March 15th, 2016

Welcome to MeCoDEM's Bridging Dialogue!

We look forward to sharing our results on the **2010 Pride Parade** with you.

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List of Speakers

Krstić, Aleksandra:

Aleksandra Krstić, Ph.D., is Teaching Assistant at the Department for Journalism and Communication at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade. She teaches TV journalism and investigative TV journalism. Her research interests include the EU-media relations, role of the media in transitional justice processes, journalism in post-communist countries, digitalisation of television, visual aspects of democratisation conflicts and the mediatisation of politics. She is a member of the Belgrade team within the EU-funded project "Media, Conflict and Democratisation" (MeCoDEM) and works on the work package on "Media representations of democratisation conflicts". Her PhD thesis focused on the coverage of EU institutions and EU topics in the Serbian electronic media and the EU-media relations. Prior to her academic career, she worked as a journalist and media trainer. She was awarded for producing the best TV stories on the EU integration process in Serbia during her journalistic career.

Thomass, Barbara:

Barbara Thomass is Professor for International Comparison of Media Systems at the Institute for Media Studies, Ruhr-University in Bochum, Germany. Her main fields of interests are international communication, media politics, media in transition countries, and media and journalism ethics. She is member of the Board of the ZDF, a national PSB, and head of the Akademie für Publizistik, an institution for further training of journalists in Germany. Earlier, she was a Lecturer and Researcher in communication science at the universities of Hamburg, Göttingen, Lüneburg and Bremen and at the universities in Vienna and Paris. She has worked with international organisations for several years in courses on journalism standards and ethics in different parts of Eastern and South Eastern Europe, West Africa and India. Prior to her academic career she worked as a journalist.

Vladisavljević, Nebojša:

Nebojša Vladisavljević teaches comparative and Serbian politics at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade. He completed MSc (1998) and PhD degrees (2004) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and taught comparative politics and national and ethnic conflict regulation as LSE Fellow in LSE's Graduate School (2004-2008). His research interests include authoritarianism and democratization, social movements and revolutions, ethnic conflict regulation, media and democratization, and communism and postcommunism. He published a book Serbia's Antibureaucratic Revolution: Milošević, the Fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and articles in various international academic journals, including International Political Science Review, Europe-Asia Studies, Nationalist Papers and Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies. Dr Vladisavljević also presented his work at various conventions of international associations for political and social science (APSA, IPSA, ECPR, ECREA, ESA, ASN, ASEN, PSA).

About MeCoDEM

MeCoDEM began on 1 February 2014 and will run over three years. The project investigates the interplay of communication and democratisation conflicts in four countries, Egypt, Kenya, Serbia and South Africa, each of them representing unique aspects of transitional / post-transitional divisions. Based on a comparative case study design, the research covers constitutional conflicts, civic conflicts and conflicts surrounding accountability and good governance. These conflicts constitute arenas of dispute where the media interact with the communicative strategies of governments on the one hand, and political activists and political movements struggling for recognition on the other.

MeCoDEM is funded by the European Union within the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. With a budget of 2.2 million Euros, the project consortium includes eight partner institutions from six countries: University of Leeds (coordinating institution), University of Belgrade, University of Hamburg, University of Cape Town, University of Oxford, Stockholm University, Ruhr University Bochum and American University in Cairo

Summary: findings from electronic and print media coverage of the 2010 Pride Parade

How did media report on the Pride Parade in 2010, the event which polarised the political stage and involved violence by militant groups? MeCoDEM's team at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, has conducted content analysis to find out how the Parade was portrayed in newspapers – Politika, Večernje novosti, Blic, Danas, Press and Pravda – and on TV channels – RTS, B92, Pink and Prva. The examination was based on a systematic and quantitative analysis of media content.

Causes of conflict

There was a wide range of distinct and competing interpretations of the conflict's causes: five different (groups of) causes were identified as very important in media coverage. References to perceived violence on the streets of the capital by militant right-wing groups dominated legal causes, in addition to law enforcement, partiality of police and ineffective legal system. Gender and religious identity (domestic and pan-Orthodox Christian dimensions) featured high on the list of perceived causes since much of the opposition to the event originated from religious and traditional values. Polarisation/intolerance and anti-democratic attitudes, as well as the erosion of traditional values, were also discussed, as well as weak political institutions. Finally, there was some reference to the role of international causes, principally to the EU, in terms of both support and opposition to it.

Sources and conflict parties

In the coverage of the 2010 Pride parade, journalists used civil society actors – civic groups, NGOs and citizens as individual or collective actors without clear group affiliation (e.g., protesters) – as sources more often than political authorities and ruling parties put together, which is highly unusual. In turn, political authorities – president, government, parliament, bureaucracy and executive agencies – appeared in media reporting as sources much more frequently than both ruling and opposition parties. International actors appeared as sources less often than other actors.

