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Original Article

The civil norm building role of news journalism in post-civil war settings

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Abstract

This paper seeks to provide an answer to the question of the role that news journalism can play in the building of civil peace as peaceful cooperation in post-civil war settings. Alternatively expressed, how it can utilise its communicative capacity to facilitate and contribute to contextually and culturally appropriate versions of sustainable peace within civil society. Peacebuilding tool kits are wide and varied and often narrowly focus on news journalism as a political actor and its role in political life. We would like to shift the focus away from the 'political' to the role that news journalism can play in the (re-)building of an associative and cooperative civil society. Specifically, we believe that news journalism should and can develop for itself an ethos of civil norm building that aims to stimulate a civil consciousness in its audiences which is indispensable for the practical application of the categories of civil norms of peaceful cooperation in everyday life. To understand how such an ethos can be developed we need to recognise three features that are necessary for news journalism to achieve its potential as a civil norm builder: (1) its transformative communicative capacity, (2) its institutional and organisational commitment toward news reporting that exemplifies peaceful cooperation in everyday life and (3) the way it can concretely undertake the application of editorial guidelines in post-civil war settings which exemplify the three basic categories of civil norms of peaceful co-operation: (a) assent to civil peace, (b) substantive civility and (c) building civil capacity and civil competencies.

Keywords

civil society, communication, local journalism, peace, social change

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Introduction

Since WWII, civil wars have represented the 'most widespread, the most destructive, and most characteristic form of organized human violence' (Armitage, 2018: 5) as well as the most difficult form of war to permanently end. Indeed, 'almost every civil war in the last decade was the resumption of an earlier one' (Armitage, 2018: 6) with recurrence rates estimated to be as high as 43% (Philpott, 2012) or even 50% (Jenkins, 2013). The pernicious character that defines civil wars, fought between citizens of the same community, is that they thrive on the creation of enemy images, the articulation of alterity and on dehumanising discourse (Savage, 2013) that 'legitimises' 'the other's' potential extermination. Post-civil war (and particularly immediate post-peace agreement) settings still struggle with widespread 'distrust, detestation, and fear' (Paris, 2004: 170) and questions of how to deal with the contrasting civil war experiences of the fighting and non-fighting population. They are often 'bereft of functioning [civil] institutions' (Thompson and Price, 2002: 20) and display a variety of discourses that can have as much a xenophobic, exclusive and divisive character (often fuelled by partisan media) as there can be voices advocating the need for peaceful cooperation, overcoming enmity and the pursuit of a common good. We argue that news journalism (henceforth journalism) has an essential role to play in the rebuilding of peaceful cooperation in post-civil war societies. We envisage this role to be that of a civil norm builder and intend to justify and propose a set of universal editorial guidelines supporting this civil norm building mission; guidelines that need to be adapted to local circumstances and culturally specific contexts by local journalists themselves. The article proceeds in four main steps: (A) an examination of existing understandings of the roles of journalism in society generally and peacebuilding more specifically, (B) a conceptualisation of its civil norm building role, (C) the development of a set of culturally and contextually adaptable editorial guidelines and (D) a discussion of the ideal and real of civil norm building in post-civil war settings.

Roles of journalism

Journalism's political-democratic and the civic-developmental roles. Much has been said about the role of journalism in society – two of these roles are particularly relevant to our argument: its political and its civic-developmental role.[1]

The role of journalism in political life in its most basic[2] and ideal form is conceived of providing citizens with information that enables them to act as citizens in political life, to make informed decisions and participate in elections. In this conception, journalists act as the Fourth Estate – a watchdog for democracy; they hold those in power accountable by scrutinising them, their policies, statements and decisions; they report and analyse matters in the public interest.[3] This political-democratic role is closely associated with the traditional professional values of journalism: accuracy, truthfulness, sincerity and objectivity (Harrison, 2019a). Though it would be easy to dismiss the democratic-political role understanding and its attached professional values as Western and therefore limited in relevance and applicability, studies have shown that many Latin American as well as African journalists share the understanding that journalism has a political-democratic role

supported by and dependent on adherence to journalistic professional standards and ethics (see e.g. Wahl-Jorgensen and Cole, 2008; Mellado et al., 2012; Harlow, 2019)[4]. This role is, however, evidently normative and the extent to which it can be undertaken depends on the 'social environment' (Ginosar, 2015); that is, the journalism culture, context – routine or non-routine (Ginosar, 2015), institutional and cultural settings and the values and beliefs of the individual journalists themselves. It is in the social, political, cultural and economic environment that the 'should' (normative) meets the 'can' (reality).[5]

