

# P@X online bulletin

## GIVING VOICE/S: MASS MEDIA AND INVISIBILIZED ACTORS

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## Editorial

The health of a democracy can be measured, first and foremost, in terms of the diversity of voices that co-exist within it. The voices of the elite, of the people, of minority groups etc. dialogue in environments with different degrees tension in an attempt to make evident the complexity of reality and thus manage to reach consensual agreements. It is specifically the media (mass, social and local) that, as a public service, bring these debates closer to its audience. Towards the end of the 1990s Michael Ignatieff began speaking of the effects of the mass media's internationalisation of conscience. He points out the relationship that the audience maintains with the information that traditional media bring in to their homes: the greater the understanding of the complexity and conflicting nature of social reality (both near and far), the greater the engagement with that reality, and the greater the involvement and the will to search for solutions. Traditional media are currently experiencing their greatest crisis both economically and in terms of credibility. After nearly two decades dominating information mediums and tools, the media have forced the logic of market forces into the relationships, subjects and processes inherent in the phenomenon of communication, and as a consequence on the human perspective. Within the dynamic of building discourses to represent reality, this situation has

resulted in the failure of the media in assuming their public service function, listening instead only to the voices of officialdom. This has led to the consolidation of the phenomenon of contagion in the news and to the loss of trust by its audience. This situation is particularly extreme in situations of conflict, since it is when the ties between the disputing parties are at their weakest, or even non-existent, that the media's political role is most crucial due to its capacity to elevate the voices or break the silence of many of the actors involved (women, young people, ethnic minorities, underlying communities, etc.), raising their discourse to the same level as the other actors.

This issue discusses the impact that mainly the traditional media have on conflicts when it prioritises the voices of some participants over others. There are practically no academic studies that have investigated the impact of these coverage decisions, however quantitative research which analyses the presence of some groups over others as sources of information or newsworthy events have already clearly shown that the voices that dominate are often male, official, and monolithic.

In response to this situation, Communication for Peace argues that peace cannot be left exclusively in the hands of the forces that are fomenting the conflicts. It is therefore necessary for the communities and the people to begin the task of creating

spaces that allow the reasoning, dialogue and transformation that will in turn enable the recovery of the natural flow of communications that contributes to the prevention, monitoring and systematic response to conflicts. Communication for Peace goes beyond the peace media approach to underline the importance of the relational process. Peace Journalism can provide the tools and the means through which to orchestrate a constructive criticism of the hegemonic way of doing journalism and disseminating information, so that the events that make up reality are defined from a perspective that is both more human and more concrete.

Regardless of whether, in order to break the silence of the various actors involved in the conflict, or the victims of the conflict, we research the possibilities for Communication for Peace, the more concrete methodology of Peace Journalism, or responsible and ethical traditional journalism, the questions that must be asked are: Whose voices are we listening to?, What is the effect of the silencing of some voices in the conflict itself?, and What hidden interests determine that some voices are heard more than others?. The reflections, studies and sources of information that are found in this number of P@x constitute a first step in this direction.

Cristina Sala Valdés

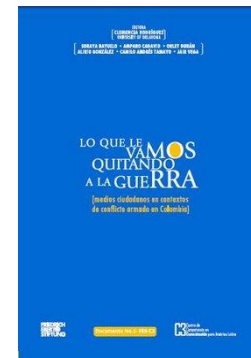
## P@X Theory

### Communication for peace: beyond the media and the messages

Communication, underpinning as it does much of social life and human relations, is a central element of peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Starting with the pioneering studies carried out by Harold Lasswell and Walter Lippman on war propaganda during the First World War, mass communication research, and later peace studies have recognised the central role that traditional mass media (newspapers, radio, television, films etc) play in the dissemination of information and messages that can shape the views of policymakers and public opinion on conflicts. The conflicts that took place in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s provided sad examples of the use of the media to demonize the other, to create perceptions of threat and insecurity and to instigate and legitimise ethnic violence (Article 19, 1996; Thompson, 1999).

However, moving beyond the media, a review of the theories on the nature and dynamics of conflict, war and peacebuilding put forward over the last 50 years by both conflict resolution studies and irenology (in particular in the works of Kenneth Boulding, Johan Galtung, Adam Curle, John Burton, Edward Azar and Jean Paul Lederach) reveals the implicit presence in these theoretical models of other dimensions of communication, such as the relational and the constructivist ones. This is because communication is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is not merely the transmission of information and flows of messages through the media, but it also –and above all– encompasses processes and relationship networks of different types, as derived from its etymological origin – the Latin word *'communicare'* (to make common, join together, share, dialogue, participate in). *'Communicating'*, as Antonio Pasquali (1978) reminds us, is much more than just *'informing'*. Communities –from local to global ones– are tissues of relations in space and time, which involve many groups, organisations and institutions, and provide multiple roles for individuals and social groups –roles that are constantly created, recreated, contested and negotiated.

