(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

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INFOCORE Working Paper

Distinctions: Audiences, Lay Publics & Media Active Lay Publics

Conceptual Framework for WP3

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Abstract: This working paper outlines a theoretical and a conceptual framework for INFOCORE's Working Package 3 which concerns the role of Media Active Lay Publics in construction and interpretation of conflict news content. Its aims are threefold: (1) to discuss relevant literature concerning the relationship between the notions of the Audiences and (Lay) Publics; (2) to construct a workable definition of the notions of Lay Publics (LPs) and Media Active Lay Publics [MALPs]; and (3) to review literature relevant for the discussion of the role of MALPs in violent conflicts. This paper creates a theoretical foundation for the operationalization of relevant concepts for the WP3 methodological Framework – Media and Publics.

Key words: lay publics, media active lay publics, audience, conflict

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1. Interpretation and Interaction Cycle

Various types of conflicts at different phases of escalation may bring various degrees of control on (or damage to) the media system in afflicted areas. Large-scale violence makes reliable information a rare commodity, and this is true regardless of the kind of control on the ground. At one extreme, a robust power structure may monopolize the means of news production and thus monopolize news discourse to serve the aims of one elite. This type of propagandistic colonization would resemble the model in totalitarian states where a bureaucratic structure 'monopolizes mass media space' (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 144). At the other extreme, polyphonic propaganda machines may make what we can call an 'information cacophony' where the reliability of information is 'problematic' due to similar discourse-construction capabilities of two or more conflict actors, producing a 'hyper-real' effect (Baudrillard, 1994: 1). In between these two extremes there are varieties of possible models in which the loci of control shift between various actors involved. In all these cases though, the processes of discourse interpretation and corresponding action are never vectored in a simple one-way fashion due to the immense social, behavioral and communication complexity underpinning the violence. Taking this complexity into account, conflict prevention, management and resolution in this respect are to be viewed as interlinked processes that need to be addressed in a holistic fashion (Swanstrom & Weissmann, 2005: 18).

In a world where political movements, economic realities, conflicts and other social phenomena are increasingly mediatized (e.g. Cottle, 2006), it is of great importance that one raises the issue of the involvement of what is here theorized as *Media Active Lay Publics* in the process of conflict news production. This theoretical concept is founded in the tradition of Weberian Sociology in the sense that it aims to interpret, to the greatest level possible, the *meaning* actors give to social actions (Weber, 1978). More specifically, it deals with the way Media Active Lay Publics' involvement in the process of news production and their interpretations of news content change over the course of the conflict. In other words, we focus on the (a) interpretations and key interactions between different audience segments (more specifically Media Active Lay Publics) and (b) different types of media in (c) different types of conflicts and (d) at different stages of conflict.

By *(a) Interpretations* and *Interactions* we mean, on the one hand, the interpretative processes that members of various audience segments employ to make sense of and construct meanings from the discoursive nexus encompassing conflict news; and on the other hand, the modes of infusing information back into the news content. The concept of *Interpretative Frames* is central in this respect and it is concerned with the meaning of media messages. Baden (2010) integrates several

theorized aspects of the concept of *frames* into a coherent definition. He defines the frame as a 'contextualization that situates a specific claim within a selective, coherent, purposeful interpretative context'(2010: 22-29), drawing on the notions on *selectivity* (Entman, 1993) by which frames 'select specific aspects of reality to construct meaning'; *coherence* (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987) as frames connect aspects of reality in a certain fashion; and *purposefulness* (Benford & Snow, 1992) by which frames 'imply specific interpretations, evaluations, or courses of action' (Baden, 2010: 22-29). INFOCORE Working Package 3 operates within this definition, but it puts an emphasis on the frames that are *decoded* from the media messages and the *meaning* that a segment of the Audience (more specifically Media Active Lay Publics) brings back to the process of news production.