The civic-developmental role of journalism has been described by (Kurpius 2002: 855) as 'an effort to alter journalistic practices to improve the connection between journalists and the communities in news coverage'. It is a more local approach to news reporting, one that focuses on the community in question and that aims to provide solutions to the community (Heider et al., 2005). Mellado (2015) shows that journalism with a civic audience approach reports form a citizens' perspective, is open to citizens' questions and demands, supports citizen initiatives, movements and possibly protests. Civic journalism is focused on community life, associations and to some extent civic rights (also Hanitzsch and Vos, 2018). It is closely related to advocacy, social change and nation-building as well as citizen participation which is often seen as crucial to social change and peace[6] (Rodriguez, 2011). The extent though to which journalists feel comfortable with a more interventionist role depends again on the environment they operate in as well as on local cultures and traditions.[7]

Both of these roles have been adapted to peacebuilding settings but with various shortcomings.

The roles of journalism in peacebuilding. There is general agreement that journalism *can* contribute 'to the peaceful settlement of conflicts' (Hanitzsch, 2004: 483), that it can 'play an essential role in the societal construction of reality' (Kempf, 2007: 4), serve 'as a tool to promote peace in war-torn divided societies' (Curtis, 2000: 142) thereby contributing to the development of a peace-oriented mindset amongst citizens (Thompson and Price, 2002). This has so far been attempted in two main ways: first, by enabling journalism to fulfil its political role and second, by creating a civic-developmental form of journalism.

With regard to the first, peacebuilding initiatives have focused on the rebuilding of professional journalism and the media in situ such as in Serbia (Golcevski et al., 2013), Kosovo (Krug and Price, 2002; Kyrke-Smith, 2007) and Bosnia (Price, 2000). Such initiatives address the problem observed by Price and Rozumilowicz (2002: 259) that 'many journalists [in post-civil war settings] lack the training, detachment, professionalism, and indeed the will to be truly independent' (also Holguin, 1998). They might see 'their role as consisting of nothing other than the straightforward advocacy of a particular political outlook, or of supporting a particular politician' (Harrison, 2019b: 8), of undertaking what Ginosar (2015: 292) has termed 'tribal journalism' where journalists '(a) (…) adopt the governmental/elite framing of the crisis; (b) (…) avoid criticism of their government during the confrontation; (c) (…) express solidarity with their national community; and (d (…) ignore the other side ("the enemy"), its narratives, and its positions' thereby keeping enemy images and divisive discourses alive. It is believed that the de-escalation as well as the prevention of extremist speech can be achieved by training

journalists in professional values (e.g. Andresen et al., 2017) so that they can undertake their political role and develop a public service ethos which can 'support other, more intrinsic values and goals' (Rozumilowicz, 2002: 12).

Peace journalism, in turn, is reminiscent of the civic-developmental role of journalism in that it aims to contribute (in some way) to finding solutions to national and international conflicts by advocating peace over war. As an antidote to war journalism, it aims to provide deep accounts of the causes and origins of violence and to advocate and endorse peaceful solutions. Its values are peace-oriented, truth-orientated, people-orientated and solution-orientated (Lynch, 2007: cf. 7) and it can engage in conflict-transformation whilst being a '"journalism of attachment" to all actual and potential victims' (Galtung, 2003: 179). Peace journalism has been criticised, in part, for considering journalism an active political agent.[8] Hanitzsch (2004: 484, 2007) argues that it 'unacceptably diverts political responsibilities from politicians and policy makers to journalists' and 'over-estimate[s] the influence journalists and the media have on political decisions' (Hanitzsch, 2007: 1) all by adopting a 'highly simplistic and probably unrealistic approach to the media's effects' (Gilboa, 2009: 110). The consequence being that peace journalism risks compromising the value of objectivity and professional journalism altogether. Loyn (2007: 3) notes that 'Reporting and peace making are different roles; reporters who give undue prominence to passing peace plans (…) distort their craft and do not serve their audience'. They 'cannot see that holding onto objectivity could be a useful vaccine against the relativism of "attached journalists"' (Loyn, 2007: 6).

