(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:

INFOCORE

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

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Stakeholders Seminars' Proceedings

Stakeholders Seminars

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Introduction and Executive Summary

INFOCORE's first Stakeholders Seminars took place in Brussels, on October 9th and 10th 2015. During this event, the researchers of each work package shared their preliminary findings with the four different stakeholder groups: policy-makers, academics, NGOs, and media. The eight different work packages presented to each stakeholder group individually in separate sessions. The aim was to shape policy debate and to test first findings in their respective fields. Overall the Stakeholder Seminars were very productive for the researchers and the stakeholders.

The Proceedings from the Stakeholders Seminars summarise the main questions raised by all stakeholder groups, reactions to and discussions on the preliminary findings from the research, concrete suggestions for improving the utility of INFOCORE's analysis towards maximum utility for the specific stakeholder groups, and the dissemination needs analysis. The researchers will verify carefully the stakeholders' feedback and will decide what and how it can be implemented into project. The main feedback regarding the overall project was the following:

- Interlinkage between the different work packages should be clearer

- One single academic methodological approach should be pursued

- Definitions of terms such as e.g. media, escalation, peace should be available

- Developing more sophisticated analysis methods

- Making the collected data open source for further analysis in the future

- Giving clearer expectations to the stakeholders for future workshops

- Using the mechanisms of escalation and de-escalation to connect the different WPs

- Starting to implement change by disseminating the findings as soon as possible while they are still relevant, to a wide audience as well as through high-level policy forums

- Incorporating the link between media and fragile states, providing comparison of the role of media in non-conflict zones, and providing a more comprehensive investigation of the top level and their influence

- Disseminating findings to a wider audience through e.g. news organisations, conferences, workshops, universities, and institutions dealing with journalism education to increase professionalism

- Teaching socially responsible journalism

The concrete suggestions were mainly very practical ones and can be summarized for the different work packages as follows:

WP1:

- Researching deeper the role of external influences on journalists

- Making recommendations on conflict journalists' necessary trainings

- Investigating journalistic news productions' quality to enable policy-makers to differentiate between trust-worthy and unreliable journalistic news

- Investigating journalists' mentoring, and disseminating the research's results to top media organisations for them to see their journalists' deficiencies
- Analysing other branches of media system such as top-level management actors or donors, considering NGOs into the news production cycle
- Distinguishing news production process at different local, national and international levels
- Investigating journalism education and sharing conclusions with educational institutes to boost journalism standards

WP2:

- Investigating the role of media in worsening conflicts with ethnic components
- Analysing deeper the issue of influence versus perceived influence
- Researching the issue of media freedom in various environments, and its impact on conflict news production
- Identifying more clearly the direction of the influence between politics and media, distinguishing between news and political strategic communication or PR to help journalists identify news accordingly, and comparing the use of traditional and social media by political leaders
- Looking closer at how people absorb and interpret information they get from the media to understand how politicians may use them for political gain
- Rethinking the PMP methodology

WP3:

- Defining what makes news media reliable, and making coherent comparative analysis to enable policy-makers to take policy actions based on generalised findings.
- Having specific case studies on quantitative and qualitative methodology to accompany the findings from the first round of interviews
- Clarifying structural elements such as the extensive use of radio in Burundi, language factors, or international elements of conflicts

WP4:

- Researching the extent of NGOs' influence on policy-making, and including guiding components as well as the role of the NGOs becoming media-like actors, and their positive and negative consequences of this evolution
- Mapping the different NGOs – depending on their ideologies, mandates, activities, level-incorporating top level and donors into this mapping
- Investigating donors' interests and their influence on NGOs' activity
- Differentiating between news and communication in NGOs' production
- Evaluating NGOs' contribution to peace and conflict resolution
- Holding an intensive workshop or select interviews with NGOs donors or top level

- Comparing journalists' careers in conflict and non-conflict zones and their relations with NGOs. Results should be disseminated to other NGOs

WP5:

- Clarifying the lack of political will in conflict prevention and the use of social media as pre-conflict and post-conflict tool

- Investigating how journalists' arguments can create new ways of looking at problems

- Looking at alternative social media platforms in some countries

- Analysing the direction of the influence and inspiration between traditional and social media

- Researching the role of social media in worsening or solving conflict,

- Determining purposeful distraction news to overshadow other events

- Identifying the utility of social media as watchdog platform or alternative real-time source of information beyond PR communications, and comparing the transmission of PR in the absence of social media.

- Adding more targeted interviews about the specific social media use of different individual journalists, examining comments on social media and how media websites use data from social networks

WP6:

- Analysing ethics in communication, factors that make strategic communications develop into media discourse, and defining factors of strategic communication's success.

- Further information is required on how exactly the researchers will go from their approach of identifying what kind of ideas are to be found in the PR content (including the recurrence of actors and concepts) to the goal of identifying strategies to prevent conflict and support resolution

- Further clarification on how will WP6 draw conclusions on this content in relation to the WP's particular objectives as well as the question of whether there are any points where the researchers look qualitatively at the data.

- Giving specific definition of reality and truth in relation to strategic communication, focusing on the increasing advocacy use of the material as organisations are increasingly shifting towards strategic communications

- Comparing various strategic communication approaches, trends and actors.

- Diversifying the list of PR organisations, focusing on more visual material, and assessing non-text based sources, which researchers explained is not easily doable

WP7:

- Analysing the relation between various media and their patterns of attention, determining potential means of predicting media coverage to some extent, and detecting media's hidden agendas.

- Researching how media influences public opinion (a question addressed in conjunction with WP4), concretizing the project's definitions of peace, consulting UN archives for more radio records, and identifying where to invest to improve journalists' work conditions.

- Including third-party groups to help access complete archives of media outlets, augmenting the media selection, and assessing differences in linguistic precision using Euronews' equivalent coverage in different languages

WP8:

- Defining behavioral patterns in relation to political affiliation and gender and their impact on news media influence in political debates

- Integrating older approaches, tackling the gender approach question, and analysing parliamentary debates on topics not related to conflict for comparison and relevance of the conclusions.

- Analysing how politicians use social media on conflicts, re-thinking concept words for the different conflicts, and including a breakdown by politics for each conflict by political parties.

- Focusing on political officials' "media awareness" and its variation depending on individuals' level or affiliations

- Identifying the direction of the influence between media and politics

- Investigating why some conflicts make it to the political or media stage, and defining conflict resolution and peace building more clearly

The above mentioned stakeholders' suggestions regarding the different work packages are not necessarily all related to the respective work package. This could have been caused by the chosen structure of the seminars. For the future stakeholder workshops INFOCORE will consider a different structure which might help the stakeholders to understand the complex structure of the project easier.

These proceedings will be disseminated to all participants and associate stakeholders, and put onto INFOCORE's web page.

Policy-Makers Stakeholder Group (Rapporteur: Sophie Vériter)

WP1 –Journalistic News Production in Media

1. Main concerns raised by the stakeholders

The Policy Makers Stakeholder group welcomed the potential future policy recommendations and instruments arising from the preliminary findings of the WP1. The Policy Makers clearly manifested their desire to use INFOCORE's conclusions as a starting point to improve their work with the journalists in the future. One of the first issues raised was the lack of a definition of the "journalist" as a subject of the study but this was clarified by the presenter. The panel of experts was interested in understanding the extent and characterisation of the influences applied on journalists reporting on conflicts (e.g. location, higher education, training, and protection) and what can be generalized about such influences. Attention was also raised in relation to journalists' protection, in terms of safety and freedom of expression.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Secondly, the audience reacted very positively to the presented preliminary and partial findings, which strongly stimulated discussions. The Policy Makers expressed interest in knowing more about selection of sources by journalists (e.g. NGOs data), especially for journalistic news that has high impact in the political developments in conflict. The research team presented that communication between NGOs and Journalists were strongly developed, due to NGOs' wide access to field information and how NGOs actually shape the production of information in order to fit the media needs and thus to get larger local/international coverage. Some policy-makers were surprised about this information, and thus requested that the INFOCORE focuses more in looking at the extent of NGOs' influence on journalistic news production in conflict.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

Experts mentioned various specific recommendations, including maximising the value of INFOCORE's analysis through the practical aspects, by taking a proactive and open-minded attitude towards policy-makers recommendations. The group recommended inclusion of clear definitions of journalist-related concepts (e.g. peace journalist, conflict journalist) in the INFOCORE research project. In addition, they suggested researching intensely on the role of external influences on journalistic news production in conflict areas; especially regarding information and data provided by NGOs, but as well journalists' location, higher education, training, and protection. Moreover, they recommended exploring the potential relation between journalistic presence on the ground and news media coverage peaks. In light of the preliminary findings, participants expressed the desire to find practical recommendations on the necessary training of conflict journalists taking in consideration INFOCORE's conclusions. Such recommendations should include aspects of: cryptology, technology, ethics, source assessment, pressure

management, and judicial reporting. In addition to that the overall need for the Policy Makers is to be able to differentiate between objective and trust-worthy journalistic news, and news which should not be relied on from a political perspective.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP2 – Political Interaction with Conflict News Production

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders
Policy-makers were very interested in using INFOCORE's conclusions in order to improve their ability to analyse risks and respond to crises, particularly about the impact of the "digital age" on policy-making and policy implementation. Their recommendation was the use of "new media" for policy objectives, particularly the effect of the "digital age" on facilitating the expected promptness of political response, which researchers confirmed.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings
Policy-makers were very optimistic towards and interested in the presented preliminary findings. The use of social media during conflict was a major point of discussion. In particular, the group examined the positive outcomes of social media use during the Arab Spring. With this regard, researchers explained the negative correlation between social media use and protests during the Arab Spring. Consequently, one of the participants raised the point that social media seems to be predominantly used for negative purposes (i.e. criticising, disapproving, destroying, etc.), even when the outcome is positive, as in the case of the Arab Spring. Notably, the large use of negative news by politicians and their assumed effect to decrease government trust was mentioned as popular in Western societies. Also, the possibility of social media regulation was considered, but was against the agenda of some policy-makers aiming to promote freedom of expression in all environments. Nonetheless, all participants acknowledged the definitional issues of privacy and of hate speech. Overall, the policy-makers group was genuinely looking forward to the final results.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility
Experts mentioned various specific recommendations, including keeping in mind policy-makers recommendations at the project conclusion. Stakeholders particularly recommended including analysis of the ethnic component of the role of media as in the case of Burundi. With this regard, the question of media responsibility/accountability was formulated. Researchers mentioned that the representation of various ethnicities within media structures (producers and audience) could be a key factor to advance media objectivity, tolerance, and integration. They provided the example that very few Arab Israelis were employed in Jewish news media. In addition, policy-makers recommended analysing the political issue of

media freedom in various environments, and its impact on conflict news production. In this respect, researchers indicated that finding alternative ways to achieve media freedom (such as social media use) was a key question, as well as the credibility given to official media channels in comparison to unofficial ones.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP3 – Media & Lay Actors

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The main issue of policy-makers was to use INFOCORE's research to improve their ability to analyse risks and respond to crises, as well as coming up with practical policy responses to issues such as the closure of radio stations, spreading of rumours, and issues of trust in news media. In addition, it was not clear for them how to take decisions on the basis of news media reliability.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Policy-makers reacted positively to the presented preliminary findings on lay actors' use and reception of conflict news. Also, participants were worried about the possible comparison of data analysis between Kosovo/Macedonia (done by Snezana Trpevska, Igor Micevski and Zaneta Trajkoska) and Burundi/RC (done by Marie-Soleil Frère and Anke Fiedler), and potential generalisation of findings. In particular, experts mentioned analysis of the influence of various types of news media (e.g. social media, independent journalists, propaganda) and of various scopes (e.g. local, regional, international). Policy-makers expressed their will to provide assistance in function of the dynamic between the latter elements. Special attention was given to the monopolistic/superior position of government-owned media, in all contexts analysed by the research team. Indeed, stakeholders clearly expected to see coherent comparative analysis emerging from empirical findings on lay actors' use and reception of conflict news (findings upon which they can base policy action). Finally, participants wanted the research team to explore how rumours were spreads in the contexts of focus (i.e. Kosovo, Macedonia, Burundi and DRC), as well as issues of trust in media (e.g. radio Okapi).

