Pan-European perspective
	BBC World Service	-	+	(+)		Popularity (Africa) & Elite	UK-based; Public service
Transnational media outlets (newspapers)	New York Times	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Popularity & Elite	Leaning left
	The Economist	Weekly	+	-	Highbrow	Elite	Center-right
	Financial Times	Daily	+	-	Highbrow	Elite	Center-right
News agencies	Associated Press (AP)	-	+	-		Popularity	U.S.-based
	Agence France- Presse (AFP)	-	+	-		Popularity	France-based
	Xinhua	-	+	-		Popularity (Africa)	China-based
	Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)	-	+	-		Official News Agency & Popularity	Syrian government
	Palestinian News Agency (WAFA)	-	+	-		Official News Agency & Popularity	Palestinian Authority
	Net Press	-	+	-		Group- specific	Burundi; Pro- Tutsi

¹ A plus sign in brackets indicates that the format exists but is not included in the study.

² The category of "non-affiliated" is used in countries/areas with low press freedom and/or close affiliations between news outlets and state institutions, in order to distinguish media outlets which are relatively independent. The non-use of this category in relation to democratic countries does not suggest that the news outlets in these countries are less independent than the ones that are marked as non-affiliated in the table. Rather, the focus in the democratic countries is on political orientation rather than institutional affiliation.

Selection of news texts

Within each media outlet, the collection of news texts for the computerized content analysis applies a keyword based selection procedure within the timeframe defined for each conflict. We cover full years of news coverage, but include also the first six months of 2015: 2006-2015 for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 2010-2014 for Kosovo and Burundi, 2011-2015 for Syria and Macedonia, and 2012-2015 for the DRC. For each conflict, we define a range of keywords that ensure that texts containing these keywords are very likely to be about, or at least partly about, the respective conflict: Reflecting the different manners of referencing conflicts in domestic and foreign news, we rely on a combination of references to groups, actors, sites and issues related to the conflict, conflict labels and characteristic actions within conflict. Within the range of texts thus identified, we apply a range of data cleanup procedures (e.g., removing doubles, eliminating irrelevant texts) but in principle retain all relevant texts, which jointly constitute the population of discourse. Based on the patterns identified in the automated, quantitative phase, small groups of texts are selected for the in-depth analysis, representing key moments in the evolution of the news discourse.

Measurement

WP7's measurement strategy is based on interweaving inductive and deductive logics in all main stages of the analytical process. Relatedly, measurement is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Notably, however, the inductive-deductive and qualitative-quantitative distinctions do not fully overlap: inductive logic is also incorporated into our automated-quantitative measurement procedures (for example, in identifying frames), and the in-depth qualitative analysis in both the pilot study and the final stages of the project is based in part on textual indicators drawn from the literature.

The different types of transformations are thus operationalized based on a multi-stage process: identifying the various indicators associated with each type of transformation as part of the ongoing qualitative pilot study, including key indicators that can be examined using automated content analysis in the ontology, while capturing and further developing the other dimensions at the subsequent stage of in-depth qualitative analysis of select cases. Table 2 presents our approach to the measurement of the core constructs examined by WP7, including specific examples of textual indicators for the different types of transformations. The full procedures for identifying interpretive frames, agendas for action and evidential claims is described in Baden and Stalpouskaya (2015).

Table 2: Operationalization of WP7's main constructs

	Construct	Operationalization
Discursive building blocks	Interpretive frames	Recognizing potential frames by searching for patterns in the joint use of concepts in news discourse, and manually validating that the detected patterns represent coherent interpretative frames.
	Agendas for action	Identifying directive statements (e.g., "we need to...", "call for...") within 15 main categories, based on a matrix of five arenas in which action is required (military, economic, political, psychological, and social/humanitarian) and three conflict directions: escalation, maintenance, and de-escalation.
	Evidential claims	Identifying those propositions that make statements about the (past/present/future) state of specific concerns of interest in the analyzed conflicts, collecting what is said about these concerns and qualifying their epistemic status (alleged, likely, ascertained, etc.).
Inter-textual transformations	Cultural transformation	Identifying specific cultural selections and constructions in the news texts, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ References to key events and symbols in a culture's collective memory (e.g., The Holocaust, The Nakba) ▪ Religious references (e.g., "the Chosen People") ▪ References to everyday and pop-culture knowledge within a specific culture ▪ In-group references ("we", "our") ▪ Stereotypical representations of ingroup and outgroups
	Political transformation	Identifying selections and constructions that advance a specific political point of view, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prominence of specific political actors ▪ Reinforcement of agendas for action which are identified with a specific political perspective ▪ Criticism and praise for specific political actors and positions
	Professional transformation	Identifying textual additions/formulations which correspond to conventional professional standards and norms, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adding/juxtaposing different points of view ▪ Maintaining accuracy in relation to the original source ▪ Corroborating, contextualizing or questioning given claims ▪ Distanced style of reporting (e.g., indirect quotes; paraphrasing that eliminates emotional dimensions)

	Construct	Operationalization
	Evaluative transformation	Identifying textual elements that establish the epistemic truth status of evidential claims presented in the news, or the significance of the news story. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of evaluative reporting verbs, such as claim, declare, admit, speculate, doubt, concede, predict, announce (each denoting a different level of confidence in the content of the reported claim) ▪ Markers of importance and novelty such as "historic", "rare", "exclusive", "the first time since...", "fatal", "at the crossroads", "for the next decade".
	Emotive transformation	Identifying emotional selections and formulations, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of emotive language (e.g., descriptors such as "crisis", "catastrophe", "disaster", "devastation", "slaughter") ▪ Personalization mechanisms ▪ Analogies to collective traumas ▪ Future-oriented arousal of fear and hope
Diachronic processes	Polarization	Measuring the degree to which interpretive frames and agendas for action advanced in news outlets with different political/group affiliation become increasingly distinct (signifying polarization) or increasingly overlap (signifying depolarization) within the time period examined for each of the six conflicts.
	Radicalization	Measuring increase and decrease in the presence of radical agendas (i.e., agendas that disregard due process and the legal order) in conflict news coverage, in combination with excluding discourse and strong emotive language.

Contingency plans

While content analytic procedures are generally low-risk, there are two types of potential risks that arise from the scale and complexity of our methodological approach, concerning access to archival materials and the implementation of some of the more complex, innovative automated procedures. These are unlikely, as by this stage we ensured the availability of digital archives for all the selected news outlets and we are confident in our ability to carry out our plans for the automated analysis. However, in case that accessibility conditions change or that we encounter insurmountable technical obstacles, alternative plans are available. For archival materials, we can either replace the news outlet with another suitable outlet, or acquire the archival materials using a budget we save for this purpose (in cases where the public archive is no longer accessible but materials can be bought from the respective news organization). For automated analysis, we plan several options for procedures that were not implemented in the past. For example, we have devised several alternatives for linking news texts to the transformed sources, ranging from both probabilistic and aggregate automated procedures to simpler procedures of manual matching.

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