Though both approaches to journalism in peacebuilding have value, we believe that the first is in itself insufficient in post-civil war settings as it simply aims to rebuild the political sphere; that is, to enable citizens to act as political citizens and to establish an accountability between State and demos. The second approach equally focuses too much on political advocacy, remains vague about how and what kind of social change (other than peace) can be achieved and tends to be dismissive of journalism's professional values – however, several studies have shown that these values contribute to audiences trusting the news. This trust in the legitimacy of professional journalistic values is, however, vital if peacebuilding aims to render partisan or hate media in post-civil war settings much less relevant and to orient citizens towards public service journalism.

What we believe is missing is an acknowledgement and exploration of what kind of role journalism can actually play in (re)building the civil sphere conceived of as a structurally differentiated from the political (State-demos) and the economic (the market) spheres in Alexander's (2006) sense and as defined by an inclusive solidarity 'that unites individuals dispersed by class, race, religion, ethnicity' or culture (Alexander, 2006: 43) while respecting individual and group identities based on more particularistic attachments to specific traditions, cultures, customs, language, religion and ethnicity. This can, however, only be done if journalists accept and adopt the role of a civil norm builder. This role shifts journalists' focus to civil society and is premised on journalism understood as a civil institution and its contribution to the building, development and empowerment of civil society.

Journalism's civil norm building approach

Civil norms. Civil norms are typically defined as rules governing specific associative situations, as regulatory or controlling guidelines and customary ways of going about things. More specifically, we use the term civil norm to refer to a prescription of actual behaviour, skills, orientations, sensibilities, habitual modes of acting and feeling (Weintraub, 1996) accompanied by values that justify that behaviour and provide a reason for why some actions are more approved of than others (Alexander and Thompson, 2008). Civil norms 'are formed, in large part, by the practices in which they engage and, thus, their everyday experiences' (Weintraub, 1996). As such, they are 'creatures of social practices' (Stout, 2004: 79) – collective norms of common meaning and associative behaviour that guide and govern the cooperative and solidary life of civil society across boundaries of culture, ethnicity, religion or any other sectarian groups.

Civil wars destroy inclusive solidarity and operate instead with norms of enmity. Inclusive solidarity is replaced by public and institutionalised cruelty, systematic fear and exclusion by and from the rule of law. The building of civil peace requires the adoption and exercise of the three basic categories[9] of the civil norms of peaceful cooperation: (1) Assent to civil peace, (2) Substantive civility and (3) Building civil capacity and civil competencies. Journalism can contribute to the building of these civil norms within society by exemplifying them in its reporting. If such civil norm reporting appears authentic, useful and practicable to the audience, it might adopt behaviour and conduct in accordance with these categories in everyday life. Three particular features of journalism enable its civil norm building role: 1) its transformative communicative capacity and the way in which it can create common meaning and shared realities, 2) the way it can achieve an institutional and organisational commitment toward the building of civil norms in news reporting and 3) its ability to apply editorial guidelines all by interpreting them in and adapting them to varied local circumstances.

The transformative communicative capacity of journalism. Dewey drew a distinction between the 'Great Society' and 'the Great Community' – the former was characterised by impersonal relationships, instrumental rationality, technical and industrial institutions, organisations and bureaucratic structures. It stood for what he (2016 [1927]) called the 'eclipse of the public' and of the communal. It was a society without civil consciousness, which was in his terms pre-reflective. The 'Great Community', in turn, stood for social democracy and a collaborative life of cooperation, the existence of multiple publics formed through 'social inquiry' (pragmatic community-based problem solving, open disagreements, choice and political discussion) as well as 'the perfecting of the means and ways of communication of meanings so that genuinely shared interests (…) may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action' (Dewey, 2016 [1927]: 181). For Dewey the move from the Great Society to the Great Community was driven by what he calls a 'returning to the idea itself' (Dewey, 2016 [1927]: 172, also Festenstein, 1997); that is collaborative civil life and peaceful cooperation in communities of equals. This idea is only made concrete when 'wants and impulses [are] attached to common meaning' and ultimately, 'transformed into desires and purposes, which, since they implicate a common

or mutually understood meaning, present new ties, converting a conjoint activity into a community of interest and endeavour' (Festenstein, 1997: 179). Metaphorically, the desire for common meaning represents a 'demand for communication' (Festenstein, 1997: 178), which meant for Dewey, as Festenstein (1997) notes, 'transformative communication' (as a form of social inquiry) leading to social change (also Forstenzer, 2016). In short, the shift from society to community presupposes the development of transformative communicative capacity that underwrites collective problem solving through social cooperation and open dissent in societies. Supporting such social action is a communication nexus conducive to toleration, co-existence and debate which provides the underpinning architecture for active peaceful cooperation and enables a community to constantly redefine itself by communicatively revising its norms and values (see Dewey, 1999 [1935]).