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The panel of experts mentioned various specific recommendations manifested the desire to find customised practical recommendations on policy assistance in INFOCORE final conclusions. They suggested clarifying the research methodology. Particularly, they expressed interest in finding information on what makes news media reliable, on the basis of specific criteria (e.g. ethnic integration). They suggested that the research team address the potential lack of coordination between the two components of the present working package.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP4 –NGOs and Experts Interaction with Conflict News

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The group was curious about specific policy initiatives that can arise from INFOCORE's findings, especially in the dynamics that exist in the relations between NGOs/experts and policy-making actors. Policy actors' main issue was to be able to analyse such relations and adapt their behaviour and use of NGOs- and experts-provided information accordingly.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Policy-makers reacted positively to the presented preliminary findings on NGOs' and experts' interactions with conflict news. The issue of reliability of information provided by NGOs (who tend to adapt their work to the media offer) was discussed in order to ascertain which NGOs/experts to trust and rely on for policy-making, and which particular kind of information or data is most likely to be reliable. In particular, questions were raised about mechanisms of control, transparency, and of respect of ethics and humanitarian principles. Furthermore, the quantification of NGOs' and experts' influence on conflict news and on highly influential political bodies (e.g. UN Security Council) was mentioned. The NGOs' strategic interest to establish relations with policy-makers was mentioned as challenge, especially regarding the dynamic (e.g. top-down, bottom-up) and creation of such link. Furthermore, the various points of focus of NGOs were discussed, in particular the short-term or long-term approach, location, and policy aims (e.g. early warning for ICG, on-the-ground action for MSF).

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The panel of experts suggested researching the quantified extent of influence NGOs and experts have on policy-making through their interactions with conflict news, and in function of the particularities they present (e.g. location, focus, approach, policy aims). In addition, policy-makers expressed the desire that INFOCORE's conclusions include guiding components on NGOs' and experts' reliability.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP5 – Interaction and Dissemination of News in Social Media

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

Policy-makers were stimulated by the manipulation of online media content, the use of media for propagandist aims, and the overload of media information, which appeared to be serious interferences

and methods to deal with such obstructions to policy-making and policy implementation. The main issue raised by policy-makers with this regard was their lack of preparedness to overwhelming and sudden media occurrences during events like the "Arab Spring".

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Participants were attentive to the research team's preliminary findings, which stimulated the discussion. On various occasions, experts mentioned the "CNN effect", referring to improper and hasty stimulus of policy reaction. The overall importance of quality over quantity in the media, and of prior insight in policy environment, was discussed. In particular, the possibility to establish a relation between the type of authority and the use of social media was discussed. Furthermore, policy-makers were wondering about the vague definition of key concepts such as "hate speech" within the presented preliminary findings. Policy-makers expect clear definitions of the concepts relative to the role of media in violent conflicts. Researchers made reference to the dictionary construction workshop that took place in March 2015 and to the extensive availability of material in this respect.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The panel of experts mentioned various specific recommendations such as e.g. social media as a tool for policy makers. The experts suggested giving more attention to political will rather than early warning as a lacking component in conflict prevention. With this regard, the researchers explained their ability to look retrospectively at the use and reactivity of social media and thus to potentially predict future behaviours. As a result, the double use of social media seems to be relevant, as a pre-conflict and post-conflict tool.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP6 – Strategic Communication of News and Public Relations

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The panel of experts was attracted by the characteristics of 'successful' strategic communications. Policy actors' main recommendation was how to make use of strong strategic communication of news and public relations as a tool in their policy-cycles.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Policy-makers reacted positively to the presented preliminary findings on strategic communication of news and public relations. They stressed the important role of personality and of institutional structures when analysing strategic communication of news and public relations. Indeed, discourse appears as a crucial element when determining what makes a communication become a "master message". In

addition, policy-makers advocated for the consideration of variables that influence strategic communication of news and public relations at various institutional levels. The panel believes that the inclusion of oral speeches' analysis would be an added value to the INFOCORE project. The researchers assured, that oral information has been included into the research material (speeches for instance), if the respective text is available/accessible as transcript. Furthermore, the panel of experts asked whether WP6 investigates on ethics of news and of ethics of strategic communication/public relations. The researchers explained: WP1 and WP7 will investigate on ethics in news, WP6 on ethics in strategic communication/PR.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility
The panel of experts mentioned various specific recommendations, particularly examining the factors that make or prevent strategic communications from developing into media discourse (e.g. presence of social media, interpretation as a "master message", etc.).

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP7 – Dissemination of News in the Media

1. Main concerns raised by the stakeholders
The panel of experts was very interested in the factors that create peaks in news media, and expressed the desire to be able to predict such occurrences in order to adapt their behaviour accordingly.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings
The policy-makers raised the question of potential linkages between news media and social media content or use. They suggested an analytic focus on original reports found in the news media, rather than information encountered on social media which "takes and copies" what has already been said. Furthermore, ethical aspects of the coverage were put forward as a necessary point of examination, in particular regarding potential trends or evolutions in their adherence. In addition, policy-makers requested analysis on the factors that could help identifying critical and objective journalists.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility
The policy-makers suggested analysing the relation between various media and their pattern of news attention, in order to determine whether consistent and particular attention to specific aspects results from an editorial line, journalistic interests, or inter-media influence. The panel also noticed the potential of isolating the type of sources which eventually lead to high media coverage. Some policy-makers expressed hopes for a means of predicting the dissemination of news in the media on the basis of regular patterns – a desiderate challenged by the complexity of causes and possible developments. In

addition, experts were interested in potential advocacy of specific interests/goals by news media, and the possibility of detecting such hidden agendas; where detected, the panel encouraged the inclusion of such findings in INFOCORE's conclusions. Lastly, the policy-makers group recommended taking into account the issue of manipulated or distorted news, which may exert considerable influence on conflict and hence warrant an effort at detection.

Finally, the panel of experts mentioned various specific recommendations regarding research on dissemination of news in the media. It suggested maximising the utility of INFOCORE's analysis by bringing back the project conclusions toward practical recommendations valuable for policy-makers. The group communicated its desire to see trending analyses in INFOCORE's outcomes, especially regarding media coverage of a particular issue and respect of ethics. The present group of experts hope the project will be able to provide guidance on "how to avoid being taken by surprise by journalists", through an alert mechanism framework which could predict media coverage to some extent.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP8 – Reception of News Contents in Political Debates

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The panel of experts was very interested in the roles of ideological affiliation and of gender in the reception of news contents in political debates, which the research team confirmed to consider in its analysis. As a result, the group was interested in knowing whether a behavioural pattern or consistency was detectable with this regard.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Policy-makers suggested looking at the different institutional levels when analysing the influence of media sources on political/parliamentary debates. For instance, the distinctness between national parliaments and the European Parliament was mentioned. In addition, the researchers were recommended to investigate on the genuine influence of news content, in the light of already confirmed trends in parliamentary debates. It also indicated that very controversial debates in the media seem to clearly influence debates in parliamentary assemblies according to the literature and their preliminary findings. Consequently, policy-makers advised to analyse the responsiveness of parliamentary debates to peaks of media interest on particular issues, and whether a temporary or long-term approach is adopted as a result. In this respect, the policy actors suggested to compare the influence of local and international news media.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The panel of experts mentioned various specific recommendations regarding research on reception of news contents in political debates. It suggested maximising the utility of INFOCORE's analysis through keeping in mind the practical aspects of the project conclusions, by means of a proactive attitude towards policy-makers recommendations. Policy-makers were interested in obtaining information regarding the existence of behavioural patterns in parliamentary debates, especially in relation to the political affiliation and gender of parliamentary members. They believe this could explain why they chose to rely on one news media over another and to promote a short-term or a long-term approach, which will then clearly concern policy-makers' agenda. Also, the group is looking forward to acknowledging under which circumstances is an established behavioural pattern not followed anymore in parliamentary debates.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments

Academics Stakeholder Group (Rapporteur: Anouchka Baldin)

WP1 –Journalistic News Production in Media

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The Academic Stakeholder group raised several questions regarding the presentation of the preliminary and partial results of the WP1. The stakeholders raised the question of the level of reliability of the story reconstruction methodology as journalists may have different accounts of the same story.

In addition, the stakeholders highlighted that the paradigm from which the research started is unclear and is lacking better understanding of journalism cultures. Participants criticised the approach of question preparation under impression that there was assumptions when drafting the questionnaires and interviewing journalists. It was agreed that it is always crucial to reflect on premises and assumptions and to be self-critical when building the questionnaires in inductive research. The stakeholders also wondered whether the ambition of coming up with a model giving researchers a framework to duplicate researches was actually feasible, and whether this model could be generalizable due to the limited context of the research. Other participants disagreed and indicated that the results will actually be generalizable enough for theory building, thanks to the fact that so many different conflict cases are studied in the project. In addition, all the researchers come from different theoretical perspectives and assumptions. It was also emphasised that for the model to be generalizable, it is important to precisely define what is looked at and dealt with. Researchers must make sure that they are talking about the same things with their interviewees, e.g. that they have the same notion of what a conflict is (democratisation conflict vs. violent conflict for instance).

Furthermore, there was criticism addressed that the interaction and cooperation between the content analyses and interviewing WPs, is one of the biggest challenges faced by the researchers because of incompatibility of theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, the stakeholder group concluded that the methodology cannot be changed, but researchers and stakeholders could look for ways to make different work packages and different theoretical frameworks come under one perhaps 'meta-theoretical framework' that could be applied in all WPs.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholders discussed and agreed on the fact that NGOs have their own agenda and should not be presented as unproblematic, authoritative news sources. Media often team up with NGOs, forming teams against political actors or others, without realising that the latter have their own agendas and are taking sides (e.g. Syria and Kosovo).

The stakeholders also discussed the fact that journalists increasingly take control of the discourse and the tension between international media, which have limited access to conflicts, and local media, which have limited resources. It was mentioned that these two levels of media production could actually complement each other, if they could combine international media's resources and local media's access.

It was however highlighted that this may sometimes be difficult, as Western and local journalists may have different modes of operation and concepts of impartiality.