Data reveal sharp boundaries in media coverage with regard to which non-official sources were considered legitimate. While media were wide open to civil society groups, militant groups (those who use or promote the use of violence) could hardly get their voice heard, which shows great barriers to intolerance in media reporting.

Regarding perceived conflict parties in media coverage, political authorities and non-official actors, including both civil society and militant groups, were at the forefront. In sharp contrast to sources (voices), militant groups featured as one of two main conflict parties, while civil society groups also ranked high. The main ruling and opposition parties played a low key role in media reporting.

Proposed solutions for conflict

Our data suggest that discourses about conflict treatment clearly endorsed institutional, as opposed to cultural, bottom-up solutions. There was a clear preference for radical change, without compromise, as opposed to gradual, peaceful change, based on compromise, with some (but not significant) preference for peaceful and tolerant approaches as opposed to violent and intolerant ones.

Summary: findings from journalists' accounts of covering the 2010 Pride Parade

MeCoDEM's local country team at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, has identified specific challenges faced by journalists when reporting on the 2010 Pride Parade. The following findings on the perception of conflict, work practices, journalistic roles and ethical dilemmas emerged through in-depth interviews with 25 professional journalists.

Perception of conflict and work practices: how journalists perceived the conflict, selected topics and what processes they engaged in when investigating and constructing stories on the Pride Parade

The Pride Parade was perceived as a high-risk political event marked by street violence and shaped by contested political, international and societal actors. Journalists saw their task to be inside the Pride, to inform the audience, convey the facts and highlight the problems LGBT population had been facing with. Stories on Pride Parade were selected if they displayed human rights aspects and security issues. While constructing a story, journalists emphasised the importance of their own responsibility towards the audience, avoiding sensationalistic and tabloid reporting style. Therefore, some interviewees admitted they had decided not to broadcast stories that would have promoted voices of extremist groups.

Journalistic Roles: what journalists perceived to be their role in reporting on the 2010 Pride Parade

Journalists perceived their main role to be informing the audience, analyzing facts and conveying messages of tolerance and peace. They were active, socially engaged participants whose role was to give voice to the voiceless, i.e. endangered sexual minorities. Some interviewees thought their role was to decrease widespread societal divisions and to defend not only the Pride Parade, but the right to free speech and free assembly. Journalists also acted as educators of the public, trying to explain the context of the event more in-depth or addressing those who did not support the Parade.

Ethical considerations and dilemmas: what guided journalists in reporting on the Pride Parade and what challenges they encountered

Journalist faced several challenges, such as how to cover the violence of the event, interpret the information gathered only a few hours prior to the event and communicate with official sources of information, i.e. the police and the government. Some were guided by the scope of the event, admitting to have exaggerated cheerful voices of LGBT population instead of reporting on violence in the streets of the capital. With voices of extremists mostly excluded from the coverage, the main professional dilemma related to journalistic objectivity and proper balance in the coverage.

Summary: findings from activists' accounts of the 2010 Pride Parade

In 2010, the Pride Parade received a lot of media attention. But did civil society organizations and activists found this useful to their struggle in terms of giving voice to their issues? MeCoDEM's local country team at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, conducted 20 interviews with civil society organizations and NGO workers to explore what was driving the protest, how organizations were communicating about their issues and how the media reported on their activities.

Activists' understanding of the conflict's causes

The 2010 Pride Parade was understood as an event supported by the NGO sector and a small number of political parties aimed to highlight human rights issues and to make the LGBT minorities more visible. The conflict between LGBT activists, extremist groups and the police was also seen as the clash of cultures and contested political views. Civil organizations with more conservative orientation perceived the Pride Parade as provocative, unconstitutional, as a moral failure of the society and an attack on traditional values and family based society. However, these organizations highlighted their non-violent approach towards the LGBT and blamed the EU-oriented government and state actors for triggering reactions by extremists. Although the right-wing organizations claimed to be supported by the Orthodox Church, the Church as a whole distanced itself from violent actors and opposed LGBT issues. Civil society activists reported to had been supported by high state officials.

Encouraging participation

Civil society actors and NGO activists encouraged participation mainly through personal contacts with local communities, organizing workshops, educational trainings and public debates. Creative teams for engaging citizens' participation were established to communicate with the media, political institutions and the police, as well as for lobbying and organisation of the event. Websites and social media were used to convey messages, as well as posters, graffiti and leaflets expressing the views of civil society organizations.

Getting media attention

The findings show large differences in activists' perceptions of the media representation of the event. The Pride Parade supporters and LGBT activists admitted they had been largely covered by the media and invited to TV talk-shows and online debates, often communicating with journalists, offering press releases and even getting their own articles published in national print media. However, some interviewees thought the media focused more on the security aspects than their struggle to become respected and equally treated in society. The Pride Parade opponents claimed to had been underreported or completely excluded from the media coverage, most often treated as the punching bag and portrayed as paramilitary hooligan groups. Therefore, they sought media attention by organizing massive public protests or expressing their attitudes through striking slogans, caricatures and graffiti.