

Changing Media Landscapes in Transitional Countries - Handbook on Mapping Media Landscapes

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The media landscapes in transitional countries very often undergo dramatic transformations throughout the transition processes, but extensive and solid knowledge about these transformations is rarely available. This means that the different stakeholders in the media and civil society navigate in unknown territories governed by unsubstantiated claims and rumours. The aim of this handbook is to provide a brief introduction to how a basic mapping of the media landscape in transitional countries can be established so that civil society, politicians, media owners and journalists can make informed decisions. The notion transitional countries carry many connotations depending on the applied perspective and therefore a working definition is required. In this handbook transitional countries refer to countries that are or have recently undergone significant governmental, structural and institutional change. The main characteristic in this context is that many parts of society are in motion, being negotiated in one way or the other and consequently relatively unpredictable.

The concept of media mapping has similarly been used in different ways and throughout this handbook we will account for some of them and refer to different examples. Our main focus will be on mapping media landscapes consisting of media outlets, ownership, circulation, media access, thus leaving out equally important

aspects like monitoring media content of e.g. election coverage and legislation. Further, the focus is on establishing the capacity to conduct a continuous mapping of the media landscape so one-off assessments are not included. The handbook is based on the authors' experiences from consulting the implementation of media mapping capacities in several transitional countries.

The handbook consists of five chapters and in the second chapter the following issues will be discussed:

- Why conduct media mapping
- How to initiate a media mapping project
- Who should conduct the mapping
- Funding and expenses
- What should be included in the media mapping
- Data collection
- Data analysis and presentation

These issues will be discussed on the basis of the authors' first hand experiences with establishing media mapping capacities. Some of these first hand experiences and reflections will be presented in chapter three and four accounting for the implementation of two donor financed projects on mapping media landscapes in transitional countries. The two projects are a) mapping the Mongolian media landscape, established in 1999, ten years after the break down of Communism, and b) mapping of the post-Qaddafi Libyan media landscape, initiated in 2012, a year after the ousting of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi. Although there are similarities in the methodological approaches, the two cases are very different when it comes to contextual issues in relation to the character of the transition, the timeframe after the initial transition, the characteristics of political and social transition, the institutional anchoring, etc. Therefore, the implementation of the two projects has taken two significantly different courses.

The final chapter discusses some of the lessons learned from the two cases and concludes by recommending a contextualised approach to implementing mapping of media landscapes. This handbook will not present one specific way to setup a media mapping in a country going through a period of transition. The reason is that there is not one universal way that can be applied to different contexts. Instead we will account for some general issues that we recommend are taken into consideration followed by some detailed reflections based on our own first-hand experiences.

Chapter 2: Why and how to conduct media mapping

Why conduct media mapping?

The media play a significant role in any society no matter if it is well-established or emerging. Therefore, it is considered of vital importance to have access to reliable knowledge and a proper understanding of how the national media landscape is structured and functions to support transparent and enlightened public debates and political and business decision-making. In the early 20th century self-regulating auditing bureaus of circulation were established in the US and many European countries. Since then, systematic and increasingly detailed approaches to mapping media output, media access, media use and ownership have been introduced.

Historically, the auditing bureaus for print media were set up by the publishers themselves as self-regulating systems in the liberal media markets with the main aim to regulate prices for advertisement¹. Afterwards the commercial interests of the media owners have been the driving force behind the increasingly sophisticated and systematic approaches to mapping readership, audience ratings, mobile phone penetration and the use of ICT. Concurrently, some governments have mapped media ownership to expose monopolisation and extensive cross-ownership and NGOs have scrutinised media ownership and conflict of interest for advocacy purposes (Petkovic 2004). Additionally in several countries extensive monitoring of media content – not least election coverage – has been conducted².

No matter how strong involvement of commercial and/or political interests are, the systematic mapping of media outlets, media access and media use in combination

¹ See the British auditing bureau of circulation ABC: <http://www.abc.org.uk>

² See for instance Sudan Media and Elections Consortium (2011): <http://www.mediasupport.org/publication/southern-sudan-referendum-2011/>

with scrutiny of media ownership and media content creates a certain degree of transparency. Such transparency provides the foundation for enlightened decision making in relation to legislative initiatives, advocacy from civil society, programming policies for broadcasters, media business initiatives and advertisement spending. Consequently, media mapping has to be considered an essential, integrated part of maintaining well-functioning liberal media markets.