Communication flows link them together in a relational process through which they convey and produce meanings that come to integrate broader cultural frameworks for human action. Behind and within the models of communication between all these actors lie models of human interaction. Society, therefore, can be seen as a form of communication.



Book cover "Lo que vamos quitando a la guerra", Clemencia Rodríguez, 2008

Despite that, the increasing importance of media in modern society over the last century –as mediators of knowledge, cultural norms and social relationships (Thompson, 1998)– has led to the prevalence of the informative dimension and technologies over the relationships, subjects and processes that are inherent in the phenomenon of communication. In the field of peacebuilding, for instance, the mainstream approach to the strategic and explicit use of communication for peacebuilding has been limited mainly to the peace journalism, and more recently to the proposal of peace media (Galtung, 1986, 1998; Varis, 1986; Roach, 1993; Botes, 1996; Gilboa, 2002; Manoff, 1998; Melone, Terzis & Beleli, 2002; Barry, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Bratic, V. & Schirch, 2007).

Following in the footsteps of UNESCO and in light of the new opportunities for communication opened up by technological,

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innovations, the last decade has seen the emergence of a debate on the necessity to widen the scope of that approach in order to develop a comprehensive and all-encompassing strategic framework for the integration of communication in peacebuilding efforts (SFCG & USIP, 2011; Warshel, 2009). Such an approach, which transcends information and its means of distribution in order to include and give value to people, relationships, processes and networks, was already adopted decades ago in the area of communication for development and social change (Melkote, 1991; Servaes, 1999; Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2008; Mefalopulos, 2008), having admitted the failure in facilitating development of the once dominant paradigm of unidirectional, vertical and monologic communication (Rogers, 1976). Horizontal, interactive and participatory models of communication were proposed as alternatives to the old paradigm.

Surprisingly, as stressed by Clemencia Rodriguez (2000) a decade ago, development communication and peace studies traditionally have been foreign to each other, despite sharing the historical causes and context of their emergence and the central importance that both fields give to social change. Rodriguez, a Colombian USA-based media and communication scholar, has provided for the past 20 year some keys to rethink the relationship between communication, peacebuilding and social change, grounded in her field research into local initiatives of citizen communication that re-knit the social fabric in contexts of armed conflict (Rodriguez, 2008). With over 60 years experience of conflict, Colombia offers many examples of social innovations aimed to resist and counteract from the realm of communication the perverse logic of violence, as shown in the works of other Colombian scholars, especially Amparo Cadavid and Jair Vega. Similarly, the experience of NGOs that have pioneered the use of communication as a fundamental locus of and tool for peacebuilding -such as Search for Common Ground (SFCG)- invites to reconsider the role conventionally assigned

and recognized in the peacebuilding practice and theory to communication as well as to the media.

Conceiving of communication from that broader perspective, as a space of encounters and dis-encounters, where discourses and differences are mutually constituted and where human relationships are organised, calls for emphasis to be placed on the importance of giving voice to people and communities and of facilitating dialogue. According to Lederach (1998: 161), the peacebuilding process is fundamentally based on the creation of relationship and trust, at the root of which lies dialogue. It is therefore crucial to open communication spaces where people can meet, live first-hand experiences of non-violence and construct peaceful links among each other based on mutual respect and solidarity (Rodríguez, 2004).

The new spaces of interaction on a local-national-global scale afforded by new technologies, as well as the explosion of citizen media in the last two decades in conflict-affected countries, have provided new avenues for civil society to participate and actively involve themselves in the different phases of the cycle of conflict. This fact is transforming the very nature of the communication flows and networks that contribute to the systemic prevention, monitoring and response to conflicts, making them more complex, horizontal and open. It forces the decentralisation of the processes of peacemaking, peacebuilding and development and thus it facilitates the implementation of bottom-up peacebuilding, an approach proposed in the 1990s by Adam Curle (1994) and Jean Paul Lederach (1998).

Communication for peace would therefore include a multiple set of strategies, processes and interactions aimed to overcome or at the very least reduce as far as possible the deficiencies and weaknesses in the existing communication that occur between the parties in conflict, influencing its dynamic and in turn being influenced by it. Ultimately, it attempts to contribute to the establishment and

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maintenance of peaceful, balanced and constructive relationships between them, allowing for the collective design of emancipatory social change processes. Although the roots of communication for peace can be traced to the philosophy and practice of communication for development and social change, fulfilling its potential to prevent, resolve and constructively transform conflicts requires to undertake extensive research and systematization of experiences from which to generate new knowledge. So it has been understood, for instance, by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) which this very year has launched an international programme to support research and innovative practice intended to increase understanding of how the different flows of communication and technology can best be leveraged to improve peacebuilding efforts.

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\*\*\* Please note that in the previous version of P@x 18 this text had some mistakes in the references section, which were now revised. The biographical note was also corrected. The P@x team apologises for the inconvenience.