In addition, it was agreed that investigating the structural differences in journalists' education was crucial in different countries. In discussion of the findings from the survey results of the WP1 on education of conflict journalists, it was discussed by examples that in Germany, there is no practical formation for journalists; students only obtain a first degree at university, and then the craft of journalism in a journalism school. In Israel, there are no journalism schools, but rather communication schools, which basically teach social sciences. If it is decided that journalism education is important, researchers need to look at the different kinds of education and what is meant by journalism schools. Furthermore, economic factors are also important, in how journalists behave and how news is produced. Examples of countries such as Somalia were brought in stating that journalists suffer employment problems, they may provide low-quality pieces out of economic need even if they are well-qualified. The role and identity of journalists can vary between different countries and situations (e.g. political shifts, conflict situations). Journalism is different in the United States or in the United Kingdom, where it is more about objectivity and relating facts. It was suggested that the way journalists respond to the questionnaires possibly also depends on whether they are from a Western country, such as the United Kingdom, and are not specialised, or whether they report from the countries, with a specialised knowledge.

When discussing the role of social media, the stakeholders emphasised that it is important to not only focus on the exchange and processing of information, which social media impacted, changing the news cycle (e.g. by providing immediate feedback, due to the demand from editors for certain kinds of stories, etc.), but also on interaction through social media. It was responded by the research team of the WP1 that the interview questions dedicate great importance to the role of social media, including four specific questions (using social media as source, distribution of news, on feedback, etc.).

The panel also discussed the way social media changed the news world, as it is more event-driven and bottom-up. In addition, news agencies have become filters for stories gathered from wires and social media. They do not create news anymore and do not send journalists to the field to report news anymore: they are just "checking agencies".

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

First, the stakeholders would like the data collected by the INFOCORE team to become open source in the future to give the opportunity of more analysis by other researchers, as INFOCORE researchers have limited time and resources for analysis, allow the data to have a longer life, enable the dissemination of the results, and draw attention to the project.

One of the participants suggested that more sophisticated methods could be used to analyse the results, such as using a statistical software to put all data in one database to find out clusters and determine patterns in the context of statistical analysis.

The stakeholders also asked whether the interviewed journalists had made references to other people during the interviews, and suggested that the researchers should perhaps try to consider involving these people in the process, integrating their analyses, for instance talking to the locals and the "invisible" fixers and stringers that international media rely on as sources in countries such as Syria.

Furthermore, the participants mentioned that it would be useful for them, for the future workshops, to have much clearer expectations of how they can contribute to the project. Besides, one of the participants particularly mentioned that making suggestions about how to analyse did not really make sense as this is linked to methodology which is already agreed and halfway through, so participants could not help on something if they were not asked about methodology before.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP2 – Political Interaction with Conflict News Production

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders
No specific comments.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings from INFOCORE's research
The stakeholders discussed the idea that hate and violence get more media coverage than peace because "Good news is no news". A stakeholder mentioned an anecdote, according to which pornography on the Internet sells better than educational materials; political hate was described as being the equivalent of pornography on the Internet.

Moreover, it was agreed that sensationalism is even more amplified by social media and that this leads the public to believe in crises, which influences how people behave on social media. However, it was argued that some monitoring groups have done a good job in checking what is about hate on the political websites.

In addition, the group discussed the fact that during the Arab Spring for political change, because they were so frustrated with the regime's oppression and that Facebook helped people mobilise. However Facebook is just another tool; it is the political context that determines the level of mobilisation. Similarly, in Iran, the mobilisation during the Revolution had nothing to do with the invention of cassette tapes; cassettes tapes were just a tool to disseminate the revolution. It was also mentioned that although there are potentialities for that, there is not a clear positive outcome between the rise of digital media and development; there is not much hope for change, despite assessments of e-democracy and the emergence of political websites due to digital media.

What is more, the stakeholders reacted to the findings by saying that leaders react to their perception of international media, which is generally that media is always against them. For instance, the Israelis consider any pro-Palestine international news coverage as biased. It was also mentioned that sometimes,

leaders criticise something negative that has been said against them in the media, or something they believe is wrong, whereas nobody in the audience had seen it or focused on it until then. This will then lead everybody to focus on this, because it became controversial.

During the discussion, the stakeholders also wondered if the researchers will get to the question of "who is influencing who" in the interviews, and wondered if the question would not be more about whether there is an influence at all rather than where the influence is. The stakeholders discussed the possible frustration-gap politicians because they feel that what they are saying is not getting through or not understood, and that they do not have much influence over the media. Additionally, political leaders do not want to admit that the media influences them (the "third person effect"). The group concluded that politics come first, and that politics drive the media much more than the media drive politics, (e.g. the Arab Spring).

There is also the question of the political consensus of the "CNN effect", wherein during situations of strong level of political consensus, the media has very little influence over the discourse. Thus, the level of consensus of the political environment has a very important impact on the media's role. There are many examples where, despite atrocities showed in the media, leaders do not send troops, because it is not politically beneficial.

The group decided that it is hard to understand in which direction the influence goes, therefore calling into question the PMP effect. Journalists may report some information spontaneously and independently of political influence. Similarly, politicians may change their policies because of the actions of other leaders and not because of media influence.

The stakeholders also mentioned that it is important to understand what influence is, and to distinguish between what politicians are actually saying and doing, and between what politicians think they are saying and doing. They suggested to focus on how the interviewees understand influence. The researchers defined influence as the fact that due to the media coverage, the political leaders did something different from the plan of action they had (e.g. political leaders decide not to send soldiers somewhere because they think that the media is going to report there).

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility
As far as the issue of influence vs. perceived influence is concerned, it would make sense to use the reconstructive methods for political leaders, showing them the articles in which they are quoted to ask them whether they feel like they had an influence on this statement, and whether they feel like their position was reflected properly.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP3 – Media & Lay Actors

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The stakeholders raised the issue of differentiating correlation from causation in the research. Moreover, when the researchers explained the goal of INFOCORE – to understand the news creation process at all level, focusing on the process, investigating how the news are created, by the journalists but also asking all the actors who are part of the process – the stakeholders argued that this is investigating interpretation, not investigating the process.

The stakeholders mentioned the difficulty of isolating the role of the media itself from the role of politicians and the political issues raised by the media. It was agreed that no one can answer this question, because mediatisation of society makes it impossible to isolate the media factor.

The stakeholders added that despite the *stimuli* – specific events – used by the researchers during the interviews, the answers given by the interviewees are still answers to the content, in the end, to the event, it is still a discussion on the political issue. However, these *stimuli* just aim at encouraging, stimulating the interviewees' reaction. Then, the researchers can ask about the journalists, about how they approached the event, they can deconstruct the package and ask about certain segments of the latter and how the interviewees interpret them. Furthermore, the stakeholders discussed the problem of summarising and comparing very different contexts and case studies. It was then discussed that the research design is not really a comparative design of research.

The stakeholders also pointed to the lack of a general theoretical framework to integrate all the different aspects and contexts studied. They asked how the researchers will face the challenge of putting the results into a framework. In addition, despite all the complex methodologies presented, a theoretical framework seems to be missing for the case studies, and there lacks a model and a clear explanation of what the project aims at achieving. It was further mentioned that the aim of achieving multidisciplinary theories may be problematic; it may be better to look for precise social science or political science theories. Finally, it was mentioned that each WP uses too many concepts, and that researchers should choose which approach they want to go with in order to focus the research.

The group also discussed that the researchers concealed the theoretical problems of the Work Package. This is because the researchers are working with these different frameworks (e.g. evidential beliefs), but they are missing an underlying theory. It was concluded that this discussion had actually tackled and deconstructed the whole problem of such projects. However, this is also due to the challenge that this project represents, which is bringing together lots of academics from lots of different universities with different expectations, different qualitative and quantitative approaches, etc.

Some stakeholders also asked about what will be done with the results. Theories will probably not change anything on the ground, policy papers will be read and nothing will change. There would be a need to find a way for these results to have an impact on the field, in order to try to make some kind of change, at least for the European Union to know what the media are bringing and how to solve a conflict before it happens.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

One of the participants wondered why the social change approach was left out of the analysis, why nothing was said about the triggers, often raised by the media, which activate the populations, for instance.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

To answer the lack of general direction for the project, the participants mentioned that what seems to be really connecting the different WPs exposed is the mechanisms of escalation and de-escalation, and that this should be further explored. This would be a field in which the researchers could make a very good contribution, where they could use their case studies and the different WPs. It is one strength of INFOCORE to work comparatively, to try to get a broader vision rather than having specific dynamics in different case studies.

The stakeholders formulated concrete suggestions regarding the lack of integration of the different WPs. For instance, between potential steps 2 and 3, the researchers could look at other WPs and at how they react to their own data, before designing the next part, rather than waiting to have the final data. This gives researchers the critical opportunity to collect crucial data, which they could obtain by integrated steps and conclusions, and methods made and already informed by other WPs. It was also suggested that the researchers could for instance use the same articles used for the journalists' story reconstruction with political leaders, and use them as *stimuli* for the lay publics. The stakeholders added that it would just be about integrating the different progresses made by the different WPs step by step and at case level when designing the interviews rather than integrating everything across all the WPs together.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP4 –NGOs and Experts Interaction with Conflict News

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The participants first discussed the fact that the impact of NGOs on conflict may be difficult to measure. Sometimes NGOs make a difference on the ground, but do not solve the whole conflict in a certain time frame, which may be judged as ineffective and unsuccessful. In addition, the influence of NGOs is difficult to measure, and if there is an implicit relationship between the media and NGOs, there are many conflicting factors.

There was a discussion that perhaps NGOs should not be a WPin and of themselves because of the nature of different NGOs in so far as they may be seen as partly media, partly political actor, or even part of the public. An argument was made that they should perhaps be seen as political actors. A lot of

elements in this WP is also present in and influences other WPs, and the researchers should make clear what they really want to find out and how to measure it, which would help the integration across the other WPs.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings from

The stakeholders were interested in knowing, how NGOs think they are successful in strategically influencing the media. In addition, the stakeholders thought it would be interesting to see how the NGOs perceive media coverage, whether they see it as good or bad, how they would assess the reports on conflicts from journalists.

In addition, there was a discussion about NGO agendas and the extent to which NGOs have become media-like actors and provide journalistic information. Even if objective reporting is traditionally more characteristic of the media, there are still many common points between NGOs and the media. Many NGOs are also funded by news agencies or run by people coming out of journalism schools. NGOs also tend to provide viable career options for journalists facing the cuts in the media budgets and the media's lack of resources. Additionally media outlets are often unable anymore to pay enough relevant correspondents to cover specific conflict regions, and thus they use more information from NGOs. Sometimes, NGOs even provide whole stories that journalists can then disseminate. Some journalists are also funded by NGOs to work on specific conflicts. The stakeholders also wondered whether the researchers included the fact that some NGO people come from a journalist background, and that more and more journalists go to NGOs.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum

No specific comments.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP5 – Interaction and Dissemination of News in Social Media

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

It was mentioned that this WP may be overlapping with the Lay Publics one, as they look at very similar questions about social media. It was also discussed that it was not clear how the researchers collected the data, how the analytical methods were relating to each other, and how they related to the data.

There is also an ethical issue about collecting the data on the social networks because researchers often assume that if someone puts something online, it is public, and it can be collected for data use. However, this creates ethical privacy and anonymity issues, as it is not just about the researchers gathering individual data, but about analysing the data, putting the information in relation to each other,

about creating data of actors engaging with conflicts that affect civilians. It is necessary for researchers to engage with these issues.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholders reacted to the findings saying that the results concerning key words and concepts are not very surprising, and wondered what useful elements this analysis will bring. It was also discussed that even with all these analyses, it is not obvious how this data will increase understanding the role of media in conflict.