The aim of mapping media landscapes is to secure transparency through providing trustworthy and reliable information that is as 'objective' as possible on the media situation and thereby establish an informed foundation for enlightened decision-making and public debate. From a liberal point of view, providing reliable information should be in the common interest and to the benefit of all, but in strongly politicised and immature media markets this is not necessarily the case. For various reasons some of the main actors do not support independent scrutiny of media output and ownership and they consider the current lack of transparency beneficial for their own – often obscure – political, business or private interests. Hence it is important to take into consideration that the introduction of mapping projects will provide new knowledge that will support some local stakeholders at the expense of others, and may thus easily end up being part of a local power struggle. When introducing a mapping project, not least a donor-financed project, the implementing party has to bear in mind how the new knowledge will interrelate with the local power hierarchies, and it is a political decision to determine when the time is ripe to establish a media mapping capacity.

How to initiate a media mapping project

The media mapping projects that we are suggesting in this handbook are usually introduced from abroad, initially donor funded and implemented by a project team consisting of a foreign consultant and a local manager. Before a media mapping project is turned into a continuous operational media mapping capacity it should go through two different phases: a preparation phase and an implementation phase. The preparation phase can proceed in different ways, but first of all the initiators of

the project should establish a strong investigation team for the initial explorations of the current media situation and the main stakeholders. It is important that the local member(s) of the investigation team are considered impartial and trustworthy and that the team has authority. Besides creating an overview of the media situation including the current, established knowledge from existing databases and public records the team should prepare the ground for general support of the idea of media mapping among the main stakeholders in the business and in civil society through individual meetings and interviews and public meetings. Finally the project team should identify a credible and knowledgeable institution that could host the media mapping capacity as well as a skilled project team. The project team can be identical with the investigation team but not necessarily, and it is important that the local project manager of the project team is committed to the project long term.

In the implementation phase it is necessary to secure proper training of the local project manager so that the project team in collaboration can develop a contextualised and detailed project design. Further, the project manager should be able to convincingly explain the immediate and long-term benefits of the project for all the media outlets that have to provide the necessary information. A specific challenge in the implementation phase is to identify all relevant media outlets, especially since the media landscape often is very dynamic in transitional countries with new media outlets emerging and others closing constantly. Therefore it is not realistic to expect that the mapping will be perfect and function fully and smoothly within the first round of data collection. Missing data should gradually be included and special attention should be given e.g. to the inclusion of media in rural areas and newly launched media outlets.

Who should conduct the media mapping

There are several options when deciding who should do the actual mapping. In mature liberal media markets, the well-established media industries have typically developed a degree of self-regulation or self-mapping because of the above-mentioned commercial interests. Although it is desirable that the media industry

establishes a genuine mapping of the media landscape as a mechanism for self-regulation, this is, for various reasons, rarely possible in media landscapes undergoing significant structural change, which often is the case in transitional countries. First of all, the media tend to be governed by political and financial interests beyond making the media enterprises profitable in themselves. Thus there is no immediate commercial basis for developing auditing mechanisms (i.e. to pay the costs for its development). Additionally, setting up an auditing system in a polarised media context is rarely the first priority of the media outlets and it might be problematic to establish a trusted organisation to conduct such a mapping. Finally, the necessary know-how on how to set up a proper mapping will rarely be available within the media industry.

Consequently, a genuine mapping of the media landscape is not likely to take place without initial support from local civil society and/or a foreign donor and it is usually necessary to look for an independent organisation that can implement the media mapping. In a context where established political and societal structures are either broken down or deemed biased by the media and significant parts of the population, credibility is crucial and the main task for the principal organisers is then to find an organisation that is not intertwined with wrongdoings of the past or establish a new independent organisation. If there exists a traditional or newly established local, independent press/media institute with a recognised reputation it is an obvious choice. Alternatively it could be any independent civil society NGO that is directly or indirectly engaged with media issues. It is important to stress that the independent implementing organisation should put substantial efforts into developing strong ties with all the media outlets and media associations like the publishers and journalists' associations. If the media outlets are not cooperative in the beginning, the implementing organisation should consistently work on improving the involvement of the media industry.

In order to detach the media mapping from the political system, establishment of the mapping within state structures should be avoided. This is a point that is

particularly relevant in cases where countries are in transition from authoritarian state control towards another type of governance where the state might be strongly affiliated with the past regime.