Furthermore, we investigate this process across *(b) different types of media* - both traditional media outlets and new media available in certain conflict zones on a variety of Internet platforms. While taking into account the complexity and variety of possible factors underlining conflicts, it can be claimed that inflammatory media discourses lead to opposing interpretations among different segments of the audience and different modes of interaction with different types of media (e.g. Georgievski & Trpevska, 2005; Frère, 2007).

This communication complexity is addressed across *(c) different types of conflicts*. We hold that conflicts should neither be understood in a narrow military sense so as to exclude so much of the political, social or economic processes underpinning them; nor should they be conceived too widely so as to incorporate just about any dispute between groups. *Conflict phases (d)* are important as the roles of the variety of actors in the conflict news production change over time and in correlation with the intensity of violence or the attempts for political resolution (Swanström & Weissmann, 2005).

2. 'The Laity' of Lay Publics

Before we elaborate on the concept of *Lay Publics* and *Media Active Lay Publics* we need to clarify the use of the adjective 'lay' in the coinage. The term 'lay' has its origin in the ancient Greek word '*laïkos*' (from laoß). Its meaning refers to 'the tribe' or 'a group of people' that have some peculiarity in common ('of the people'). According to the Merriam-Webster English Dictionary Online, through the Latin '*laicus*' and Anglo-French '*lai*', the adjective 'lay' specifically refers to people who belong to a particular religion but who are not priests. In a more general sense, 'lay' refers to people who are 'not trained in a certain profession: who are not having a lot of knowledge about a certain thing' ("lay" in merriam-webster.com, 2014). Similar

explanations of the adjective 'lay' can be found in the Oxford Dictionary Online ("lay" in oxforddisctionaries.com) and Cambridge Dictionary Online ("lay" in dictionary.cambridge.org, 2014). 'Lay' in this sense suggests a 'generality' and an 'absence of *specific* expertise' of the group in question.

Furthermore, the term 'lay publics' is in use in contemporary scientific literature to designate the so-called 'general public' or that part of the 'publics' which is not 'expert'. For example, a somewhat loose use of the term based on the distinction between 'experts' and 'non-experts' is to be found in Harrison, Burgess & Filius (1996). They investigate the responsiveness of the 'general' or the 'lay' public in adjusting to certain aspects of their lives for the sake of environmental considerations. Burns, O'Connor & Stocklmayer (2003) suggest that the term "lay public identifies people, *including other scientists* [emphasis added], who are not experts in a particular field" (2003: 184). Dupras & Williams-Jones (2012) highlight the importance of trust between 'lay publics' and 'experts' in the "implementation of public health measures" in a risk society (2012: 591). As it follows, 'lay publics' are not simply an 'ignorant mass of people' but rather are well informed citizen groups (possibly even experts in other fields) who lack expertise in the particular field of mass communication during a conflict.

We will define the concept of *Lay Publics* and more specifically *Media Active Lay Public*s in light of the active-passive debate within communication theory and on the basis of its differentiation from the concept of *Audiences*. The "*active-passive*" dichotomy debated among few traditions in communication studies is an important starting point in theorising the kind of 'lay publics' we aim to research here. The direct media effects theory of the Frankfurt School (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002) has attributed passive quality to a vulnerable audience. This 'passivized' conception of the *Audience* has been challenged from a variety of theoretical standpoints. Two of the most relevant are the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) approach, which made the notion of 'active audience' central to its research (Levi, 1983; Rouner, 1984; Palmgreen, 1984), and the Cultural Studies tradition, which developed a sophisticated approach rooted in linguistics and literary theory (Hall, 1980). Both of these approaches, we claim, gain new relevance in the Internet era.