Dewey was not the first to see the transformative capacity of communication and its link to social change. Indeed, both Durkheim (1950 [1912]) and Weber (1919) also recognised this but Dewey was amongst the earliest to see it as a means for enabling peaceful social cooperation. In a similar vein and more recently, Donsbach (2004: 138) argues that the 'channel for achieving shared reality is communication' and more specifically, journalism. Alexander evokes the idea of the civil transformative capacity of journalism as being able to bring about 'civil repair' (2006) and to 'societalize problems' (2019). The former is concerned with the media's normative role in redressing structural and societal injustices, the latter with bringing to public attention social crisis and problems in a way that demands their redress. Calhoun (2011: 313) speaks of the media as supporting 'the idea of self-government by communication'; a claim that rests on the fact that the news media can address: 'first, (…) matters of concern important to all citizens and to the organization of their lives together; second, that through dialogue, debate, and cultural creativity, citizens might identify good approaches to these matters of public concern; and third, that states and other powerful organizations might be organized to serve the collective interests of ordinary people—the public—rather than state power as such, purely traditional values, or the personal interests of rulers and elites' (Calhoun, 2011: 311). Harrison (2019a) also recognises the transformative communicative capacity of journalism. For her journalism has a form of civil power which resides in its ability to influence public sentiment in solidarising or non solidarising ways and to mediate the invariant civil concerns of identity, legitimacy and risk. Such concerns, she argues, arise whenever people turn their attention to the kind of civil-collaborative life they find themselves in.

Overall, journalism's transformative communicative capacity lies in its ability to enable members of society to construct a shared reality by generating common meaning and facilitating the development of intersubjective understanding among strangers with essentially conflicting views and to orient citizens towards behaviour in line with the three categories of the civil norms of peaceful cooperation. It contributes to finding an answer to 'the question of how we might live together, and how the media (…) can be enabling rather than disabling of that rather basic project' (Silverstone, 2007: 80–81).

Institutional and organisational commitment to the civil norm building role. To understand institutions as norm builders, a short digression into the sociology of institutional and organisational analysis is necessary. Smelser (1997: 46) defines institutions as consisting of 'those complexes of roles, normative systems and legitimising values that constitute a functionally defined set of activities that gain permanence through the very process of institutionalisation'. He further notes that institutions are both simultaneously imagined and yet spoken about as if they enjoyed a public 'empirical existence' (Smelser, 1997). This empirical existence typically manifests in organisations. The relationship between institutions (here the institution of news journalism) and organisations (here specific public and private news channels and outlets) can be regarded as follows. An institution such as journalism holds idealised norms about how something should be undertaken or how some goal should be achieved, while organisations (that claim to be in alignment with any particular institution) attempt to exemplify these idealised norms practically and communally (Coleman, 1990 drawing on Parsons). Weintraub (1996) also notes that 'institutions help to form mores (as well as depending on them)' and that accordingly, there is an 'ongoing reciprocal influence of institutions and mores'. Another way to express this is that an idealised set of norms becomes internalised by people in organisations which operate within the purview of a particular institutional identity. This internalisation creates, according to Powell and DiMaggio (1983/1991), a form of organisational 'normative isomorphism'. As institutional influence extends, a variety of organisations pursuing the same goals conform to what they have internalised to be the acceptable, common and standard way to go about achieving these goals.

The process of institutional and organisational socialisation (Breed, 1955) occurs reflexively via journalists accepting institutional mores as defining their role. In such cases journalists see themselves as belonging to the institution of journalism by going about their role in certain organisationally prescribed ways – independently of whether these ways are formalised in mission statements or editorial guidelines or experienced and practised through an informal ethos. Either way, these prescribed ways reflect what their particular news organisations require and how they see their institutional role. As such they define a range of journalistic practices which individual journalists learn (mainly through training and observation). Significantly, they define news production routines which span the application of editorial guidelines, assumptions about news gathering, news styles, types of appropriate reporting, criteria of relevance and use of news sources amongst others (Domingo et al., 2008; Kleemans et al., 2017; Paulussen and Ugille, 2008). All these production routines allow journalists to organise their news work (Tuchman, 1972, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Harrison, 2000) and to deal with the sometimes conflicting tensions arising from the vested interests of external parties, the news organisations' needs and the views and values held by individual journalists (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