Finally, it is of utmost importance that the media mapping capacity secures local ownership by being anchored in local institution and not for instance in an external donor. The local implementing organisation has to be committed to the mapping in the long-term and should mainly cater to the needs of the local commercial and non-commercial actors rather than donors or other external interests. It is likewise crucial for a long-term successful implementation of the mapping that it is widely anchored in the local media environment and civil society.

Funding and expenses

Regarding funding of media mapping projects, it cannot be expected that the mapping projects will be financially self-sustainable from the outset. The implementing organisation needs time to build up trustworthy relationships with the different media outlets and establish itself as a credible source of information. Therefore it is necessary to provide donor funding for capacity building, initial implementation and a three to five years commitment to conduct the mapping. In a longer perspective, the obtainable aim should be that the mapping continues as a self-sustainable activity financed by the media industry, the advertisers and advertisement agencies and to a lesser extent other users of the information.

The total cost of the project will be dependent on the context and consequently it is not possible to include a fixed budget showing the costs of establishing any given media mapping capacity. However, there are some general budget lines that should be included when making the budget for project.

- Overhead: Includes costs for office space, computer equipment, software, potential IT support;
- Salary for project manager;

- Salary for consultant;
- Cost for layout and publishing reports.

For the last post it will be an advantage to include some of the stakeholders, e.g. owners of printing facilities and professionals working with layout and thereby minimise these costs. Depending on the context it may also be sufficient to publish it digitally only.

What should be included in the media mapping

In the following section we will account for what should be included in media mapping. Focus will be on basic mapping of media outlets and media access, thus leaving out equally important aspects like monitoring media content and legislation.

The following media categories can be used as a point of departure³:

- Newspapers,
- Other print,
- Radio
- Television, (Local, national, (transnational) satellite)
- Cable operators and satellite penetration
- Online media (news sites, streaming sites, blogs, active Facebook-groups, Twitter-accounts etc.)
- Media infrastructure and penetration
 - Mobile phones (number of subscribers, coverage, type of phones)
 - Internet (penetration, subscribers, coverage)
 - Cable and satellite penetration

³ The definition of the different categories of media outlets must be defined and specified in the local context. What is perceived as a newspaper according to publishing frequency and content differs from one country to the other and the same goes for other media categories.

Added to this list could be institutions such as film, television, radio and multimedia production facilities, distribution companies and movie theatres. Which categories to include will be dependent on the context and the scope of the media mapping capacity.

The type of information that is relevant to include in the mapping of each category depends on the context – including considerations about what is realistic and possible to include – and the scope of the project. Generally, information listed in the following should be considered to be included:

- Title of outlet
- Location of headquarter
- Ownership
 - Name of owner/company
 - Cross-ownership
 - Public/private
 - Local/national/foreign
- Circulation numbers and circulation frequency
- Hours of broadcasting
 - In-house
 - Syndicated programmes
 - National/foreign
- Means of broadcasting
 - Terrestrial/satellite/cable/on-line
 - Digital/analogue
 - FM/AM/Shortwave
- Number of paid employees and volunteers
 - Administration
 - Editorial staff
 - Journalists
 - Media workers – photographers, cameramen and technicians

- Volunteers

Following recent technological developments with the convergence of platforms, and the comparatively much easier entry level to the media market it is becoming more complex to collect and process the quantitative data on the media landscape. It is beyond the scope of most mapping efforts to be able to include every blog, Facebook group, Twitter account, etc., but depending on the context, some of these might be an important part of the media landscape. Similar issues arise in relation to international media outlets like transnational satellite TV stations, radio stations broadcasting across national borders, diaspora media available on the Internet and so on. In any case, it is important to consider what criteria should be used to decide which media to include in the mapping. Is it a matter of availability within national borders that determines whether or not to include it in the mapping of a national media landscape? Or is it instead a matter of the media outlets being based within the national borders or being subject to national legislation? There are no universally valid answers to these questions, so anyone establishing a media mapping capacity should reflect on these issues and make informed decisions based on contextual knowledge.

Data collection

Overall, the method of data collection is built around questionnaires designed to collect systematic information about the respective media outlets in correspondence with the scope of the project. The use of questionnaires makes it possible to maintain consistency over time by ensuring that the same data is collected each time and that changes in what data is relevant are made gradually. One re-occurring challenge when initiating a media mapping project is related to verification of the data. While in a Western context verified circulation figures and reliable public accounts on ownership have been the norm for decades, verified auditing rarely is possible in politicised and distrustful transitional contexts, and in many cases media outlets might refuse to participate or provide untrustworthy accounts. Ideally the collected information should be verified or at least random

checks should be accepted on e.g. circulation and ownership. However in the initial phase, the mapping projects usually will have to rely on declarations from the media outlets. This of course limits the credibility of the specific data, but as long as the project in a transparent way presents the data as self-declared then misinformation will rather expose the media outlets that provide incorrect declarations than harm the media mapping as such.