3. The Notion of Activity as Orientation towards the Other

U&G - a media effects theory sub-cluster (McQuail, 1994) – originally repositioned the axis of the fundamental question to which audience studies should seek answers. This tradition rests on the notion that people use media with respect to their needs, their expectations and gratifications

sought. Consequently, researchers should ask *how people use* media rather than *what media do to people* (Kitzinger, 2004: 170). The shift in focus meant that audiences are to be viewed as 'active' and that media use is 'goal oriented' (Katz, Blulmer and Gurevitch, 1973). This has stimulated primarily quantitative research studies that isolated patterns of media uses. However, it has also been a target of strong criticism, with some critics demonstrating how intangible the idea of 'activity' is actually. The 'active audience' concept has been criticized for its elusiveness (McQuail, 2005), for lack of capacity to be operationalized and for not being falsifiable (Biocca, 1988). Some of the criticism has had a philosophical focus, precisely because to claim that audiences are 'active' and 'goal oriented' implies that the communication process is rational (McQuail, 2008). In a critical essay, Biocca (1988) isolates two levels of 'activity' with which U&G operates. In the *(a) stronger conceptual sense* 'activity', he argues, entails what Bauer (1964) calls '*imperviousness of influence*' presupposing Enlightenment notions of individual autonomy and self-determination. In other words, this position is essentially a validation of liberal ideas of *freedom of choice* and *consciousness of value acquisition*. We are careful with this primarily individualistic approach to media use. While Biocca (1988) has made his objections to the issue of autonomy primarily from the standpoint of a cognitive psychology, discussing how individual psyche brings about a complexity of niches to enable understanding and choice, we have two idiosyncratic considerations.

First, we investigate the *interpretative frames* (Entman, 1993; Baden 2010) that are *read* by the *individuals-as-part-of-a-group*. This sociological standpoint entails an examination of the *group interaction and dynamics* of the hermeneutical processes. While admitting that most of what is public is in fact mediatized, our standpoint allows for the view that other 'factors' apart from media contribute to how *individuals-as-part-of-a-group* interpret/construct reality and how they see themselves as shapers of the same. We adopt this position starting from a debate that has been going on for a few decades in sociology and political theory. Cautious so as not to engage the slippery terrain of political debate between liberals and communitarians, we give credit to one valid argument given by two culturally informed lines of political thought and anthropology that will shed light on our conception of *individuals-as-part-of-a-group*. The Communitarian (Taylor, 1994) and the Multiculturalist (Kymlicka, 1996) views, though from divergent positions of departure, claim that cultural identity and membership in cultural groups give individuals a sense of meaning of self and of society. Implicit in this is the conception and the understanding of the Other - it is through this 'dialogical' (Bakhtin, 1999) existence or the awareness of the 'significant other' (Mead, 1934) that individuals are capable of giving meaning to themselves and the world around them. This saliency of self-identity is perhaps even more significant in times of conflict. Conflicts

tend to homogenize groups, thereby giving identities a thicker political and social meaning. Some theoretical approaches of the study of nationalism, for example, claim that friction (ethnic, political, class etc.) hardens identities, and that individuals tend to conform to the 'logic' of the group during friction (e.g. Breuilly, 1989; Nairn, 1990). Hence, our theoretical stance is that 'activity', understood as '*imperviousness of influence*,' is connected with the cultural fabric of which individuals are a part.

Second, we look at what and how these *individuals-as-part-of-a-group* feed back to the process of conflict news production. This brings us to what Biocca (1988: 53) calls (b) *the weaker sense* of the notion of 'activity' entailed by the U&G. This meaning entails *selectivity* (as audiences select their media exposure), *utilitarianism* (as audience members are self-interested consumers), *intentionality* (as there are conscious motivations in members of audiences) and *involvement* (affective arousal of a para-social nature or the cognitive organization and information structuring). These categories, however, have an issue with their falsifiability. As Biocca (1988) argued, they have no opposing concept and are only to be accepted as ideas of what Blumler (1979) argued to be 'articles of faith'.

Following this discussion, we take a more palpable meaning of the concept of 'activity'. We are more interested here in individuals (to misuse two of the Sartrean concepts) as '*oriented for the other*' than in individuals as '*oriented for him/herself*' (Sartre, 1976)'. The cognitive level of an individual's motivations is important in this process, but it is the in-group interplay that will make the social impact eventually. When individuals are members of Lay Publics they would be *oriented* towards making a social imprint and therefore *act* upon their beliefs, values and attitudes. Hence, in the analysis of the *group interpretation* of the conflict-related news and the *interactions* of Lay Publics with the media it will be also possible to identify *agendas for action (*Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013) that emerge through the process of social interaction - *emerging agendas for action*.