In addition, the stakeholders suggested looking at the differences between what happens in the social media and in other media, and how the information is circulated across the different platforms to better understand different types of media in the context of conflict. Moreover, the stakeholders discussed that in terms of social change, the researchers are sticking to a very traditional assessment of processes and social dynamics. Beyond their attractive methodologies, the researchers should identify the final objective of their approach and the triggers and moments when social change is happening.

In addition, it was mentioned as potentially interesting to look at what is meant by social media, and look at how, in certain societies, such as in African countries, social media-like things, such as emails or mobile phones, play the same role as social networks. It was also mentioned that, although social media may be more important in Israel than in Burundi, the importance is given by how influential they were in shaping the view of the conflict of the public, and not only by how many people use the social media (e.g. large access in Israel vs. less in Burundi). For instance, it may be that not many people use the social media in some contexts, but that they have a large impact, whereas in other societies social media are widespread but do not have much impact.

The stakeholders also asked how Twitter and Facebook were chosen as focus of the research, as the visual dimension of networks such as Instagram could be interesting for study. The stakeholders also found the idea of studying the formation of groups and communities absolutely core to the study, and would be worth exposing at the beginning of the presentation. The stakeholders also asked how researchers will get into this group formation (e.g. will they try to get information from private sources). The stakeholders also asked what should the data look like in order to understand how social media contribute to violence or to conflict resolution.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

It was briefly mentioned during the discussion that beyond analysing the journalists' discourses and how they provoke discussions, it could be interesting to assess the dimensions of the arguments made by the journalists and assess how they created new ways of looking at the problem. The researchers analyse these actors' whole activities, to see how communication evolved over time, to see if there was a spread of information and if the discussions had an impact on the actual debate.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP6 – Strategic Communication of News and Public Relations

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The academic stakeholders made use of the opportunity that the leader of WP6 at the same time is the coordinator of the INFOCORE project. With the INFOCORE coordinator they discussed their impression, that from their point of view the project seems to lack a common(ly shared) framework and comprehensive theoretical models. They appreciated the fact that the researchers will try to answer the European Commission's questions (applied research), but they wondered how the researchers will do that in a scientific and academic way (fundamental research). After having been exposed lots of presentations on major topics, the stakeholders felt that presenting the framework was lacking a way to perform theoretical tests and to test the relevance for policy-makers and academics. The researchers referred to the introductory presentation of the coordinator at the morning of day one as well as to the diverse and elaborate theoretical and empirical 'working papers' at the INFOCORE website which due to the very restricted time unfortunately could not be subject of the presentations at these stakeholder seminars. Furthermore, the coordinator explained, that INFOCORE's objective is to apply a 'theory *building*' approach –– which of course will not make the adaptation and further development of existing theories and models superfluous.

The stakeholders were also interested in knowing how the concept of collective memory is informing the project. The researchers referred to the fact that two of INFOCORE's team members are experts for the concept of collective memory; they strongly contribute to the definition and development of respective categories for the content analysis.

Due to the differences between the analysed conflicts as well as the WPs' different theoretical and methodological approaches, the stakeholders asked how INFOCORE will integrate and put in a dialogue these different methodological and theoretical paradigms that they are working with. From their point of view, the theoretical papers so far include diverse concepts, some of them competing with each other. The stakeholders advised the researchers to put time and energy into this issue. The stakeholders also asked about the way INFOCORE will deal with the question of languages in their research. It was answered that INFOCORE has financial resources to programme analytical tools for the computer assisted content analysis in eight different languages (including Hebrew, Arabic, Serbian etc.); another part of this budget is dedicated to translate interviews and focus group material to be conducted in those languages.

The stakeholders also asked if the data will become open source at some point. The researchers referred to the fact that the European Commission commits INFOCORE to provide its non-sensitive and non-personal data as open source after a certain time of embargo; the latter is sorted out in detail and already approved by the EC in INFOCORE's data management plan.

The stakeholders also asked about the place of the gender perspective in INFOCORE. The coordinator (in cooperation with the leader of WP) is responsible for the general implementation of a gender perspective throughout the whole project. She is constantly reminding the WP leaders to take the gender-sensitive approach, which she developed for INFOCORE; cf. respective working paper at website) into strict consideration, when choosing interviewees, conducting interviews, compiling questionnaires and interview guidelines, analysing/interpreting interviews and focus groups, developing code books etc. Regarding the content analytical part of INFOCORE, it is less difficult to strictly apply this approach (through the dictionary/code book), even though it is harder to identify gender in some languages than in others. The stakeholders felt that some WP leaders (during their presentations) tend to dismiss 'the gender question'. The coordinator acknowledged this.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholders recognised that they consider WP6 to be one of those (rare) WPs which do have a comparatively solid theoretical basis. Still they asked for more information on the question of how WP6 will go from their approach of identifying in details what kind of ideas are in the PR content (including the recurrence of actors and concepts) to the goal of identifying strategies to prevent conflict and support resolution. They argued that even if the researchers are able to track how successful the strategic communicators/actors are or not in transmitting the content, to see how it is effectively communicated, this does not lead to seeing the impact in influencing the conflict. The researchers explained that after having identified the complex content of PR material and after having classified this content as escalating vs. de-escalating structures/concepts (see INFOCORE concept definitions in working papers on website), WP6 will firstly compare those results with other content analytical WPs –– for instance look for similar structures in media references, political discourses and lay publics' discourses. In doing so they will apply the so called 'determination theory' (developed by German PR researcher Barbara Baerns) as well as the so called 'intereffication model' (developed by German PR researcher Günter Bentele). This will provide the researchers with an overview on dominating/successful and less successful strategies (diffusion of messages/concepts). On the basis of the differentiation between escalating and de-escalating structures/concepts, the researchers then will secondly compare their results with the interview results of WPs 1, 2 and 4 (experts). From this multilevel combination/comparison between interviewing WPs and content analytical WPs they expect important insights into the question to what extend preventive and resolution oriented strategies are distinct and can be distinguished from non-preventive and escalating strategies. The researchers aim to transfer their respective results then into advice for (successful) communication strategies for (political) peacebuilding of the European Commission, NGOs and other peacebuilding actors and on how to professionalise their communication with the media. They also try to analyse whether the impact of PR is increasing during the last ten years also or even exceptionally in war and conflict reporting), following the hypothesis that resources on the media side are decreasing while at the same time the PR industry is growing and professionalising (here

again comparison with WP1, WP2 and WP4). The stakeholders also wondered whether there are any points where WP6 looks qualitatively at the data. The researchers explained (and gave brief examples) that they defined/identified particular levels and phases of analysis where they will apply qualitative methodologies.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility
No specific comments.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

WP7 – Dissemination of News in the Media
1. Main concerns raised by the stakeholders
No specific comments.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings
The stakeholders were intrigued by the possibility to identify specific contributions of collective memory and gender to the news debate and their respective effects for conflict escalation or de-escalation. As far as collective memory is concerned, the dictionary that the researchers built includes many concepts relating to collective memory, gathered from events of the past that are central to collective memory on conflicts, and temporal markers and indications, looking at distant or recent past, future indicators, and dynamics of the discourse in terms of temporality. One concern addressed by the researchers thereby aims at understanding how news narratives about past events evolve over time – recontextualizing the same events to derive different types of meaning, instrumentally reading and embedding them in a new context to justify and naturalise political agendas, supporting contentious claims while making them look like they are self-event, e.g. as did the journalists tackling the issue of chemical weapons in Syria by referring to the "Munich" event.

The stakeholders discussed how the researchers intend to proceed from the descriptive to the explanatory content. For the inter-textual transformation, the researchers collect systematic patterns of changes. For discourse-level transformation, they look at dynamic patterns in the sense of connecting the diachronic into contextualised patterns. They try to understand when there are interpretation, contextualisation of ideas, which connect with collective values, are integrated, and become parts of the debate, and when there are ideas that are controversial.

The stakeholders were also curious about how the quantitative analysis can be used to enrich findings pertaining to the overall research question of the project, and discussed possible linkages of the quantitative analysis to the qualitative aspects.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The stakeholders mainly underscored the need to integrate their analyses and findings closely with those of other Work Packages.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP8 – Reception of News Contents in Political Debates

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

No specific comments.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholders wondered how the researchers distinguish whether the media influence politics or the other way around. The researchers replied that the cause-effect processes are difficult to test. In addition, they want to know in which conflict context this can happen. The researchers said they will be able to answer these questions when they cross their data with the media content WPs, to see who sets the agenda, who of the media or the politicians is the first actor to put the issue on the table.

Then, the stakeholders wondered how the researchers will aggregate all the data about all the different conflicts. In a future analysis, the researchers will focus on these differences among parliaments. They also want to see how key concepts are tackled depending on conflicts, and not only by parliaments. The researchers only started to work with the data recently. They are starting with a broader overview of the whole data set that they have, and they will then go specifically and deeper by parliaments and by conflicts.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The stakeholders suggested that the idea that when there is a political consensus the media have no effect could be tested and the idea that when the government has certainty about what is happening the media have less influence would also be worth testing

The stakeholders mentioned that all the discussions on gender so far have mostly been on the representation of women and their participation in politics. However, there might actually be some more interesting questions to ask. In addition, the gender approach would only be meaningful if applied across the entire project. The risk otherwise is that other WPs pick up some aspects of gender, rather than having an interesting approach for the whole project. The casualty regarding gender cannot be done easily, if the attempt to get a general conclusion by using the same theory for the different WPs. Having a gender perspective on top of everything would be helpful.

Furthermore, the stakeholders said the researchers should focus on the parliamentary minutes of debates about trade or aid to see if there are similar clusters about conflict, de-escalation, etc. The

project is problematic as a whole because the researchers cannot know if what is being found is only about conflict or if it is general features that they could find in many other debates. The researchers need to analyse some non-conflict situations and debates, to check that something different is happening.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination
No specific comments.

NGOs Stakeholder Group (Rapporteur: Arianna Khatchadourian)

WP1 –Journalistic News Production in Media

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The stakeholders asked that clear definitions be introduced for specific terms such as 'peace journalist', 'conflict journalist' and journalists in general. It was also noted that during the presentation, when the topic of NGOs was touched upon, there was a lack of recognition towards the distinctness or variety of NGOs in play (e.g. advocacy, policy oriented or action-based). The NGO representatives also demanded a structural categorisation of NGOs that part take in initiating the news as well as defining whether these NGOs are media assistance NGOs or advocacy NGOs because that helps deepen the research in the field of news production.

The group highlighted the need to not be limited and focus solely on the journalists as the central actor in the news production process, but consulting the media system as a whole and how differing aspects can influence or impact one another. Moreover, editorial policy (if it exists and is adhered to in conflict areas) can also affect production, however there is a close relationship with this aspect and the decisions made at the higher levels.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The group gave positive feedback and comments to this WP and they were content with the findings and approach thus far. They provided several recommendations and inputs that if tweaked, would be of great added value to their NGO perspective and use.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The group recommended that the research package seeks to expand its research horizon, in that it should investigate along other branches of the media system beyond looking at the journalists' self-perceptions. Instead, the 'top-level' management, donors, and funders, need to be factored into the equation because decisions on priority areas, coverage and resources are decided at this level. Given the example of large NGOs or organisations which set up local media outlets that compete and/or destroy existing local media infrastructure can provide insight on what kind of information is prioritised by the 'foreign' media outlets. It was also noted that in certain circumstances, NGOs are occasionally the only entities able to enter certain conflict zones. Given this, it was recommended that the media or news produced by NGOs be considered into the news production cycle as the media outlets pick up on the stories, but it is necessary in these contexts for journalists to be able to distinguish advocacy from facts. The news production process differs from the local, national and international level, and so the project should seek to factor this consideration into its analysis. This research can also lead to the identification of correlations on how media is picked up or pushed down the system, that is, if the news is picked up

locally and moves up the chain to the international level (if the news is considered of significant importance), or are international stories pushed down the chain to the local level and consumed.