Data analysis and reporting

When it comes to reporting the findings, the focus should be on transparency and credibility. It is important that the collected and compiled raw data is presented as fair and fact-based as possible so that the project can establish itself as the unquestioned authoritative source of information on the media landscape. Any biased presentation of the data or tendentious analysis of the data might, in the often politically biased media environments, cause major setbacks for the project. Therefore, the presentations of the findings should focus on a compilation of the raw data and leave analysis and interpretations of the data to others. This does not mean that the presentation of the collected and compiled data can be considered objective or ideologically neutral, the sheer presentation of the data supports the idea of free and independent media and sheds light on the degree of pluralism and ownership concentration in the media landscape.

Further, it is important that the reporting includes a transparent and thorough presentation of the methodology including definitions of the included categories, how the data has been collected, how media outlets have been identified, how overlooked media outlets can be included and not least how the data has been processed. Also the above-mentioned problem with verification has to be addressed. It is unproblematic to include media outlets that have refused to provide data and expose their lack of collaboration. Dealing with media outlets providing unreliable data is more complicated. Based on the above-mentioned assumption that misinformation mainly will expose the media outlets, our suggestion is that all the self-declared data should be included in the reporting even if the data is considered

unreliable. Hopefully the media outlets will self-regulate so the data gradually becomes more trustworthy.

Finally, the dissemination of the findings can take place on different platforms. For the purpose of making the data easily available for all interested parties, a website should be set up. The frequency of the updating of the data (quarterly, half-yearly or yearly) depends on the available resources and to what extent the media outlets and advertisers use the data for pricing. In addition to the website it might be worth it to publish a yearly printed report. In any case it is important in relation to each presentation of new findings to create public attention through press releases, press meetings and public meetings with invited stakeholders. The news media will usually find the data newsworthy and widespread news coverage will contribute to the consolidation of the project.

Chapter 3: Mapping the Mongolian media landscape

The mapping of the Mongolian media landscape began in 1999 nine years after a nonviolent transition from 70 years of governance under the communist regime in 1990. In the first multiparty election in 1990 the communist party won a majority of seats, however the embryonic democracy survived and a new constitution supporting democratic freedom rights were amended in 1992. In the 1993 presidential election the first of several alterations of governance in Mongolia took place as a healthy sign of consolidating the democratization process.

Right after the transition a plethora of new mainly print media outlets and soon after broadcast media mushroomed. Since then the Mongolian media system has been headed towards a Western liberal media model despite different kinds of setbacks like unfair access to newsprint for newcomers, harassment of journalists and lack of access to information as well as general 'market failures' caused by a small and immature media market with limited advertisement revenue. Further, the media operated in a society governed by political and financial vested interests and prone with corruption and clientelism (Nielsen 2009).

As one of several foreign donors entering the Mongolian media field DANIDA (the Danish International Development Agency) provided in collaboration with the Danish School of Journalism in 1994 substantial support to free and independent media including mid-career training of journalists and the establishment of both a Press Institute and a printing house. In 1999 the mapping of the Mongolian media landscape was included as an additional sub-project to the continuous support. The mapping project was conceived by the Mongolian Press Institute and the Danish School of Journalism in collaboration and implemented by a Mongolian scholar and one of the authors of this handbook as consultant.

Despite widespread unsubstantiated rumours of an amazingly prolific media situation in 1999 no reliable accounts of media outlets, ownership and media use were available. While preparing the design of the mapping project and familiarizing

ourselves with the media environment the research team constantly were told that more than 1000 newspapers and magazines were published and more than 100 radio and television stations broadcasted. After further questioning it turned out that more than 1100 media outlets had been registered with the Ministry of Justice but some had never been in operation and many newspapers had only been published once or a few times. In 1999 only 5 daily newspapers, four biweeklies and an uncertain number of weekly and monthly papers were published. Of course, media professionals, politicians, business people and civic society knew about the dailies and the significant bi-weeklies, however very few had a genuine understanding of the media situation in the capital and even less about the situation in the rest of the vast but scarcely populated country.