The overall INFOCORE conceptual framework defines *agendas for actions* as "prospective discursive constructions that postulate specific goals which must still be achieved" (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013: 91-111; Baden, 2014). This agenda is usually associated with actors that comprise an easily recognizable and formalized structure, such as a political party or a military organization. However, in the context of Lay Publics we can recognize agendas for action, but these are emerging and not (or not yet) formulated in the form of a political manifesto or a program. The

concept of *emerging agendas for action* draws upon the three-element model of the concept of *agendas for action* (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013, Baden 2014) which entails a presentation of the need to change the current situation; a future desirable state which is however achievable, and a proposition of a course of action to realize the desirable situation (Benford & Snow 2000, Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013, Baden 2014). For the purpose of WP3 *emerging agenda for action* entails (1) a verbal/written manifestation of the intent to act for the change of the current state of affairs; (2) a general idea of a desirable situation; and (3) an action undertaken towards building a consensus on achieving it. By 'activity' we consider engaging with the media in the name of an *emerging agenda for action*, not in the sense of the audience's choice of programs.

The Internet gives a viable means of the Lay Publics to articulate *emerging agendas for action*. Rugerio (2000: 3) proposed that this tradition takes into consideration the concepts of 'intertextuality, demassification, hyper-textuality and asynchronies to respond to the developments'. Indeed, recent research concerning Twitter (Chen, 2011), Facebook (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009) and mobile telecommunications (Wei, 2006) have revealed that new technologies make 'activity' a more measurable concept. In the case of WP3, the Internet gives a more tangible way of operationalizing 'activity'.

The tradition of Social Action Theory underpins the overall approach we are adopting here, which is rooted in the sociology of Max Weber, in symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986), in phenomenology (Schutz, 1970) and in the sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann 1991). The tradition is tied to the Weberian concept of *Social Action* that is '[…] human behavior when and to the extent that the agent or agents see it as subjectively *meaningful* […] By 'social' action is meant an action in which the meaning intended by the agent or agents involves a relation to *another* person's behavior and in which that relation determines the way in which the action proceeds" (Weber, 1978: 7).

4. Lay Publics and the Emergence of their Agendas for Action

The concept of 'activity' is also an important part of the Cultural tradition in media and communication studies. It is anchored in Stewart Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding model which is informed by the field of linguistics and literary studies (de Saussure, 1959; Eco, 1976). Hall argued against 'linear' attitudes toward the communication processes and proposed a circular approach whereby he envisages a "structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments - production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction" (Hall,

1980:117). This circuit of interconnected practices puts audiences into an active position as individuals draw different meanings from the media messages which are inherently polysemic. *Meaning* being drawn out of the discursive process is necessary; otherwise there would be no 'consumption' of the message. This meaning needs to be translated into social practice if there is to be any 'effect' from the communication. Talking about the mode of production of messages, Hall draws attention to one important 'discursive' aspect – the 'assumptions about the audience' ('the implicit reader' in narratology). This implies that the production process presupposes a constructed knowledge and that the publics are present in the construction of messages, both as a *source* (the real audience) and as a *receiver* (as an implicit audience). We draw from Hall on the assessment that the processes of production and reception are distinctive but inter-related. However, for us the role of the Lay Publics is more direct with respect to *social action*. Lay Publics would not only collectively interpret and change the encoded meaning, but also would *act* with actual engagement with respect to a certain issue and make an attempt to push through an *emerging agenda for action*. *Media Active Lay Publics* would push these emerging agendas through the media. Compared to the traditional mass media, the Internet obviously makes this push-process more viable and this is subject to analysis in different conflict and media settings within WP3. While in some country cases (Macedonia, Kosovo, Israel) *Media Active Lay Publics* are easily identifiable, in others (DR Congo, Burundi) they are not as developed.