The issue of journalism education was brought up in various recommendations and it was highlighted that perhaps the information collected and research conducted should be shared as much as possible with educational institutes in order to boost and reinvigorate standards in journalism, especially given that what is reported can have a significant impact in a conflict area. As added value, the group asked if it was possible to perhaps consult with national journalism unions in the selected conflict areas and collect information about the percentage of journalists with journalism degrees, those with degrees from other subject, and those without any degrees to see if and how that can impact the news production process.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

The stakeholder group strongly recommends that the research conducted in this Work Package as well as the INFOCORE project as a whole be transmitted to a wider audience either through conferences or workshops. Moreover, it was recommended that the findings of the project be shared with universities or institutions dealing with journalism education to help raise awareness of the array of issues and aim at improving standards of journalism education, particularly around social responsibility.

WP2 – Political Interaction with Conflict News Production

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

At the conclusion of the presentation, it was asked if on the whole it appears that social media is changing the way media is reporting on conflicts. If this 'new media' is in fact doing more harm than traditional media, bringing up the issue of freedom of expression but also the need to balance social responsibility may be important.

The other point brought forward by the group was that negative media or stories 'sell' more than positive news; a self-fuelling cycle, but would it be possible to break this this cycle? It was asked if social media could somehow play a greater role as being the 'watch-dog' to political news and activities in order to call out what is being misrepresented or abused power. Yet, it was also asked if social media is in fact as powerful a tool as it has been recently perceived to be (asking about other examples beyond of the Arab Spring).

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Overall, the reaction was very positive. There was a lot of material covered and a great potential of utility to the current research project.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

Through the recurrent theme of journalism education, it was highlighted that the collective research of this Work Package (as well as others) stresses the need to teach socially responsible journalism. The cases touched on the Israel/Palestine conflict and the use of social media by lay audiences and journalists indicated a need to try and instil more positive values. This is not to say that conflicts will be resolved through this, merely, that it should be ingrained that journalists should consider what the impacts can be on certain stories on society, and should be mobilised to write towards positivity if possible, but above all aiming to ensure their writing does not make the situation worse.

It was asked if through this research it would be possible to identify more clearly if politics influences media, and if it is only really adopted once there is a greater political consensus (i.e. the conflict at hand is of indeed great self-interest). How political leaders use both traditional and social media and providing a comparison could prove to be added value to the research.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

Same answer as WP1.

WP3 – Media & Lay Actors

1. Main issues raised by the Stakeholders

The NGO stakeholder group presented five main topics of concern related to the relations between 'Media and Lay Actors', including the role of media for lay actors, the specificities of African societies regarding radio as the dominant media, the top-down structure of media, the diversity or lack of diversity of media and subsequent consequences, as well as the issue of trust in general.

The issue of trust became a recurrent theme that manifested itself throughout the aforementioned topics. For instance, the group wanted more information on how lay actors perceived the media, that is, if the role of the media is to serve as "peace facilitators" or "truth givers", both of which can carry different responsibilities and approaches. Moreover, asking if the priority of importance for audiences lays more with the transmission of facts and information, or for the transmission of educational material from the media. Given a discrepancy in the available internal (domestic) versus external (international) media outlets raise the issue of distrust as affiliations, objectives and information transmitted cannot in effect be verified. The group also highlighted the confusion that occurs in lay actors as they at times cannot differentiate between media outlets, journalists, the structure of the "media ecosystem" as terms of description are used interchangeably making it difficult to identify specific concerns, but also it fosters an atmosphere of insecurity for need of confidentiality.

Another issue brought forth was the composition and selection process of the focus groups because information in the African states such as Burundi and DRC for instance, present a lack of statistics and quotas. They were asking if such a process is reliable as there is difference between "natural" and "constructed" focus groups, which is further hindered by lack of persons willing to

participate and speak freely or be associated with 'foreign' agents given the situation in the respective conflict areas.

Lastly, the stakeholder group highlighted the need to clarify, as the differences between lay audience and lay public were not as clear, which also led to questions of relevance.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Stakeholder specific recommendations were put forward on certain aspects or content which can be further expanded on as summarised in the Section 1. More research on the understanding and relation of lay actors with the media could facilitate the approach of NGOs in their operation and work which can be adapted or tailored for example in different conflict situations and settings. As conflict zones, particularly in Africa also lack general information, an initiative such as the INFOCORE project is welcome as it helps in filling gaps in knowledge.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The stakeholder group put forward several recommendations for improvements. These included the publication of policy papers which can help inform action, that is, attempting to implement change as soon as possible and start disseminating the research and findings of INFOCORE because a longer time frame for completion can ultimately lead to the information (or project findings) becoming out-dated, especially in the changing nature of conflicts and conflict areas.

Exploring and incorporating the link between media and fragile states could provide greater substance and relevance to the research. This can incorporate the research into media strategy or strategies in effect or being employed in the selected case studies which could contribute to the overall country case analysis and conflict dynamics of the INFOCORE project. In addition to the selected case studies, perhaps delving into, or providing links or comparisons of the role of media in non-conflict zones such as Europe can help in greater contextualisation and the development of parallel comparisons in general; given that the triangular relationship between the media, lay actors, and trust.

Suggestion: Providing a more comprehensive investigation into the role of media by looking at the 'top level' (such as those in charge), as well as donors to media and their respective influence(s).

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

Throughout the session, the group asked that as much as possible, the information collected, gathered, and analysed be made available to the public. What has already been collected can already begin to be utilised in their planning and approach of certain activities.

WP4 –NGOs and Experts Interaction with Conflict News

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

One of the main suggestions made by the group was the need to differentiate between the various NGO structures, in that not all NGOs operate the same or have the same mandate (especially at different levels such as international, national and local). From how the research was orally presented it did not seem clear that such differentiations were taken into account, although the researchers responded that this differentiation was covered in the underlying papers and asked for in the questionnaires. Depending on their mandate and level(s) of operations such as international, national or local, NGOs can have different objectives and priorities that can be either action based, information gathering, advocacy, policy oriented and so forth. As certain NGOs produce reports or communications there can be a blurring of understanding if what is transmitted is news, or facts. Can the research and reporting conducted by NGO be classified as news, or simply material for news production? Especially considering at times NGOs have greater access to certain conflict areas given their mandates and reputation, and so what is reported back through photographs, videos and texts, are then picked up and utilised by media outlets.

The group also highlighted the need to take into account the activities and agendas of the top-level of the NGOs, particularly donors or donor ambiguities because they require results and set the agenda or priorities that will be pursued on the ground. This phenomenon needs to be recognised because that is how the decisions are often made about what needs or will be covered and what is not covered by NGOs; i.e. the autonomy of information gathering and information processing. Another issue of discussion was the need to recognise 'pollution between advocacy aims of NGOs' and 'maintaining the integrity of the facts' because media production which utilises the information from NGOs often transmit advocacy reporting as truths on the group.

From the presentation, the group also pointed out that the need to factor in the research 'religious' NGOs, especially those that operate on the local level because they have their own mandates and agendas. Similarly, as not all countries recognise NGOs per se, the group enquired about the equivalent in 'local establishments', such as mosques and churches which in essence channel similar mandates as 'NGOs" (i.e. to help and assist). Moreover, local (equivalent) establishments can possess their own media outlets and are more prominent in areas of conflict as they are often an integral part of a conflict society.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholder group was positive about the findings and research presented and believed there was a lot of potential and utility for NGO use and they provided their perspectives and recommendations. The group did stress it was crucial to factor in the differences between the different types of NGOs at the local, national and international level because it is not possible to put them all in the same 'category' for analysis.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The collective agreement amongst the stakeholder group was that a mapping of the different NGOs, perhaps through ideologies, mandates (e.g. action based, research, policy, advocacy etc.), even existing distinctions such as "working on conflict, around conflict, in conflict", would be fruitful so as to be able to then potentially see overlaps and avenues of interaction.

Moreover, incorporating a 'donor criteria' into this mapping, or having a separate chart to identify (in as much as possible) the main sources of funding, for instance, private, public such as governments (which governments) and so forth. This information can then be analysed together with the agendas or actions of NGOs and to better see how they interact and why certain conflicts or issues are preferred while others lay forgotten (the example was raised between Syria which has been in the news non-stop for four years, as opposed to central African countries such as Burundi and Congo).

Links can perhaps then be drawn between donors and interests and to what extent this influences NGO activity, their impacts, visibility in the media and their impacts overall. It was also stressed the need to really differentiate between news and communication when discussing or analysing NGOs because the blurring of understanding whether what NGOs report is news, facts or communication, affects how the information is picked up and packaged by media outlets. Within this framework, the idea of investigating perhaps in the future through the INFOCORE research, the causal influence of the different actors, but with the added value of linking it to actual activity on the ground would be a huge added value.

A clearer definition of "media production" would be helpful, and if that is solely committed by journalists and media outlets, or if what is produced by NGOs can also be defined as "media". Within this framework, there could be distinct criteria or references on the different forms of "media production" created by NGOs because the content is affected by the mandate and objective of the NGO in question; for example, reporting, communication of activities and advocacy as the content of the transmission is produced accordingly. To better understand the relationships and interactions in the vast world of the NGOs, it would be valuable to map out (e.g. ideologies, donor sources, mandates for action, research, and advocacy).

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

The stakeholder group suggested holding an intensive workshop or select interviews with NGO donors (or those in charge of fundraising) in order to get their input on how the NGO machine works, and its choice of priority areas are decided. Researchers pointed out that the current research design was geared towards covering many NGOs and there are resource limitations associated with going into greater depth on each and every NGO.

The stakeholders suggested creating a "map" of the NGO world, and if possible a report or analysis paper on the topic can be of utility for the NGO to have a better understanding of their 'place' in the system and identify means of overlap, activity and impact.

WP5 – Interaction and Dissemination of News in Social Media

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The group bought forth the question of how this approach would work in countries where there was not sufficient access to respective social media platforms such as Twitter due to censorship or lack of Internet access. Given the selected conflict areas it would appear there is an imbalance to the application of this study to the conflict areas in Africa, however there was agreement that for conflict areas such as Israel/Palestine and Syria it is highly relevant and valuable.

Social media platforms such as Twitter provide public platforms with possibilities of anonymity, and the group enquired as to how the study tackled the issue of contextualisation and fake users, that is, how to identify if what is being discussed is genuine and not a replication.