In the preparation phase the research team presented the basic idea within a scientific framework and discussed the benefits of a systematic mapping of the media landscape with the main stakeholders - media owners, publisher associations competing journalist associations, editors and journalists, distributors, printing houses, media scholars, politicians and civil society organizations at large. The two main objectives were to establish local ownership of the project and to lay the foundation for good and productive collaborations with the local stakeholders well knowing that if the media businesses did not co-operate, the mapping would face a difficult start and the immediate impact would be limited.

The stakeholders gave the media mapping project mixed response: the newly established journalist association, a few media scholars and the civil society organisations were spontaneously in favour of the project while many media outlets and media scholars were more critical although only indirectly. In 1999 the Press Institute had established itself as an independent institution that was highly respected by most stakeholders in the media sector and civil society due to

involvement of main stakeholders in the board⁴, comprehensive mid career training of journalists from all major media outlets, and persistent advocacy for free and independent media. Since the donor funding for the media mapping project was provided by the Press Institute and the Press Institute strongly supported the idea, it was difficult for the stakeholders to openly criticize or directly reject the project, because that would have indicated objections not only towards the project and the Press Institute but generally towards progress, freedom, and democracy. Therefore, in principle, the media owner associations, politicians and the old guard of media scholars at the university supported the project, however when it came to actual collaboration many media outlets were quite reluctant and unwilling to provide the relevant information.

There were a variety of reasons for this resistance. First of all quite banal financial reasons related to taxation and advertisement issues, secondly an unwillingness to reveal the actual ownership (and cross-ownership) of the media outlets, and finally, since clientelism and corruption were prevalent in the then Mongolian society several media stakeholders had created powerful political positions and did rightfully or not see the media mapping as a threat to the existing opaque power relations.

Additionally, in a general atmosphere of distrust most of the media outlets were not willing to provide verified information on ownership and in some cases a straw man was used to hide the actual ownership. Neither did the newspapers accept an audit with an independent verification of circulation. Instead, the mapping relied on the publishers' declarations of circulation, and some publishers did not provide any figures at all. In most cases the research team had access to secondary information on circulation from printing houses and elsewhere, and in general the declared numbers were pretty accurate, however in a few cases the numbers were either

⁴ The mapping project used the board of the Press Institute as an umbrella instead of establishing an advisory board specific for the project. However, when the Press Institute later on established a project on audience research financed by the main stakeholders an advisory board was set up.

significantly exaggerated or knowingly understated. The research team decided to present the declared numbers without any comments and in case a newspaper had not declared any circulation the report just stated that. The reason for that was to avoid any controversy about manipulating the numbers. Further within a limited print media market the untrustworthy newspapers exposed themselves to ridicule among the main stakeholders in the media, most of whom who roughly knew the circulation. Over the years, fewer newspapers refused to declare their circulation and according to secondary sources the declared numbers became apparently more precise.

The research team chose to present the collected basic data in a neutral and descriptive style (Myagmar, M. 2000). The aim was to appear impartial based on the underlying assumption that the data in itself would improve the general level of information and facilitate enlightened public debates. Further it would leave it open for all stakeholders including researchers to analyse the data and make their own interpretations and conclusions no matter if it was for business, socio-cultural, historical, political or legislative purposes.

The reception of the report was in the beginning ambivalent, civil society found the report helpful in their continuous advocacy for media freedom and democratization and several media reported on the findings, while other stakeholders in line with abovementioned reluctance towards the project tended to ignore the report. Further, in the beginning the data had limited impact on the immature media market, which was governed by political and financial interests rather than market principles. Due to strong commitment from the local project manager and a successful institutional anchoring at the Press Institute the solid mapping of the Mongolian media gradually established itself as a highly acknowledged source of information and an integrated part of public debate and informed market decisions.

The mapping has successfully taken place ever since and is now a self-sustainable activity at a high profiled research department at the Press Institute.

Chapter 4: Mapping the Libyan media landscape

In February 2011 Libya experienced an armed uprising against the former dictator Muammar Qaddafi who ruled the country for more than 42 years. Under the Qaddafi regime media and freedom of speech had been severely curtailed and the uprising opened up for new public spaces and new media to develop. International Media Support (IMS) was the first media development organization on the ground in Benghazi in Libya in 2011 at a time when the outcome of the armed struggle was still unknown. The purpose was to support the new local media in the efforts to create a counter narrative to the narrative created by media controlled by the Qaddafi regime. After the Qaddafi regime was toppled in October 2011 IMS developed a strategy to support the development of the nascent Libyan media sector in the period from 2012-15.