The production moment, to continue the explication on Hall's analysis, encodes messages as a meaningful discourse. This encoding entails a framing process in a way that was defined at the outset. The encoded messages need to be decoded (a meaning should be drawn out) in order for the message to have any effect. Hall differentiates between what he calls "meaning structures 1" and "meaning structures 2" to designate the asymmetry between the encoded and decoded messages. This asymmetry is also a point of departure for WP3: informed by the content WP's that are going to analyse the "meaning structures 1" – the framing of the conflict news, we are going to investigate further the "meaning structures 2" – the frames that are being drawn out by a variety of Lay Publics in the selected country cases. We use this model as it enables us to compare the "meaning structures 2" and the "meaning structures 1" and analyse how and why they differ. The meaning drawn from media messages cannot be isolated from other encircling socio-cultural or political meaning carriers. We are not going to attempt to isolate these, but we will analyse the power relations intertwined in this process by analysing the dominant social-cum-political-cum-cultural *Super Frames* (recognized in specific items of media coverage), and see how these are transposed into the matrix of interpretative frames drawn by Lay Publics. Furthermore, we are analysing how *emerging*

agendas for action are being formed through these collectively created frames and how these frames are being fed-back in the process of conflict news production.

5. Media Active Lay Publics and the notion of 'Sociation'

Thus far, the concepts of Audiences and Lay Publics (as well as Media Active Lay Publics) have been used loosely. A growing literature in communication studies that draws on sociology and political philosophy takes into consideration the notion of the 'public sphere' in making an attempt to analyse these in their relation to one another. We make a case here to view the notion of Audiences and Lay Publics as closely connected but *not* interchangeable phenomena. Sonia Livingstone (2005) isolates three approaches in her conceptualization of Audiences and Publics:

First, the 'opposing' approach whereby these two concepts are regarded as divergent phenomena. There is a moral quality to this stance, which is in essence Habermasian, in that media hinder the public sphere as they turn publics into disengaged consumers. This line of thought is held by Putnam (2000), who claims mass media's responsibility for the decline in civic engagement. Of course, this stance is not without merit, but the 'opposition' approach is inappropriate for analytical reasons because the *Audience*s and the *Publics* 'do not refer to separate' phenomena, as the same group of people can be regarded both as audiences and as publics, even though 'public' refers to 'collective and consensual action' (Livingstone 2005: 17).

Second, according to Livingstone (2005), there is the 'collapsing' argument whereby the two concepts should be joined together. This view is informed from the Cultural tradition in media studies. In essence, this view is preoccupied with the fact that publics as well as audiences are mediatized. Indeed, what we can call 'the public' gets its symbolic resources through the media and also it is dependent on the media to sustain a meaningful position. Furthermore, media are the most important bearer of the public sphere. While this view points out the aspect of mediatization, it is still a great overstretching to look upon all audience as a 'matter of public or citizenship significance' (Livingstone, 1998:202). Thus, Denis McQueil (2005:407) has suggested that there are two meanings of the notion of audience: the one that originates in society and the one that originates in the media. The former implies that there is a pre-existing or pre-mediated societal structure with some degree of self-awareness and autonomy of identity which is relatively stable. The latter meaning refers to a 'category of individuals' that is constructed in the media. Even though he recognises that in time mediatisation makes it next to impossible to differentiate between the two, it still has a great analytical value to see that on the one hand people might 'stimulate an

appropriate supply of content', or on the other hand 'the media attract people to the content they offer' (McQuail 2005:407). The latter meaning - 'the category of individuals'- has less political significance. However, the former sense of his conceptualization of audiences as pre-existing societal groups is close to what we can regard as *Lay Publics* – it is concerned with some level of orientation toward a societal movement, of some kind of group identity and an *emerging agenda for action*.