What this means for post-civil war settings and specifically for any news organisation's role of civil norm builder is that any contribution that journalism could make to peacebuilding is not guaranteed, but depends upon (a) news organisations adopting certain institutional mores which are conducive to peacebuilding and internalising them as editorial guidelines (see below) and (b) journalists conforming to these mores and

accepting the role of active participants and norm-entrepreneurs in the peace process because they believe they can legitimately exercise their civil power in this way without compromising the practice of independent and professional journalism. Overall, the role of journalism committed to sustainable peacebuilding requires journalists and organisations to interpret and report on their particular environment in ways which stimulate in their audiences the development of a civil consciousness[10] necessary for sustainable civil peace and the (re)building of a solidarising civil society.

Both news organisations' transformative communicative capacity and their institutional and organisational commitment to peacebuilding exist as unrealised potentialities unless they are applied on a day-to-day basis and concretely realised and practised. Their potential for civil norm building must be applied if transformative communication and organisational commitments are to have any concrete relevance to peacebuilding. To ensure this, certain universal editorial guidelines must be adopted, interpreted and applied by local news organisations and journalists depending on local circumstances and ways of going about things. These editorial guidelines cover what we call the three basic categories of the civil norms of peaceful cooperation and act as a starting point for local development of operational systematic codes of practice by different news organisations.

A set of culturally and contextually adaptable editorial guidelines

Editorial guidelines are documents that are variously vainglorious, hortatory, legalistic, meaningful and occasionally inspiring as well as resembling a tediously prescriptive and practical training manual. They are either treated with constitutional reverence or ignored by journalists as unrealistic pretentiousness and applicability. However, what they do is to instantiate the transformative communicative capacity of a news organisation and with that they also do two further things: first, they circumscribe and describe the nature of the investigative effort a news organisation will aim to make. Second, they reveal a picture of who and what news organisations think they serve. In short, they are highly normative documents. The norms they support and promote are indicative of how journalists conceive of their role and the news.

The set of universal editorial guidelines that we have developed presumes a news organisation aware of its own transformative communicative power as well as one that is institutionally committed to civil peace and desirous of playing a part in peacebuilding. With this in mind the editorial guidelines are written[11] to reflect a commitment to the three basic categories of the civil norms of peaceful cooperation and what aspects of civil norm building they should cover – hence their universalism. As such they take no account of local circumstances, conditions and cultures and because of this they should be read as a checklist of what editorial guidelines can cover. How they are applied locally is entirely a matter for editors and journalists operating in a post-civil war setting and drawing from 'their local knowledge and (…) deep contextual understanding of barriers and opportunities to making peace at the local level' (Prendergast and Plumb, 2002: 329) via the civil norm building approach.

The three basic categories of civil norms of peaceful cooperation in news reports

Assent to civil peace. As a category 'assent to civil peace' moulds, scopes and shapes the concepts, vocabulary, tropes and images in which a community engages with and expresses its relationship to its past and future. Sustainable civil peace requires an active and on-going individual[12] and collective preference – both civil and political – for peace over war and a willingness to engage with the past in a future-oriented way. This involves the accepting and affirming the existence of and the need for toleration of conflicted histories and difficult forgiveness (Ricœur, 2004) as well as the need for mechanisms of transitional justice such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (e.g. Hayner, 2010) or processes of memorialisation (e.g. Neiman, 2019) to hold perpetrators accountable and acknowledge the victims and survivors. It also involves an acceptance of and commitment to helping the emergence of an inclusive community in which the dignity of all irrespective of past acts is respected. In fact, what is ultimately being assented to is in effect a new social contract which comes with three types of normative obligations: (1) a commitment to non-violent agonistic conflict resolution (Dewey, 2016[1927]; Wenman, 2013; Mouffe, 2013), (2) the constant exhibiting of minimal solidarity and the acceptance of reasonable losses (Allen, 2006; Sennett, 2013) as necessary for civil peace and (3) the acceptance of the obligations that arise for individuals as part of a new way of conduct – namely substantive civility (see below). As such, assent to civil peace involves both past and future. Our editorial guidelines are broken down accordingly.