Another argument brought forward was the utilisation of social media content by journalists to create 'news', which leads to the distortion of facts in cases but also leading to sensationalising reports because lack of effort is put into verifying the information. The use of social media as a major resource for journalists is itself an issue affecting the integrity of the profession. In relation to this, it was also highlighted the problem of the 'western elite' and forgetting about the plight of the local people, i.e. the West being distracted easily and quickly by trends on social media which can occur simultaneously to overshadow an event in a conflict zone.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The reactions to the current findings were positive and the group expressed their interest and belief that there was great potential for added value to their work

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The stakeholders mentioned some alternatives regarding the fact that Twitter is hardly used in Africa. One option would be to the use alternative social media platforms, namely Facebook which users in Africa utilise on public settings in order to communicate and initiate discussion. It could therefore prove fruitful to conduct a similar analysis of the use of Facebook in conflict areas in Africa and seek to identify patterns or dissimilarities, as well as what kind of news and from where news is shared.

With increased use of social media by journalists, identifying whether it is traditional media that creates the news and sets the course of dialogue and priority of social platforms, or if the verse is true in that dialogue and reports on social media provide material for the media for outlets. This could lead towards further research on the impact of social media on lay audiences and the news production process.

Within this line of thought, it was also suggested in researching the role of social media as fuelling conflicts or contributing to their resolution (e.g. a platform for dialogue or hate speech) would prove to be an immense benefit for how NGOs operate or create their communication strategy accordingly.

As some reported news tweets can get picked up by the media outlets or grow into a 'popular trend' on Twitter, it would be of great value to be able to identify movements which are just short of 'exploding' on the Internet, or making note when 'distraction news' overshadows other events and actually recording the different tweet reports to eventually identify a pattern if and perhaps why certain news is being purposefully overshadowed or pushed out of the limelight; essentially trying to identify narratives that are not being heard and why.

There was a potential for comparison and identifying the utility of social media as a watchdog platform or alternative real-time source of information beyond the public relation communications. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to compare how public relations and political communications are transmitted in the absence of social media which can serve as alternative, and less censored media source.

It was suggested that this WP get in contact with Facebook or Twitter to see if the research can be useful to them or how they can contribute or facilitate the research.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

Moreover, in accordance with the recommendation of the group to release the information as soon as possible as a report or written piece, it was also strongly recommended that one or more additional conferences be held with a wider selection of audience in order to get the message across further.

WP6 – Strategic Communication of News and Public Relations

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The group recognised the increasing prominence of strategic communications and their increasing encounters, as such; they asked if the research would be able to identify the 'successful' strategic communications. The researchers explained their particular approach on this. The stakeholders also highlighted the need to define the concept of 'successful' strategic communications and what it means. They briefly discussed to explanations of the researchers: amongst others, it for instance means being quoted in the news; that the information transmitted remains undisputed; that besides the transmission of mere information, interpretative frames of strategic communicators are transmitted, too (WP6's gradual concept of communicative 'success'). This discussion brought up the underlying theme of trust, and trust in the media has already been brought up extensively in WP3.

The group was concerned that there was increasing use of strategic communications in organisations, thereby by-passing the media and transmitting prepared information. Often this information can be difficult to verify since the journalistic cycle is increasingly shrinking. Within this framework, the group also stressed the need to again look at the 'top-level' or the donors and seek to

investigate how the information for strategic communication has been selected (by journalists etc.). This, however, is within the scope of WP2 and WP4.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The reaction to WP6 on the whole was very positive. Still, there are some questions and avenues of further research and investigation that were brought forward. While it was recognised that not everything could be taken into account, there was general agreement that there was a lot of potential to the application and utility of this research package, particularly for NGOs and similar organisations in the field. The researchers assured that they plan to investigate further in more detail on additional interesting questions when the project is over and when there is more time to pursue questions and analysis beyond INFOCORE's given frame of core objectives. Given the increasing prominence of strategic communication, the group asked how it would be possible to identify the media 'reality', for instance, the product of manipulation and the actual production process. However this could be linked to the shrinking time of the journalistic process and the time allowed for verification weighed against that of story production and so there is a mix up or deliberate use of communication material instead of information. Could this phenomenon also be related to a lack of training and education, or a disconcerting trend in the 'de-professionalisation' of journalism education? The researchers explained that those aspects are investigated when analysing the results of WP1 (interviews with journalists) and comparing them with results from WP6.

As the intention of strategic communication is to transmit specific information, is there a means of factoring what is absent and not being discussed? The researchers explained that it is one of INFOCORE's aims to describe what kind of PR messages are 'absent' in the media content, in political debate and in the discourse of lay publics and to answer the question why (for instance by analysing the quality of strategic communication/PR material/messages). When analysing WP1's results, INFOCORE will also be able to describe what journalists mention as 'absent topics/issues'.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

As an underlying theme, it was highly recommended that specific definition or description of reality and truth in relation to strategic communication be provided. The researcher explained that such an attempt (definition of 'reality' and 'truth') is highly questioned in communication science and that the discipline meanwhile agreed on the impossibility to consider 'reality' and 'truth' as measurable concepts (c.f. theory of constructivism). Moreover, ensuring again that there is a definition of strategic communication (also touching on propaganda) that is accessible by the audience so as to ensure similar understanding. The researchers pointed to the fact that INFOCORE already developed a long list of crucial key terms and concepts and developed detailed definitions for those terms – including 'strategic communication'. These definitions will be published on INOCORE's website soon.

There was great agreement that there was direct policy and advocacy use for the material as more and more entities and organisations are shifting towards strategic communications. It would therefore be invaluable if the research of WP6 could facilitate the identification of strategic communication material, what are the popular trends and social media platforms most utilised (the patter is within the scope of WP5). This process could also serve to identify what information (and why that) has 'quickly disappeared'.

The group stressed again the need to disseminate as much as possible the information and research accrued to date (before it becomes irrelevant) as it can be utilised not only in informing a wider audience, but contributing to the improvement in standards of journalistic education. Especially as certain journalistic reporting carries with it the need to report responsibly and aim to do no harm.

Through the research, providing comparisons between various strategic communication approaches, trends and actors involved can help in identifying patterns of use and patterns in crises that can be applied to different contexts.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

The group strongly suggested that the information and research be disseminated and shared with as wide an audience, and urged the WP to make contact with journalism universities to help improve and develop standards in the profession. Since the leader of WP1 is also the chair of the prominent world wide "Worlds of Journalism" project, INFOCORE feels itself perfectly prepared for this task. Furthermore, as strategic communication is often transmitted with intent and purpose, it could serve the purposes of the research to get in contact with individuals in the 'top-level' or (NGOs') donors so as to examine how the process of information selection, means of dissemination and the reach of audiences and target groups are decided (this is within the scope of WP4).

WP7 – Dissemination of News in the Media

1. Main concerns raised by the stakeholders

The group suggested refining the specific objectives of the WP such as to more directly and obviously relate to the needs of NGOs – for instance, by tying the analysis of media contents more closely to media effects on conflict prevention or response.

Parts of the discussion focused on the possibilities for including also radio contents, which play a preeminent role especially in the African conflicts, in the analyses conducted by the WP – given that texts are required for the content analytic components of the analysis. Participants highlighted the impact of very local radio stations on local society, which are often the primary and most accessible sources of information; some stations are even only temporary, due to reasons such as security and lack of freedom of expression, and are often not regulated or monitored. The researchers discussed their operational strategy, which relies partly on online contents, partly on obtained media monitoring content, and partly on a qualitative analysis of (not necessarily textual, or transcribed audio-visual)

contents. Further debates concerned the availability of material, the challenges of collecting relevant content, and the respective implications for analysis and inference formation.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The group was generally positive about the potential value of the presented research, but recommended that the aim be further clarified specifically with regard to how the analysed media content relates to conflict prevention or response as a whole. They were specifically interested in the possibility to trace events which are reported on certain outlets but not on others, which would help in identifying gaps or areas which are being 'forgotten'. Such findings might help NGOs derive appropriate strategies or plans of action for their respective involvement.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The stakeholders emphasized the importance of public opinion in the context of media dissemination, as well as the closely related issue of trust. They therefore suggested added emphasis on the extent to which media may shape public opinion, and raised a discussion about the measurement of public opinion itself, as well as its impact.

With peace being the 'ultimate' aim of conflict resolution and prevention, the group encouraged the development of a specific, easily accessible definition that may help relate findings to the specific media roles and their implications for building peace.

It was suggested that the Work Package might obtain additional radio material by consulting with UN archives, which keep extensive records that might help broaden the analysis of the African media outlets.

A specific request concerned the identification of particular ways in which media support or money could be invested in order to targetedly improve conditions for journalists, such as facilitating research which at times is costly.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

The group recommended that the research be processed and made ready for dissemination as soon as possible in order to start debates among respective audiences and target audience.

WP8 – Reception of News Contents in Political Debates

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

Following the presentation on political officials and members of parliament, it was asked if it was known how 'media aware' these persons were. That is, what are the preferred primary media sources, and do they vary depending on political party alignment, as well as on the different levels such as local, regional and national. This concern stems from the use of sources in political debates and material, but also if it

was possible to discern if the media influences politics or if the verse was true and politics sets the agenda for media?

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

There was agreement that the research of the WP is a powerful tool, however, to be able to really reap the benefits it would require an accessible manual on how to search or input specific results.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

Building on the expressed concern on 'media awareness' of political officials and members of parliament, it was suggested to investigate the popular media outlets (if that varies between local, regional and international level). This research would contribute to identifying the influence cycle between the media and political if the former influences the latter, or the latter sets the agenda for the former and utilises the media to further arguments.

From this additional correlations can be identified on if a conflict makes it to the political or media stage during the peak, but also which are the conflicts that are discussed and perhaps why and for what interests they serve; the example of Syria which has been prominent in the news for four years as opposed to other conflict situations in Africa or the Middle East were pointed out. The research could prove of even greater use specifically to NGOs to track to what extent they are being quoted, referred to, and so forth in order to assess their impact or visibility (as well as which issues covered are mentioned), but also if certain NGOs referred to escalatory or de-escalatory phases when discussing conflicts.

As the project in general is related to conflict resolution and peace building, the group suggested focusing more within a similar lexical field, as well as those related to 'peace' and assess which conflicts are paired more with said words (i.e. if there is a more positive or negative association with the words). To better grasp what is being discussed, the group asked that a more accessible and clear definition be provided regarding 'concepts' and 'words' because the two words seemed to be used interchangeably when referring to the dictionary used in this WP.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

Disseminating as early and as much of the research as possible was highly recommended as the research great utility. The group stressed the need perhaps to engage or interact with those in the European or national parliaments of selected countries in order to identify which are the most consulted media outlets or sources.

Media Stakeholder Group (Rapporteur: Rhea Goveas)

WP1-Journalistic News Production in Conflict

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The main concern raised by the group was the qualifications and backgrounds of the journalists (e.g. academic degrees, experiences, genders, incomes, business ventures and ages) in different conflict countries under different contexts. The group discussed at length how there is far less funding for media in general, making it very difficult for journalists to have fixed income, job security and benefits. This has led to media outlets hiring more freelancers and stringers. There is a lot more emphasis on "chasing the story" and a nonstop pressure to have the story before anyone else. In some situations there are no staffers, and all the journalists are essentially working on one story for many different news stations for a short active period.