In late 2012 the political climate was characterized by optimism about the future and successful elections was held in July 2012. This optimism was also mirrored in the media landscape where a vast number of new media outlets mushroomed right from the beginning of the revolution in 2011. It was in this context IMS and local Libyan partners decided to establish a media mapping capacity in Libya to track and document the developments in the media landscape in this dynamic period following the revolution.

From 2013 media in Libya faced an increasing amount of difficulties with media workers being threatened, kidnapped, physically attacked and killed. Since June 2014 the political context have become increasingly polarized with two competing governments each controlling a national broadcaster and a national news agency. This polarization of the Libyan society on almost every level has had significant negative impact on the implementation of the media mapping project. For instance by making it increasingly difficult to get stakeholders included in one united effort to track developments in the Libyan media landscape.

For the media, the local and national conflicts have resulted in at least two tendencies: firstly, an increasing polarization in both [public and private media](#)⁵ and secondly, that some media outlets have ceased to operate or have been forced into exile. The general lack of security in Libya has created a situation where it is too dangerous for the media and news reporting to operate without militia affiliation and the protection it brings with it. This applies in particular to critical news reporting where journalists are attacked on an ongoing basis⁶. Further, an increasing level of criminal activity and a generally deteriorating security situation has further made it difficult for the project manager of the mapping project to collect information on the ground and made people more reluctant to provide information about respective media outlets. Thus, these contextual developments have influenced the development of media mapping capacity in Libya at almost every step. In the Libyan case the following six steps guided the establishment of the media mapping capacity.

1. Identify local partner organization
2. Appoint and train local project manager to maintain the capacity locally
3. Identify central stakeholders in the Libyan media system
4. Search for existing sources on the Libyan media landscape
5. Data-collection: Development, distribution and collection of questionnaires
6. Processing and disseminating the data

A step-by-step approach like this is useful from the outset of the project to guide the work. Another advantage of articulating such steps is that it becomes possible to evaluate the progress of the project at each step to determine whether it is feasible to continue or not. On the other side it is also necessary with some flexibility in the approach in order to be responsive in a dynamic and changing context. Further, the

⁵ <http://www.usip.org/publications/2015/04/30/the-role-of-media-in-shaping-libyas-security-sector-narratives> (Accessed December 17 2015)

⁶ <http://en.rsf.org/libya-deep-concern-journalists-11-11-2015,48516.html> (Accessed December 17 2015)

six steps do not always follow each other in this order and some can occur at the same time. For instance training and identification of stakeholders can be carried out simultaneously as it is beneficial to establish connections between stakeholders and the local project manager from the outset. The same regards the identification of stakeholders and the search for existing sources because the relevant stakeholders in a media system often are the same person or organization, which have knowledge about the media system. The following description of the Libyan case will account for each of the 6 steps one by one.

The first step was to identify a local partner organization in which the media mapping capacity was to be established. As a part of the long-term strategy to develop the media sector in Libya IMS supported the establishment of the Libyan Media Institute (LMI), a local NGO, which after some delays was founded by the end of 2013. The vision was and is that the LMI will function as a central institution in the development of the Libyan media sector by locally providing a number of capacities supporting the development of the Libyan media sector including various journalism trainings and the capacity to conduct a mapping of the Libyan media landscape. The capacity to conduct media mapping and a recurring publication of depicting an overview of the media landscape and its development was envisioned to promote and position the LMI as a central institution in the Libyan media sector. This way the IMS support to the establishment of the LMI and support to the development of the media mapping capacity became interdependent projects.

The second step was to appoint and train a locally based project manager and researchers from Aarhus University in Denmark (the authors of this handbook) were attached to the project as consultants. One of the assignments was to train a locally based project manager with the aim of making the media mapping project operational without external knowhow after 2-3 years. In Libya it was not possible to recruit a trained project manager who already possessed the required skills to conduct the research. Consequently an extensive amount of training in the methodology related to the data-collection and data-analysis was necessary. In

addition, since the Libyan context was deemed very dynamic and unpredictable we chose to conduct the training based on a “learning by doing” principle to accommodate any unforeseen challenges. Ideally, this approach required that the consultant and project manager was present at the same physical location for a longer period of time. This also meant that it was necessary for both the consultant and the project manager to be able to make long-term commitment for the entire project period of three years. This was unfortunately not possible in the Libyan case. Prior to starting the data-collection the Libyan project manager who had been hired to conduct the research resigned. It was therefore necessary to appoint a new project manager to the position and to restart the training. Due to time constraints and limited access to Libya the training of the newly appointed project manager was the beginning facilitated through emails and Skype conversations. This was to be followed by a longer training session in Libya in July 2014 that ended up being aborted shortly after it had started because of a deteriorating security situation. Consequently, this training was carried out with limited success but the project did continue on a low scale. Ultimately, the inability to secure a long-term commitment from a locally based project manager and access to Libya for the consultant complicated the local capacity building.