They enable journalists to exhibit an engagement with the past that:

- Allows for and tolerates conflicted histories and geographies;
- Facilitates an open investigation of the roots of the conflict without attributing blame or insisting on holding grudges;
- Acknowledges the importance of transitional justice and the rule of law in addressing the crimes committed in the past all by empathising that communities have a collective responsibility for peacebuilding that extends beyond the law;
- Accepts and endorses the possible role of NGOs and mediators in the peace process;
- Helps journalism position itself as a civil institution that acknowledges the need for professional standards and ethical conduct all by addressing its own role in the conflict;

They enable journalists to openly discuss the demands that a peaceful civil life places on the community. News reporting should:

- Recognise that conflicts do not disappear but that they need to be addressed in a non-violent agonistic way;
- Emphasise that civil peace requires community decisions that will benefit some citizens but not others but that the acceptance of 'reasonable losses' is essential for the sustainability of civil peace;

- Emphasise that exhibiting solidarity towards other members is a necessary condition for lasting civil peace;
- Explain and show that disagreement can be valuable, and that different views, cultures, mores and traditions can exist in parallel and actually contribute to a more vibrant and diverse civil society;
- Show that the acceptance of new (locally shaped) institutions enhance the stability of civil society.

Substantive civility. Overall, substantive civility is concerned with public life at the level of daily routines and interactions; that is, how such routines and interactions meet common values and accepted standards of behaviour; how common welfare is understood; how the existence of different viewpoints has to be accepted and tolerated and how norms of discursive behaviours have to be agreed upon. In short, it is concerned with performing the obligations that arise for individuals as part of a new way of conduct in both the kind of practices and discourses[13] that underwrite peaceful cooperation and can generate trust and solidarity. Consequently this category moulds, scopes and shapes how substantive civility is displayed and practised in daily life in four different ways: (1) as 'a concern for the common good' (Shils, 1997: 345) which can be used 'to "pacify" specific groups with the hope of cultivating a shared vision of the common good' (White, 2006: 453); (2) as an acknowledgement of the equal standing of each member of civil society by adopting a respectful and polite code of conduct in public life with all members of society; (3) as a regulator of relationships between citizens – in Shils' terms (1997: 341) substantive civility acts 'a governor' of civil society and (4) as a regulator of the way in which disagreements and disputes are carried out between citizens. Substantive civility requires of citizens 'the readiness to moderate particular, individual or parochial interests' (Shils, 1997: 345), to '[limit] the intensity of conflict' (Shils, 1997: 343) and to '[reduce] the distance between conflicting demands' (Shils, 1997: 343). In this way, it acts to 'orient procedures for handling conflicts of interests so that they do not escalate' (Rucht, 2011: 387). These four ways come down to two sets of concerns which form the basis of the appropriate editorial guidelines concerning substantive civility: first, rights and personal conduct; second, pluralism and agonism.

With regard to rights and personal conduct, editorial guidelines should enable news reporting that can:

- Endorse the respect of human and constitutional rights which can include the right to life and liberty, freedom from torture, right to fair trial, right to take part in governance of one's country, right to freedom of conscience, expression and association
- Emphasise that each member of the community has/should have the same rights and that the acknowledgement of rights is based on a person's equal standing and therefore independent of personal likes or dislikes
- Endorse the view that each citizen deserved to be treated with dignity based on their membership in the community (and independently of the role played during civil war[14])

- Emphasise the view that each citizen has the potential to make a contribution to peacebuilding and society by helping to create an atmosphere in which all citizens feel safe to associate and cooperate in peace-oriented ways
- Emphasise the need for personal forbearance in everyday interactions so that the principles of dignity and equal civil standing are respected
- Encourage the deconstruction of enemy images and the rejection of metaphors of otherness, stereotypes, caricatures and stigmatisation

With regard to pluralism and agonism, editorial guidelines should:

- Manifest an effort to address pluralism, difference and disagreement agonistically
- Exhibit acceptance that dissent, difference of opinions and communicative conflict are part of everyday life
- Exhibit rejection of any kind of violent conflict resolution or vigilantism
- Report the need to endorse desirable common values such as equality, diversity, freedom of expression, religion and opinion as well as tolerance and respect
- Endorse a need for inclusivity
- Explain that agreement might mean compromise and sacrifice but that these are justified and necessary for the common good of civil peace