The group raised the point that if a journalist does not have a 5-star passport (UK, EU, CA, AUS, etc.), he or she cannot just fly anywhere to cover a conflict, as there are visa problems, extra costs, and time delays. This often leads to media outlets hiring fixers, freelancers, or journalists from Europe as opposed to local correspondents, causing eurocentrism and limiting opportunity for native journalists to cover important stories in their home countries. For example, *Agence France Presse* gets journalists from Cyprus to fly to many conflict zones rather than hiring local journalists because of visa requirements

A few group members advised the WP to focus on role of agencies (wire reports) in informing journalists. Agencies have larger influence on journalists (especially broadcast journalists) than information gleaned from politicians and NGOs. Many media organisations do not have the budget to send reporters to cover stories, and therefore pull information from the wires.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholders generally agreed with most of the findings regarding the difficulties of being a journalist in different countries covering conflict. Many shared similar personal anecdotes and agreed with the presentation. However, many of the group members rejected the claim that NGOs act as newsrooms or that journalists use NGOs as newsroom substitutes because NGOs do not have the capacity to act as newsrooms, though they have media capability. NGOs are a source of invaluable information for many journalists, they have people in the field but they act based on their role in a conflict or as an organisation. The group argued that a newsroom theoretically reports the news in an unbiased way, whereas NGOs cannot do that if it goes against their mandate. Notably, the situation changes for both NGOs and journalists when reviewing human rights violations because it is difficult to be objective when using crimes against as initiation for story

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The stakeholders believed that the survey should add a category for mentoring, as many journalists were mentored into their careers. There should be three types of survey classification: Non-certified, mentored, certified and mentored, in order to see how different types of training create different types of journalists.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

The group believed that this information should be distributed to the top media organisations in each country, so that they could see the deficiency in their journalists.

WP2-Political Leaders, Media, and Conflict

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The main concerns brought up by the stakeholder group include concerns about the PMP methodology, the candidness of politicians being interviewed, and the connections between politicians and the media in conflict versus non-conflict situations. They also felt that before the integration with the content analysis WP, it was difficult to make generalisations about political leaders and the media. The stakeholder group was worried that some of the politicians being interviewed would not be completely candid during the interviews, particularly if asked how they personally influence and utilise certain media outlets, implement spin doctors, or work with primary journalists to spread their political message.

The group also felt another big concern was the lack of economic consideration given by the WP, especially as the economic element and ownership structure (who owns the private and public media) highly influences the type of media analysed in the WPs. Some media is purely propaganda, is there to propagate the voice of the politicians (e.g. the Balkans). The group also discussed that is very difficult to find non-propaganda coverage in conflict zones. The group also connected this idea with idea that this WP is relevant for media in European countries and non-conflict zones, and less relevant for media in conflict zones. Several members of the group saw that this is tied to economic control and political stability.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The group was intrigued by the idea of speaking to politicians about these conflicts but, in general, the stakeholders felt that the preliminary findings apply more generally to non-conflict situations than conflict situations. Some of the examples the group provided include police brutality against black people in America and gun control, which are highly politicised issues that are also heavily covered by the media. Many of the group members had issues with the Politics-Media-Politics (PMP) principle expressed by the WP leader. The group agreed that in order to fully understand the role of media in conflict one must understand both political and media environment. However, the group felt the WP was underestimating and mistrusting the media by "squeezing it in between two big P's". The

stakeholders believed that the media is a larger driving force in its own right than simply a political tool. They felt that the PMP model applies more in non-conflict situations than in conflict situations and that the WP should not operate on the assumption that the media is primarily dependent on politicians, rather they felt in most cases it is the other way around (e.g. what has changed in policy in Syria in the context of PMP). Another person brought up the idea that politicians are often dependent on the media in the context of breaking controversial news (as conflict news often is) and must react and change their rhetoric based on the news. Another member of the group followed up by discussing how certain topics such as chemical warfare force political leaders to react when atrocities are reported in media.

They were especially interested by the idea that most politicians saw that social media leads to more hate. Half of the journalists found the questions about the changes in the dawn of the digital age very interesting and were even surprised by the preliminary findings. Some of the WP preliminary findings include that discourse on social media may be even more heated and ethnocentric than found in the traditional media, particularly in Europe. Most of the group agreed that it is true that there is more hatred on social media in Europe.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

One of the group members said that in order to get the full picture of the way political leaders actually use media in a real way for political gain, the study should include a closer look at how people actually absorb and interpret information they get from the media.

In terms of the PMP methodology, many group members found it simplistic and reductive towards the media and that it was an impediment to the focus of the study. They felt that the cyclical relationship of the media and political leaders (PMP) works less for international conflict situations as it does for domestic policy issues They felt that the methodology needed to be modified and that the PMP could not be applied to most conflict cases. One member of the group suggested that the WP provide a sample interview or a more specific view of the questions being asked of journalists and politicians. The rest of the group agreed, especially in the context of different types of conflict coverage and political agendas in each country.

4. Further Targets to be met by Dissemination

The group identified people who follow these politicians, and media outlets should be further targets for dissemination.

WP3-Lay Actor's Use and Reception of Conflict News

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The group was very concerned and sceptical about indicator measures and the differences between methodology and indicator measures (e.g. Macedonia getting both qualitative and quantitative frames and Congo and Burundi getting only quantitative frames). The WP leader explained that this was

because the researchers did not have French and English polling methods and that there is very little interaction between media and people in DRC and Burundi. Most interaction occurs through calling in to radio station, as Internet use is very low. The group discussed the idea that the radio manipulates callers and takes advantageous of their participation in Burundi.

One stakeholder asked the WP leaders how they know that all layers of society are being affected by media in places like Burundi. The leaders replied that they try to get every media source possible and that if they are unable to reach out to people about their media habits, they will not be able to get to them at all. The group was pleasantly surprised by the idea of media literacy in lay-publics because people want to be well-informed and criticise and question the legitimacy of sources. However several members pointed out that focusing only on media-active lay publics excludes women in a place like Burundi because women have less access to radio stations in that society. WP3 has shown that the majority of media consumers are men. WP3 wanted to be more inclusive in both rural and urban area.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The stakeholders were very interested that this study was focusing on how people feel they are a part of the media and active in current events and how do lay publics interact with the media in the context of conflict.

There was a point of confusion when a group member asked the WP if they were considering using the same media as WP7. The Work Package leader said they are considering not only the same media, but the same conflict cases. All the WPs are talking about the same events and same media coverage throughout. That is how they are going to come up with a final integrated product at the end. However, WP 7 had admitted to having a strong issue with the inability to access archives. The WP leader said they must have had a misunderstanding, because each WP has a specific actor and a specific conflict layout. It will be very difficult for this WP because there are no transcripts of radio broadcasts in general and that is the main sources of news in Africa. There is not a source of archives on collective memory.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The group suggested it would be excellent to have specific case studies on quantitative and qualitative methodology to accompany the preliminary findings from the first round of interviews. The group advised that structural elements, such as the radio in Burundi and language factors, need to be very clearly written out and clearly presented to derive analysis. Otherwise the study will lose the connection to an important big picture. It has been recommended to use more information on international elements of each conflict.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

Several stakeholders said they needed specific perceptions of public broadcasting trust perceptions for Kosovo and Macedonia to be sent to them and to other news organisations, specifically because they need specific elements for their members.

WP4-NGOs and Experts Interactions with Conflict News

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

One of the main points raised by the group is that the media is completely and totally under political pressure from large political parties and corporate interests, while NGOs are under pressure from governments and donor bases.

One of the main arguments was that society will see growing NGOs influence in civil society as these are becoming more media-like in terms of journalistic quality, formats and audience reach. These activities are increasingly effective and earn large NGOs millions of views on website. If a reporter wants the best journalistic report on certain issues like human rights, climate change, environment they would go to a big NGOs. Whether or not they have an agenda, they have the knowledge and specialisation, like special interest magazines that are growing their audience.

Another important discussion point is that NGOs are trying to decrease their dependence on media by creating their own social media. Also they have global readership, not conflict specific readership. People do not go to them for individual conflict information. People would be interested to know the agendas of different NGOs. It is important to understand the aim and goals behind an organisation's operation: it critical to understand if they want to affect media, policy change, or increase audience share.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Most of the stakeholders liked the classification system of NGOs, but they just did not see how the same methodology could be applied to all of them. In general, the group questioned the argument that NGOs are more vulnerable to political pressure than the media: they argued that if a reporter is reporting on a special, dangerous topic, he becomes vulnerable whether he is an established journalist or not. However, in some places NGOs are more vulnerable if they step on political or economic interests, like in Latin American countries. Additionally the Geneva Convention offers far more protection than journalistic protections. Another reason that NGOs are not as vulnerable as journalists is economic power as large media organisations have the resources to defend against legal claims. At the same time, job security does not exist for most journalists anymore. The pressure on them of getting the scoop or filing a story quickly is getting higher, diminishing time for research and harming the quality of conflict reporting. NGOs can give better contracts and financial security for journalists.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

One stakeholder thought it would be interesting to ask media-based NGOs in Kosovo and Macedonia what happened to them when the money dried up at the end of the conflict and how they recovered, in order to learn more about them. A few group members suggested that this WP needs to do a comparative analysis looking at how long journalists stay journalists in conflict and non-conflict zones. Additionally, as a foreign correspondent in a stationery non-conflict zone, journalists become generalists so they use NGOs more because they do not know all of the topics. However, war correspondents are very specialised and perhaps they do not use NGOs (they are not so sophisticated in conflict zones) as much as other sources.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

Other NGOs should benefit from this data so they can learn from the results of the NGO quantitative and qualitative analyses.

WP5-The Role of Social Media in Violent Conflicts

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The main concerns of the group primarily included: how privacy plays into this study, the differences between Facebook and Twitter, how negativity and hate play a role in discourse, how are propaganda and social media tied, how the WP planned on accessing and utilising Facebook and Twitter archives.

A large portion of the discussion and another major concern of the group was how individual journalists in the room utilise social media in their work. Many saw it as a journalistic tool like any other, but a unique way of accessing sources on the ground or alternative sources. One person saw it as a safety feature in order to warn civilians and other journalists of real-time issues when covering a conflict. Most of the journalists used it as a way to share random articles and bits of news that did not warrant its own story, to follow their colleagues' work, or to see events happening in real time. Very few group members said that they actually found sources on a regular basis from Twitter or Facebook.

Another concern the group had was the limitations of social media in the study: much of it is junk, a large portion cannot be verified, privacy policy makes it difficult to work with, there is such a vast, inaccessible volume, it is hard to find viable, unique sources on the ground without knowing what you are looking for. Many group members emphasised the attitude that where people get sources from and what they find on social media is the same. Regardless of whether it came from social media or another traditional source, all journalists must fact check and verify the same way. The methodology has not changed all that much. It just allows for the creation of new kinds of journalists. This was necessary in Cairo in 2011, where journalists had to think on their feet and embrace these new social media journalists. Many group members were of the opinion that we need old established journalists to mentor these younger journalists and to direct and manage this new influx of information and images.

The group spent a lot of time debating if media focuses public attention on a crisis even though it may be exaggerated, then social media may just be mirroring this. Several correspondents described getting a pulse of information from certain places on Twitter. This is the idea that there is intense fighting or escalation all the time. Then if you look closely, you see the fighting is only taking place in a couple places and society is peaceful and functioning in general. This is a problem with looking too closely at media and social media's response to crisis. One person argued that in terms of videos and pictures there is no choice but to accept them from social media, at any rate it is necessary to verify or put the provision that this cannot be independently verified. Pictures are so scarce that sometimes it is necessary to take from social media sources that cannot be verified.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The group felt that the preliminary findings prompted many interesting questions: particularly regarding privacy, individual and social media use on specific conflict events, and the veracity and reliability of social media in these situations. A lot of the group members believed it would be immensely difficult to compare two very different things such as Twitter and Facebook and to access the complete archives of both sites.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

One suggestion provided by the group was that this WP should include more targeted interviews about the specific social media use of different journalists, since social media use is so individualised. For example, certain correspondents use Facebook for personal things and Twitter for professional sharing. Another suggestion was for the group to do a more ethnographical view of Facebook since it was so different from Twitter.

