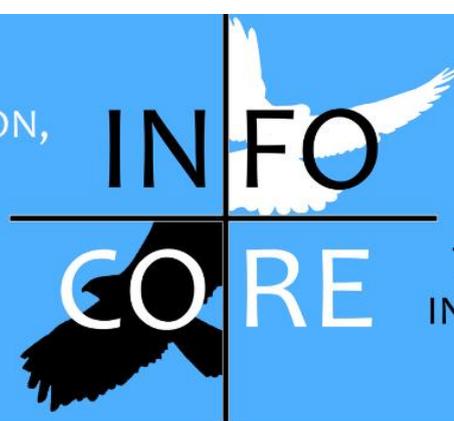(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION,
RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:

INFO
CORE

THE ROLE OF MEDIA
IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

INFOCORE Definitions

"Transformation of Information"

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Definition: "Transformation of Information"

Transformation of information refers to the intertextual process through which available input is molded to fit specific constraints, interests, values and norms, using a range of discursive devices. Within this process, discursive elements 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).

In the news dissemination process, intertextual transformation generally follows the stage of selection, with selection referring to what gets picked up by the news media and other actors (what to cover?), whereas transformation refers to the molding and reconstruction of the selected content (how to cover?). However, there are also many selection decisions within the stage of transformation (for example, what information is selected for the headline?). Furthermore, news selection criteria are not always associated with the intrinsic qualities of the original content, but with how the story can be covered (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001). Thus, selection and transformation, which constitute two of the primary processes investigated by the content analytic WPs, are not fully independent processes.

In molding information into news, the specific contents that are the object of journalistic transformation can originate from both outside and inside the media. They can be inserted into the news by strategic communicators, but they can also be added actively by the journalist via investigation, recruitment of additional sources, or the journalist's own prior knowledge; likewise, contents can be picked up from reports in social media (the same way that reports in the professional media can be transformed by social media) or from other professional news outlets. This may also include the interesting case of transforming information that appeared in the media of the other conflict party (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2011).

We can distinguish between different types of transformations, based on their different functions. An initial list derived from a pilot study (Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Baden, 2015) includes the following types:
- *Evaluative transformation* − additions or amendments that establish the authority and credibility of the information (e.g., the use of epistemic modalities), or its importance (by emphasizing the news value of the story).
- *Political transformation* − (re)structuring information in ways that advance a particular agenda or ideological perspective (Entman, 2007; Fowler, 1991).
- *Cultural transformation* − (re)constructing interpretive frames in ways that correspond to a culture's myths, values, symbols and collective memories (Bird & Dardenne, 1988; van Gorp, 2007).
- *Emotive transformation* − tuning the level of sensationalism and emotionalism in texts (see Wolfsfeld, Frosh & Awabdy, 2008, for the centrality of this practice in the coverage of violent conflicts).
- *Professional transformation* − (re)arranging information and claims based on professional standards and norms (such as the balance norm or the provision of context).

Coherently bringing together these various types of transformation, which have been addressed in divergent research traditions (though usually not under the title of transformation), can help account for the multifaceted roles played by media transformation in conflict news dissemination. This list also ties to typologies of news influences (addressed by WP1), thereby further linking the processes of news production and dissemination.

Transformation of information is the main concern of WP7 (as suggested by its name, "Journalistic Transformation"). However, it also applies to the other content analytic WPs, in particular to the turning of specific contents into social media texts (WP5) and the reconstruction of news discourse in political discourse (WP8). It may also apply to the transformation of information in the creation of NGOs' reports (WP3) and the reconstruction of evidential claims, interpretive frames and agendas for action by lay publics, as part of reception and appropriation processes (WP4).

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