Building civil capacity and civil competencies. This category moulds, scopes and shapes how we think about the building of civil capacity and responsibility at both an institutional and an individual level. With regard to the former, it is concerned with the building of new communicative, legal, economic and political institutions (Smelser, 1997; Alexander, 2006; Patalano, 2007) to redress institutionalised discrimination (Staub, 2008) and to diffuse illegitimate monopolies of power as domination (Lukes, 2005). With regard to the latter, it is concerned with the empowerment of citizens as political and civil actors. In political terms this concerns mainly elections (including understanding the value of them and one's responsibility to make an informed choice). In civil terms it concerns citizens' recognition of the value of civil associations (or of social capital, cf. Putnam, 2000) in the Tocquevillian sense; that is the value of collaborating and cooperating across a wide range of diverging interests in order to achieve something that is of value for the community (social justice, equal access of all to education and reintegration programmes). This can be done through civil actions and initiatives or through non-violent civil resistance (Chenoweth, 2012, 2021) and both need functioning problem-solving channels of communication which enable debate and dialogue on issues of common concern as well as adjudication, judgement, dissent and civil scrutiny. Our editorial guidelines cover both institutional and individual capacity.

Journalism can emphasise the need for new communicative, legal, economic and political institutions by:

- Endorsing the need for the creation of new institutions and their legitimacy
- Calling for the institutionalisation of new mediation and problem-solving mechanisms both formal and informal

- Emphasising that independent legal institutions need to be trusted as being capable to bring about justice
- Endorsing the establishment of inter-communal groups to collaborate on peace-oriented project
- Emphasise the need to provide for possibilities for the individual to be active in peace process (charity work, relief programmes, rebuilding of infrastructure, art, sports and culture etc.)
- Encouragement of civil scrutiny of both civil and non-civil institutions including (where appropriate) the police and security forces

In terms of individual capacity, it can emphasise the need for and value of:

- Civil associations, coalitions and co-alignments and of finding new ways of working together across a wide range of diverging interests for building trust
- Civil actions, initiatives and civic duties (the city, village, local and national)
- Inventing new symbols and finding new ways to collectively address the past and build the future
- Creating safe spaces to engage in discussions and debate about community and peacebuilding matters
- Social justice; that is, access for all to education, economic and social programs
- Solidarity and trust
- Election education

These three sets of editorial guidelines are an attempt to guide the news reporting that aims to contribute to civil society building and peaceful cooperation within it. But as already noted above, they only do so at the universal level of thin prescriptions and are therefore normative in character. In order to bring these editorial guidelines alive, they need to be locally interpreted, understood and applied so that they can mark the boundaries of a possible journalistic response to the myriad antagonisms manifest in a post-civil war setting. And of course, journalists and news organisations operate in specific social environments which might challenge the practical undertaking of this role.

The civil norm building role: between the ideal and the real

Ideally a civilly inspired news organisation undertaking civil norm building would see its role as (in part) contributing to the generation of society that is at ease with its past and is future facing. It would treat journalism as a profession with its own ethical outlook and which sits comfortably with the civil norms of peaceful cooperation and distinguish itself from the partisan or from simply existing as part of the 'infosphere'. Importantly, it would possess editorial integrity as well as be editorially independent but also be aware of its own transformative communicative capacity through news reports. This ideal of civilly inspired news organisations survives to varying extents across the world as proponents of the political role of journalism have pointed out. One of the main objections to journalism that undertakes a civic-developmental approach is that it often compromises traditional

professional values. This, however, is not necessary when journalism acts as a civil norm builder and as such, a civil norm building approach might be 'attractive' as it manages to fill a gap where journalists and organisations feel that they have to choose between professional values or civic-developmental journalism. Previous studies have shown that it is particularly the Global South or countries in transitional contexts (Hanitzsch et al., 2011) that sometimes find themselves in a 'trap of choice' or simply find the motivational, exemplificatory and community-oriented way more appealing.[15]

When context and circumstances allow, the civil norms building approach enables journalists and news organisations to participate in peacebuilding, to engage in an exemplificatory role and to bring together their civil consciousness and desire for peace with their professional requirements. One of the ways in which to understand the role of journalism as well as judging the extent to which such a role can be practically carried out is to analyse the performance of the role (the practised role) (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2018) through news reports (Mellado, 2015). In a fact finding and very rudimentary provisional sampling exercise of African newspapers in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kenya and Nigeria we examined 1044 news reports in the immediate post-civil conflict period. We found 2136 references to the categories of civil norms of peaceful cooperation as expressed in our editorial guidelines. Whereas this observation is in no way scientific it nevertheless to points to the idea that the normative role of civil norm building can practically be undertaken and already is - even if intuitively.