The next step was to identify local stakeholders and the purpose was to identify and involve persons and organizations that could assist us in creating attention about the project, to explain the benefits of the mapping to the respective media outlets and thereby encourage them to participate in the project. This included meetings with faculty members of media departments at local universities, NGOs, media owners and media workers. Some NGO’s and consultancy companies had been conducting research on the media landscape in Libya after the revolution⁷ and they were willing to share information, which provided us with a starting point. However, it was not easy to identify and establish lasting contacts with official state stakeholders in the ever-changing political landscape following the 2011 revolution.

⁷ See the literature list for references to reports based on this research.

From mid June 2012 and two years ahead there were a number of ministerial restructures in the newly established government and at times it was difficult to identify which department and which person was responsible for the Libyan media sector officially. The most established institution was the Authority of Promoting the Press that published a number of their own publications and managed state subsidies to a large number of print media throughout the country. The Authority of Promoting the Press was very positive towards establishing a media mapping capacity. Unfortunately, because of the ever-changing political landscape the Press Authority came under the control of the newly established Ministry of Information and Culture in 2013. This was followed by budget cuts and new management was installed and became less approachable throughout the course of 2014.

After the 2011 revolution no continued effort to map the Libyan media landscape had been conducted by any local organizations so existing sources on the media landscape were scarce. However, one project succeeded in mapping the Libyan media landscape in 2012 and the project was called the Libya Media Wiki. As the name indicates it was made on a wiki platform with the aim to make it open to public editing and updating and eventually make it “controlled by Libyans themselves⁸.” The Legatum Institute, a London based international think tank, initiated the media-wiki project and the it was carried out with assistance from the Rashad Foundation, a Libyan non-profit organization that engages with the Libyan civil society through a number of projects. The vision for the Libyan media-wiki was to create a platform where it would be easy to update and include new information on the Libyan media landscape to accommodate the dynamic nature of the Libyan media landscape in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. The information that was collected through the project was very valuable and provided a unique snapshot of the Libyan media landscape. However, no institution was incorporated

⁸ <https://lif.blob.core.windows.net/lif/docs/default-source/default-library/libya-media-wiki---snapshot-of-a-country-in-transition.pdf?sfvrsn=0> (Page 1) The wiki has in the fall of 2015 been shut down and is no longer available.

in the project to accommodate and continue the efforts to map the development of the Libyan media landscape locally. Consequently, the output from the project remained a snapshot.

The next step was to initiate the data-collection and the first task was to develop questionnaires. Given the critical situation in Libya particularly pertaining media and media workers we were uncertain which information would be realistic to obtain from the respective media outlets. We were therefore very attentive to not include any questions that could be deemed as being sensitive. On the other hand, in the first round we also wanted to test where the limits were so decisions regarding what to include were based on a balance between these considerations. To assist us to identify these limits we first did a pilot to test if the questions in the questionnaires were easily understandable and that none of the questions were offensive or asking for information considered too sensitive. After making some minor adjustments the questionnaires were ready for distribution. As a way of distribution we chose to contact media outlets by phone and afterwards send the questionnaires by email. This was mid July 2014 when the security situation in Libya deteriorated rapidly and a training session was interrupted. At this point it was decided to put the mapping activities on hold, because it was not deemed feasible to continue in the current environment. Instead of continuing by distributing questionnaires we started to compile a basic media database with name of media outlets, operational status, and contact information for internal use at the LMI. This database had two functions: a) a source of information that will be used as a basis to distribute questionnaires in the future and b) as a tool to map which media in which regions have been impacted by the increasingly volatile conflict. Unfortunately, now more than one year later, December 2015, we have not been able to continue the efforts to establish the capacity to map the media landscape regularly. But when the political and security situation improves in Libya a good starting point has been established.