The group also suggested examining the comments of posts on social media. This may be difficult as they are not archived and media websites de-activate the ability to comment on certain hot button issues. However, it would allow the WP to examine how people interact surrounding this issues instead of examining simply one tweet or post. Or if the WP is not looking specifically at the comments of media websites, they could simply find out if they have a certain social media or comment policy. Another thing the group felt could improve the study is to see what media websites embed tweets (who they give credence to) and how this changes the discourse surrounding social media (when it is attached to a media website).

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

The group was very interested in disseminating this information widely because social media studies only matter in the context of getting the opinions of many, many others because social media is primarily opinion-based rhetoric.

WP6 – Strategic Communication of News and Public Relations

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

The stakeholders asked whether WP6 also considers less traditional models of PR, such as the ISIS propaganda machine. The researchers explained that they differentiate between PR and propaganda and that they do not consider propaganda simply to be a "less traditional model of PR" (but a separate and distinct type of strategic communication). ISIS propaganda –– as long as available via the Internet –– is included in the WP6's research material (including the magazine *Dabiq*). They were wondering if the study takes into account "coupage" (journalists paid to cover specific stories in specific ways) (this is within the scope of PW1) or NGOs charging a fee or direct tax for permission from journalists who use their materials (this is within the scope of WP4).

There was a lot of discussion about PR and lobbying, as an internal mechanism of journalism that makes it difficult to publish alternative stories. One correspondent brought up the idea of editors being influenced by PR and lobbyists back home, which influences the ability of a correspondent to write articles. They cited the example of the Kurds in Northern Syria. Because of strong lobbying firms and PR campaigns in Kurdistan and Brussels, it is often editors who are influenced by public relations. They want stories about the Women's houses and other democratic institutions. They do not want published stories that are less positive: for example, Arab refugees in the Kurdish region. There is a person at the desk in Brussels who is being influenced by the Kurdish institute and therefore the stories presented are being influenced by the PR propaganda machine from the Kurdish Centre and Kurdish lobbyist groups in Brussels. They discussed how the amount of PR from the Kurdish community in Brussels has increased in the past 3 years and how this affects the discourse about this issue. The researchers admitted that this is an interesting question –– but out of the scope of INFOCORE.

Another main topic of the discussion dealt with the role of journalists in regards to using information from press releases. The general consensus was that a journalist must read it over critically and synthesise this information. Media organisations do not always have people on the ground because they do not have the funding. The less people on the ground, the less public relations will enter discourse because there is less media coverage in general. However, many of the group members said that when a journalist is in a conflict or war situation they cannot double check information they receive from PR. In non-conflict situations they have the time and resources to check and follow up and expand. This is the fundamental difference.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

Some of the group members disagreed with the idea that PR is becoming more successful in influencing people's perception of a conflict. They believe that most people do not have access to raw PR material. Most people read media content that may be partly based on PR material as well as other things. The group agreed that any conclusions could be made at such an early stage in the programme particularly because the WP leader stated that it was too early to comment on how the frames of PR change through

time, conflict relations, and other factors. The project will enter this phase of analysis not until late spring 2016. The stakeholders also discussed with the researchers the difficult distinction between 'PR' and 'propaganda'. The stakeholders also pointed out that most people do not know the difference between PR and propaganda in general. The researchers assured that INFOCORE already developed (scientific) definitions to differentiate between PR and propaganda. Furthermore, there are several exigent and useful scientific definitions existing which INFOCORE is considering for its work. The group was generally very interested in the close list of the (more than) 3,000 concepts which INFORCE's content analytical WPs are using to analyse their material. This is in particular in reference to how the data analysis will separate actual PR from trolls or junk content.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

The group believed that the list of PR organisations needed to be diversified, particularly in dealing with certain conflicts. They believed that some of the PR firms were very specific to only certain conflicts. The researchers explained that they are well aware of this; they had to concentrate on a selection of PR actors/organisations for the presentation. The group suggested that the WP leader focus on including pictures, videos, and other visual aids because visuals are essential for understanding conflicts. If the project only follows text-based news this poses a challenge in dealing with the Syrian conflict. Many conflicts and the PR surrounding them are highly visual. They proposed a qualitative assessment of non-text based sources. The researchers explained that this is not feasible because content analysis of visuals –– in particular moving visuals – is extremely complex and expensive. INFOCORE's budget does not allow for this. However, the leader of WP6 successfully raised additional funding for a young PhD student who investigates on visuals of trauma and grief in times of war and violent crisis (at LMU Munich). She is supervised by the leader of WP6 but is not member of INFOCORE.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments.

WP7- Dissemination of News in the Media

1. Main concerns raised by the stakeholders

The media stakeholder group were primarily interested in the composition and limitations of the data sample composed by the Work Package leaders. Also the next steps for this portion of the project, as well as qualitative methodology considerations were discussed.

The stakeholders discussed possible subtle differences between different formats of reporting – such as broadcast and print versions of the news – which can be captured only to some extent by the automated text analysis strategy. Also the role of independent journalists writing within the coverage of a media organizations presents a challenge to attempts to relate analysed patterns in the coverage to the opinion of the news organisation.

The group felt that the linguistic structure of news materials is an important part of the analysis, discussing both difference between websites, print and broadcast content, as well as culture- and language-specific considerations. One of the group members suggested including also English language blogs catering to Palestinian audiences also abroad in the sample collated for the Palestine-Israel conflict. Such an addition might expose interesting differences in the rhetoric used by Arabic and English diaspora newspapers and English Palestinian sources – a possibility also saliently discussed regarding differences between Al Jazeera's Arabic and English international channels. Another stakeholder noted that also news consumption patterns of Arab- and English-speaking audiences might differ, inspiring different production and editorial styles (e.g., the use of music or different pictures). Additionally, many large news groups (e.g. RFI, Al Jazeera, and Euronews) have different policies concerning translation – which may also be an asset for INFOCORE's comparative analysis.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The group was impressed by the volume of data collected, measuring over 900,000 news items. The wealth of data raised many questions about the level of analysis and the Work Package leader's goals for the preliminary findings – considering especially the need to prioritize selected avenues for research so as to obtain presentable findings from the content analysis by the date specified at the beginning of the presentation.

The stakeholders were interested specifically in possible linkages or similarities between news and social media, raising the question how the separately treated social media data would be linked back to the WP's analaysis. Especially during the Palestinian conflict, they argued, local media face considerable limitations covering conflict zones, whereas social media is much more accessible (WIFI) than broadcast media and print media (often controlled by government). Given the analysis of social media data conducted by another WP, they suggested prioritizing the specific relations between these bodies of data, and emphasizes the particular role of news blogs, which are hybrid news outlets and not traditional social media, and often show high readership and sphere of influence; the group advocated increasing the salience of such blogs in the WP's analysis.

Other questions revolved around the use of key words from the operational computer-readable dictionary; the stakeholders advocated closely integrating the quantitative analysis with the planned qualitative stages to reconstruct a nuanced and complete picture. At the same time, the discussion showed that some specific qualities of the coverage are already considered in the automated strategy, such as the heightened centrality of the editorial product (headline) compared to the journalistic report, especially for people's reception of the news.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

Several members of the group suggested third-party groups that could help the Work Package access additional archives of media outlets, addressing various avenues for further augmenting the

sample given the sometimes less than perfect availability of content from certain media outlets covering conflicts in the Balkans and Middle East.

A few of the group members suggested specific amendments to the WP's criteria for selecting media outlets, helping the analysis to create an even more complete view of the conflict, and further approximating the WP's ideal of combining opinion-leading media, outlets with the highest readership, and those representing specific groups, language communities, and media outlets that offer different perspectives (i.e. the Hamas newspapers, ISIS, and Syrian rebel group sources).

One stakeholder suggested it might be interesting to fine-tune the automated analysis' sensitivity toward linguistic differences in the news by examining organisations like Euronews, which broadcasts in 13 languages. This might help carve out perceptual differences of strictly equivalent reports (e.g., within different conflict narratives) and distinguish these from manifest differences that are untranslatable.

4. Further Targets to be met by Dissemination

The group suggested that a linguistic analysis might be interesting to address as a specific outcome.

WP8-Reception of News Contents in Political Debates: Parliamentary Debate

1. Main issues raised by the stakeholders

One of the main concerns was that this study ignored the power of social media and that there is a divergence from the traditional media and news outlets, such as established news blogs like the *Huffington Post*. There is a need to include social media and newer media in this analysis, without dismissing them as new media. Several of the group members were focused on how the lobbyists influence the European Parliament and Brussels-based news media. They claimed that Brussels is one big lobby machine: when it comes to Syria there is a very strong lobby from the Kurdish parties in Brussels. It is difficult for freelance journalist to sell articles if it is different from what the pro-Kurdish Parliament says on an issue, even if this is not accurate on the ground. The WP prepared to rectify this by interviewing politicians, journalists, NGO actors, public opinion (citizens): through qualitative data from interviewing journalists. The content analysis group is studying public opinion and public perception and the WP will ask them about lobbying. They can also do some work in identifying specific lobbyists and including more about lobbyists in the working dictionary.

2. Stakeholders' reactions to the preliminary findings

The group thought the breakdown of parliament and media in a single conflict is very important. Particularly the fact that context is very important: an errant mention vs. an actual discussion in a parliamentarian session makes a large difference. The group liked the idea of stratifying the sample, or giving more weight to certain parliaments which discuss certain conflicts more and in a significant context. This is especially more topical for the European Parliament than the national parliaments. The researchers could stratify this based on ideology, party, and other factors.

Many of the group members saw the key concepts and working definition as insufficient. They felt that not all of the concepts were necessary for all of the conflicts and that many of them were repetitive. For example, African conflicts are very different; many of these key concepts are less applicable: "women and rape" are very important. Burundi itself is very different; it requires a different list of concepts. Additionally, many of the concepts do not fit for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group had a big problem with the concepts for the mutually exclusive dictionary (i.e. key words for violent and criminal). This could account for the correlation seen in some of the findings and would make it contestable.

3. Concrete suggestions for improving the utility of the analysis towards maximum utility

One group member suggested that the WP go beyond how often these parliaments look at social media and focus on how individual parliamentarians use social media to talk about these conflicts. Then the WP could harvest this social media and use it to look at individual conflicts from the basis of individual politicians or parties. Another group member suggested that the social media aspect is very interesting and suggested the WP do cross-sections to see if certain members of parliament only represent one newspaper or the other in order to see alliances and allegiances.

The group suggested that perhaps there should be a different list of concept words for different conflicts because that would allow a greater level of specificity in analysing patterns in individual conflicts. Additionally, the group expressed a desire to see a cross-section of the different conflicts across different political landscapes, parliaments, and political parties. They specifically emphasised how they would also like to see a breakdown of each number: a breakdown by politics for each conflict by political parties.

4. Define further targets to be met by dissemination

No specific comments

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