Of course, and simultaneously, the carrying out of this role faces challenges similar to the ones pointed out in the literature on the roles of journalism. These challenges lead to a gap between what is normatively inspired to and practically carried out (Mellado and Van Dalen, 2014). These challenges include editorial pressure, market concerns, political power[16], newsroom ideologies, threats to journalists resulting in self-censorship and compliance as well as a possible incompatibility of a journalist's personal and professional identity,[17] whereas these challenges are indeed worth considering and being aware of it is also impossible to judge the challenges and their potential impact abstractly from afar. Each journalistic environment requires its own analysis that takes into account political, economic, institutional, cultural and professional circumstances and contexts. This can, however, only be done (as noted above) by journalists and organisations in situ. The active undertaking of the civil norm building role requires a firm commitment the development of a civil sphere that operates based on the principle of peaceful cooperation.

Conclusion

We have tried to describe a journalism ethos that a news organisation committed to a sustainable civil peace in post-civil war settings must have. It consists of three things: first, a reflexive understanding of its own transformative communicative capacity; second, an institutional and organisational commitment to the civil norm building role and third, locally applied editorial guidelines that scope, mould and shape how news organisations and journalists undertake this role through news reporting that accords with the three basic categories of peaceful cooperation. Supporting this argument is the further claim that (re)-building a news organisation or developing one imbued with specific institutionalised

civil ideals of journalism supportive of self-sustainable civil peace is not incompatible with transforming social relationships of enmity and distrust, but rather essential to it. This is not unprecedented. Indeed, civil norm building is an almost natural institutional and organisational disposition of serious news journalism with a public service ethos or a civil-minded idea of how things should be. Fortunately, there are still news organisations around today that are replete with such an ethos; that wish to represent trustworthy journalism and to exhibit a civil mindedness which treats their audiences as consisting of critical and influential citizens. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. As Dewey (1930: 103) argued: 'Social institutions, the trend of occupations, the pattern of social arrangements, are the final controlling influence in shaping minds'.

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Notes

1. Vos et al. (2019) find that the public's and journalists' understanding of the role of journalism only differs slightly.
2. For a more elaborate understanding of this role see Hanitzsch and Vos (2018).
3. See for example, Herscovitz (2004), Hanitzsch et al. (2011), Vos et al. (2019).
4. Also Worlds of Journalism country reports.
5. The clash between the normative and the real is particularly pronounced in 'new' democracies, transitioning and violent democracies – see Hughes and Lawson (2005), Von Holdt (2014), Garcés-Prettel et al. (2020).
6. According to Harlow (2019), Freire's work on participatory communication for social change (though he didn't focus on the media) has been influential in the ways in which journalism and media are understood and studied in Latin America.
7. Mellado et al. (2012), for example, found that Brazilian journalists were more likely to advocate for social change through their news reporting than Chilean and Mexican journalists. Harlow (2019) found that whereas mainstream Brazilian journalists valued ethical standards, alternative media journalists emphasised the importance of both their political-democratic and civic-developmental role.
8. For a general critique of journalists as political actors see Patterson (1997).

9. By 'category' we mean an opaque structure of thought necessary for understanding and which moulds scopes and shapes how we think about 'something' (in this case peaceful cooperation) and the concepts we use to explain this 'something' (see Berlin, 1999).
10. A civil consciousness is a disposition towards a certain kind of quality of associative life which includes both a cognitive-reflective (realisation of the need for civil solidarity, agonistic non-violent engagement with conflict and a conception of community) and an emotional-affective dimension (longing for the experience of solidarity, belonging and safety) (see Pukallus, 2019 and forthcoming).
11. We are aware that not every news organisation uses written editorial guidelines and we do not prescribe a certain format that these need to be presented in.
12. Assent can be given and withdrawn by the affected populations. It cannot be taken for granted and certain circumstances or states of affairs may require people to think about assenting to war or armed intervention instead.
13. On discursive civility underpinning peaceful cooperation see Pukallus (2022).
14. How difficult this is can be seen in the literature on the reintegration of ex-combatants and child soldiers.
15. See especially the studies referred to and analysed by Hanusch and Uppal (2015) on Arab and Asian journalism as well as the emergence of a Pacific-style journalism. See for example, also Herscovitz (2004) and Harlow (2019) on Brazilian journalism, Mellado et al. (2012) on Latin American journalism cultures.
16. See for example, Hughes et al. (2017) on how journalistic work is constrained by influence form the military, police and various security forces in El Salvador.
17. Albuquerque (2017: 906) shows for example how journalists in Latin America 'attempt to manipulate the Fourth Estate discourse toward their own benefit, as a means for securing and legitimizing their own privilege' and in this way, betray the position of news journalism as a civil institution.

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