Chapter 5. Lessons learned and concluding remarks

The main lesson learned from the two cases is that context matters. The mapping project in Libya was inspired by the successful implementation of the mapping of the Mongolian media landscape where a close collaboration with local stakeholders in the preparation and implementation phases helped to overcome initial skepticism and distrust among the stakeholders. The intention was to build on the experiences from the Mongolian case, however, these experiences were of limited value in the unpredictable Libyan context. The Libyan project was conceived in 2012 right after the relatively successful elections in July 2012 in what in hindsight might be seen as a slightly naive moment of optimism. Due to the unstable transition with a drastically deteriorated security situation and increased polarization of the Libyan political and tribal environment the preparation of the mapping project constantly had to adjust to new obstacles in a distrustful media environment and this made it impossible to create an atmosphere of relevance and broad support for the project.

However, if the developments in Libya had taken a less turbulent course and the mapping project had been implemented successfully, then the mapping would have provided unprecedented documentation of the media changes in the midst of the initial transitional phase contrary to the Mongolian case where the mapping did not begin until ten years after the transition. Generally, the risk of a long term media mapping project not succeeding is higher the closer the time of the project initiation is to a violent change of power as it was the case in Libya. Furthermore, for obvious reasons mapping in a nonviolent context has a better chance to succeed. Therefore it is a trade off, if the documentation of the media changes in the initial phase of the transition is considered of significant interest then it might be worth to run a calculated risk to initiate mapping projects in unstable and turbulent contexts. If successful implementation of the mapping projects are considered more important then the projects should not be initiated before turbulent transitions have calmed down.

A second lesson learned is that personal qualities and commitment of the project manager is of essential importance for a successful implementation. In the Mongolian case a highly qualified and dedicated person was hired full time for the initial three years timeframe of the project. After the project manager had received comprehensive training in relation to the project design she took responsibility for the implementation of the project. The project manager was able to gradually hand over the responsibilities to a new project manager after running the project some years.

In the Libyan case, partly due to the unstable political and security situation and partly due to less attractive conditions of employment it was difficult to find a highly qualified and committed project manager. However, in the Libyan case it was decided for various reasons to begin the preparation phase with temporary solutions in relation to manpower, and throughout the initial implementation of the project several local project managers were associated with the project. As a consequence several training activities did neither result in long-term personal nor institutional capacity building. It is unlikely that a highly qualified and committed project manager under the given circumstances would have been able to fully implement the mapping activities, and it is probably a recurring problem that qualified people are in high demand in dynamic situations like the Libyan. However, it is of utmost importance that a committed project manager given attractive conditions heads the implementation of a media mapping project.

A third lesson relates to the institutional anchoring and local ownership when implementing a media mapping capacity. In the Mongolian case the project was from the very beginning successfully integrated in the Press Institute and gained credibility from the recognized reputation of the Press Institute. In the course of time the mapping project turned out to be beneficial for the Press Institute as one of the main assets of a newly established research department. The mapping project established itself as a strong locally owned resource that contributed to an increased self-assurance on the course towards free and independent media not

only for the Press Institute but the whole media context. In Libya the idea was that the project similarly should be anchored within the institutional framework of the Libyan Media Institute. However, the Libyan Media Institute was not yet well established and under the given circumstances it was never possible to establish a similarly synergy between the media mapping capacity and the Libyan Media Institute.

A final lesson learned is the increased complexity of the media landscapes, which place new demands on the project design of the mapping. In Mongolia in 1999 it made perfect sense to talk about a national media landscape and the only challenge to that was an increasing access to transnational cable and television. 15 years later the national boundaries of the media landscape are fundamentally challenged in several ways. Not least in the Middle East where transnational satellite television has increased dramatically in output, local availability and use, and the Internet has opened a whole new scope for local, national and international information exchange both on social and public media. All media mapping projects will have to address these issues when developing the project design.

To conclude, the Mongolian case demonstrates that using a rigorous project design makes it possible to establish a media mapping capacity and this way create transparency in the development of the media landscape and providing stakeholders in the media, civil society and politicians with valuable information in relation to decision-making. Further, the Mongolian case demonstrates that an established media mapping capacity can become economically sustainable and support a genuine long-term professionalization of the media sector. The Libyan case demonstrates that it is severely challenging to fully implement a media mapping capacity in an unpredictable and violent context despite applying a project-design based on previous successful experiences. Consequently, a thorough understanding of the context is necessary and the decision to initiate a media mapping project should be based on an evaluation of whether or not the output from the project is worth the risk at the time of implementation.

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