The analytical juxtaposition of the two concepts made by Hartley (2002) brings into play Benedict Anderson's (2006) concept of 'imagined communities' when talking about the audience. Audience in Hartley's conceptualization is imagined by the industry, by the researchers and by the regulatory bodies. Of course, Anderson's concept refers rather to 'self-imagination' with respect to nation creation, but it can prove quite useful for the differentiation of these intertwined but distinct phenomena. Hartley draws attention to the point that naming an imaginary group such as the audience is in fact a procedure of 'homogenization,' inflating it with a certain quality (characteristics, behaviours, needs, want etc.). But this still is an imagination from *an external focal point*. In this respect, Hartley's conceptualization corresponds with McQuail's 'category of individuals' when he says that '[t]he term audience is used to describe a large number of unidentifiable people, usually united by their participation in media use' (Hartley, 2002: 11). The idea of self-imagination is not as clearly articulated in Hartley's conceptualization of the Publics, even though it is implied. We emphasise Anderson's notion here with respect to our concern. Being socially oriented, in construction of an emerging agenda for action it is necessary that the Publics rest upon a self-imagination principle of identity (who they are – and who they are not), action (what and how they do) and purpose (what they want to achieve).

The *third*, most recent conceptualization suggests that there is great analytical value in assessing the two as *separate but interrelated phenomena* while asserting the issue of mediatisation of both (Livingstone, 2005; Deyan, 2005). Sonia Livingstone has warned against both opposing and collapsing the concepts of Audiences and Publics (2005: 18). She argued that the former view disregards the fact that the audiences, publics, crowds etc. often comprise the same people and that the 'actuality' of the increasingly mediated publics on the one hand and the diffused audiences on the other, does not allow for a simplification of the conceptualisation. She opposes the latter proposition, namely to collapse the concepts of audiences and publics, on account of analytical value of such action. Instead she proposes the conceptualisation of an intermediate realm, the 'civic' (Livingstone, 2005:31), between the 'audiences' and the 'publics'. This, the argument goes,

would escape the danger of the expansion of the concept of publics to include all public discourse and participation; and it would encompass interesting but ambiguous phenomena such as gender-politics in the family realm, or the emerging social movements mobilising online (Livingstone 2005: 32). According to Livingstone (2005: 31): "[Audiences] sustain a modest and often ambivalent level of critical interpretation, drawing upon – and thereby reproducing- a somewhat ill specified at times inchoate or even contradictory sense of identity or belonging which motivates towards but not wholly enable the kinds of collective and direct action expected of a public". Daniel Dayan (2005) shares Livingstone's position and he juxtaposes the issue of public with other concepts such as the spectators, the crowds, the communities, the activists and militants and the witnesses, by emphasising the issue of attention. While audiences are, as he puts it, 'spectators in the plural', a public is "[…] a coherent entity whose nature is collective; an *ensemble* characterized by shared sociability, shared identity and a sense of that identity" (Dayan, 2005:46). He emphasizes that there is a fundamental difference here in the style of attention in that the attention of the spectators is 'floating' and 'undirected'. On the other hand, the attention of publics is 'issue driven' in addition to being focused. The juxtaposition with the crowd reveals that there is a level of inter-changeability of the two, as sometimes crowds behave like publics, and often they act rationally. Here Dayan brings about the notion of the 'public sphere' and the notion of the 'public space'. The former is associated with publics - it is the domain of the 'circulation of discourses'; the latter belongs to the crowds – it is the realm of the 'circulation of bodies'. The 'topoi', thus, are criteria that separate crowds and publics - some publics are congregative, but in general they do not need to be. Crowds must be congregative, or else they stop being crowds (Dayan, 2005:48). Dayan argues that 'publics *are* communities' [*emphasis added*], but this creates the need to distinguish those communities that we call publics and those that are not. He proposes, and we adopt that approach, to look for the distinction in Weber's notions of 'communalization' and 'sociation'. The former entails a subjective feeling of belonging to a community, while 'sociation' is a rational community made in a contractual fashion.

6. Studying Media Publics in Conflicts

The main role of the WP3 Media and Publics within the overall INFOCORE framework is to contribute to the study of the *production of conflict news*. Its main focus will be to identify the role *media active lay publics* (individuals and groups) play in the process of conflict news production. This will be achieved by investigating the interaction between media active lay publics and (a) different types of media in (b) different types of conflicts and (c) at different

stages of conflict. Lay publics are understood as one of the key "[…] actors that play an active role in shaping media coverage" (INFOCORE application[1] 2013: 3 &10).

The role of media in conflict has been extensively discussed in academic literature (Wolfsfeld, 2004). The role of media in securing peace (Wolfsfeld, 2004; Bratic, 2006) has also been researched with respect to the peace journalism paradigm (Hanitzsch, 2007). However, there has been limited attention given to the specific role of *media publics* in time of conflict. Recently, Zeitzoff (2014) has investigated how public support by international audiences using social media influenced conflict dynamics during the 2012 Israeli-Hamas conflict. Zeitzoff accounted for conflict intensity, attention to conflict, changes in the popular support expressed in social media and assessed how both conflict sides changed their behavior with respect to changes of the other factored variables. Popular support for Hamas decreased conflict intensity enforced by Israel, but not the other way around; increase in public support of Israel did not make Hamas more responsive to the new situation. This quantitative research focuses on 'public support' expressed through social networks, but not on the interpretations drawn by the media active lay publics and the imputed meaning fed back to the production of conflict news. Other research studies involving pressure on conflict actors with implication on international audiences focus on conflict outcome rather than dynamics, and are interested in audiences only peripherally (Bergovitch & Gartner, 2006; Regan & Stam, 2000). Regan and Stam, for example, conclude that there is a curvilinear relationship between mediation, the time factor and dispute resolution. This implies support for Putnam's (2000) contention that international mediations involve audiences. However, he does not explore this issue further. Studies have also been written on the role of diasporas (diasporic audiences) in conflict dynamics (Miladi, 2006). Uncertainty reduction theory, which was originally envisaged to be focused on affective behavior regarding media, has recently been informed by the U&G paradigm (Boyle et al., 2004). According to this approach, there is a "likely relationship between emotional reactions to traumatic event and information-seeking efforts" (2004: 156). This article further suggested that times of strife, such as terrorist attacks or other considerable traumatic events, "trigger increased effort to learn about the traumatic events and to increasingly use media" (2004: 157). Further back, Faeron (1994) has investigated domestic political audiences in relation to the escalation of international disputes. He draws from the rational choice theory perspective, however,

[1] (In)forming conflict prevention, response and resolution in violent conflict, Seventh Framework Programme: SSH.2013.4.2-1: Media in conflicts and peace building.

and thus focuses on elites' behavior with regard to audience, and not on the active input of audiences in the political process. There is also a thriving literature on mobilization and the media. A comparative inquiry in Belgium into the behavior of activists using the internet and activists who are not users has shown that there is a socio-demographic and political difference between the two groups (Van Laer, 2010). According to Van Laer (2010) the two groups differ in terms of type of organization and in some modes of mobilization. What is significant about this study is that the findings suggest higher educational background of the 'online group'. While it investigates the social structures underlining mobilization, it does not get into the issue of decoding media content by studied groups of activists. Almeida and Lichbach (2003) have used a Media Sensitivity Protest Intensity Model to see how activist web sites report domestically and internationally on protests against transnational organizations and corporations. Walgrave and Vliegenthart (2012) have investigated from a sociological perspective how the number and size of demonstrations affect the political agenda in Belgium.

7. In conclusion: Summarized distinctions

We conclude by summarizing the two main distinctions coming out of this conceptual analysis:

***First*,** we differentiate between *Audiences* and *Lay Publics* on the basis of four criteria: **[i]** self-imagination and group-self-awareness (Anderson, 2006); **[ii]** orientation towards the other as 'sociation' (Weber, 1978); **[iii]** construction and formation in society (McQuail, 2005); and **[iv]** existence of an emerging 'agenda for action' (Baden, 2014).

[i] Drawing partially on Hartley (2002) and McQuail (2005), we conceptualize audiences as a 'category of individuals' that are imagined as a category by the industry, by the researchers and by the regulatory bodies. While audiences are indeed active in terms of active interpretation of the media content, they do not have an active sense of belonging to a particular group that has a particular value position and a particular issue that unites them in terms of political action (political in the broad sense of the word). Thus, to label an imaginary group as an audience, in Hartley's words, is in fact a procedure of 'homogenization' which inflates it with certain qualities (characteristics, behaviors, needs, wants etc.) from outside - audiences are constructed from an 'external' point. On the other hand, Lay Publics are about self-imagination (to use Benedict Anderson's concept) and group-self-awareness. Thus we can speak of *individuals* when we speak about audiences, but we can only speak about *individuals-as-part-of-a-group* when we conceptualize Lay Publics. This distinction between the atomistic concept of the individual and the socially oriented *individual-as-part-of-a-group* is an important one.

[ii] Lay publics, however, are not self-imagined in an ethno-cultural sense, but as issue and value oriented informal groups. There is no ethnic-Macedonian Lay Public, but there is a Liberal Anti-Traditionalist Lay Public within the population of ethnic-Macedonians. As Dayan (2005) proposes, we use Weber's (1978) notions of 'communalization' and 'sociation' to distinguish one form of association from the other. While communalization entails a subjective feeling of belonging to a community, 'sociation', is a rational community made in a contractual fashion.

[iii] In [i] I have outlined one of the criteria to distinguish Audiences from Lay Publics. It has to be said that this distinction does not mean that Audiences are the complete opposite from Lay Publics – as one group of people against another. It only means that this distinction is useful for analytical purposes. Audiences and Lay Publics do not refer to completely different people; after all, Lay Publics are a segment of the audience. Sonia Livingstone (2005) distinguishes Publics and Audiences, but she does not oppose them for this very reason. For conceptual purposes, one can conceive of another distinction between Audiences and Lay Publics, just as McQuail (2005) has done. Publics, and in this sense Lay Publics, are constructed in society, while Audiences are constructed in the media. Both Audiences and Lay Publics are increasingly mediatized, which makes this distinction vague in practical sense, but useful in a conceptual sense.

[iv] Being oriented towards the Other, Lay Publics need to act in construction of an emerging agenda, not only that they rest upon a self-imagination principle of identity (who they are and who they are not), but are also are action-oriented (what and how they act) and purposive (what they want to achieve). They have to have (1) a verbal/written manifestation of the intent to change the current state of affairs; (2) a general idea of a desirable situation; and (3) an action undertaken towards building a consensus on achieving it - the idea of an emerging agenda for action is derived from the concept of agendas for action (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013, Baden, 2014).

Therefore we conceptualize Lay Publics as those segments of the audience that perceive and imagine themselves as members of a particular value or issue specific group, that are oriented towards the Other in terms of 'sociation', that are founded in society, and that act in construction of emerging agendas for action.

The ***second*** differentiation is the one between *Lay Publics* and *Media Active Lay Public*. The key criterion here is whether the Lay Publics are in fact *active in the media*; whether they write or

broadcast (blogs, Facebook posts, comments, call journalists etc.) to advance their emerging agenda. Lay Publics may satisfy all four criteria (self-imagined, sociated, founded in society and brewing with an emerging agenda for action) but they may construct them via face-to-face communication. However, a part of the Lay Publics may engage in content production through media: they are in fact the *Media Active Lay Publics*. They would not be journalists, as journalists would be dependent upon a media structure or institution or would be bound by a clear code of professional conduct, just like freelance journalists (citizen journalists are not really journalists). It may very well be that all members of the *Lay Public* concerned with a certain issue are in fact *Media Active Lay Publics*. Yet, the distinction between the two is analytically necessary as it leaves a possibility for the existence of *Lay Publics* that would not engage through the mass media or social networks, but would find another way of sociation expression.

Hence, the part of the Lay Publics that repeatedly engages in an original content production through a variety of media platforms (including the social media) will be regarded as the Media Active Lay Publics.

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