## P@x Interview

Interview with Mari Carmen Gascón, by Cristina Sala Valdés

**“We should look for media and cultural scenes which force us to question our thoughts, to get informed in a better way and to doubt”**

P@x talked with Mari Carmen Gascón Baquero, a researcher at the Research Seminar for Peace (SEIPAZ, Zaragoza), about the role of the media in conflict situations and about the challenges of accessing and giving voice to actors and agendas which are often silenced in conflict scenarios. Mari Carmen Gascón Baquero holds a PhD in Education Studies by the Open University with the thesis *"Desarrollo de la Creatividad a través de programas radiofónicos"* ("Development of Creativity through Radio Programmes"). Among her published books are *La Radio en la Educación no Formal*. Barcelona: CEAC, 1991 ["The Radio in the not formal Education"], *Comunicando Paz. Otros Medios de Comunicación desde el mismo Laberinto*: Editorial Popular, 2008. ["Communicating Peace. Other Communication Media in the same Maze"] and *Huellas de Paz en el Periodismo* ["Traces of Peace in Journalism"] available in: [http://www.seipaz.org/documentos/WEB/indice1\\_content.html](http://www.seipaz.org/documentos/WEB/indice1_content.html). Currently M. Carmen Gascón is developing the research "The image as means to communicating cultures", in collaboration with experts from Russia, Sweden, Poland, Argentina, South Africa and the United States.

*P@x: We know that the mass media have several responsibilities to their audiences. The first of them is to provide truthful and verified information. In many conflict contexts the search for this information becomes more difficult and therefore getting it becomes increasingly valuable. We are also aware of the case of embedded journalists along with other strategies used to limit the access to information. Do you think it is possible to offer truthful and verified information without including the voices from every actor involved in the conflict?*

*P@x: When it comes to reporting about a conflict it is necessary to distinguish between information and disinformation, propaganda and indoctrination.*

If we portray a conflict as a confrontation between "extremes", then we quickly cause rejections and support from other actors in the conflict. This isn't for sure the way to creating an integrated understanding of the situation. We need to make visible the hidden nuances of the conflict and extend the approach by giving voice to those who don't have power. By giving voice to every actor they receive acknowledgment. However, we have to bear in mind that voices are not only words, but also perceptions and feelings and these are not easy to transmit. Let alone to express them in a single headline.



Mari Carmen Gascón working on her last project, 2011.

*P@x: Traditionally, which are the most silent, muted and less present voices in conflicts reports?*

M.C. : In my opinion it is the nuances within every established actors group that are mostly silenced by reports. When facing conflict I wonder myself whether we are creating stereotypes which legitimise or delegitimise certain actors or their causes.

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The voices I miss the most are the ones from utopian people who offer concrete peace proposals. I would like to underline that we really have to be careful in the way we portray victims. Indeed, they can carry on with their lives; they don't necessarily have to stay paralysed because of the fact of having suffered horribly.

*P@x: Do you think that this situation occurs because it is difficult to access to those voices or it is just a matter of a bad journalistic habit?*

M.C.: Yes, it is in fact very difficult. The journalistic dynamics condition our work in many ways, limiting the size of articles and determining the urgency of providing information, for example. Other difficulties derive from the fact that there is little support for investigative journalism in the curricula of the Universities of Communication. Additionally, the lack of credibility of the journalistic work also means that many voices do not want to talk to us. In order to gain access to qualified and diversified voices it is necessary to avoid trivialising the journalistic work, to regain professional credibility and therefore to win people's trust. We have pretty much the same problem with scientist, and history experts, who are also afraid of us and fear the simplification of their work findings. Furthermore, usually we tend to forget that many of the actors in conflicts are bound by the Official Secrets Act, not only soldiers, but also some civilians. Also, we have to consider that sometimes we just do not have the images we would like to publish. There are also many transparent silences: the pages layout, the broadcast scheduling, the rhythm of the assemblage in a TV film, etc. Some other silences are due to the *modus operandi* of companies or institutional offices, which often submit information that is already arranged and therefore selected in detail. The Mass Media are also strategically controlled; they do not have as much freedom as people may think.

*P@x: It is commonly said that the mass media set the global news agenda and therefore also the conflicts' agenda. If the media do not tell us what to think about but they do tell us which topics to have in mind, then, what is the impact of being told which voices to listen to?*

M.C.: Well, after all, we cannot forget that the mass media are also companies and thus they have their financial and power interests. We have think critically about the information they provide us with (and also the information they do not provide us with). What really worries me is the excessive focus on detail, which stops us from contextualising the situation and also the lack of connection between the professionals of the several sections of newspapers (for instance, between the ones of the International and the Economy sections). Nonetheless, regarding the issue of the silent voices, the biggest influence that the media have on us is the one made in our potential imagination. In other words, we are being told what we can imagine and what we should not. Eventually this influence is responsible for the citizens' social behaviour: some people start acting, while others let the powers make decisions for them.



The most recent book of M. Carmen Gascón, "Huellas de Paz en el Periodismo", 2010

## P@x Interview

*P@x: Do you think this also happens in alternative or more regional media?*

M.C.: There is certainly a great diversity of voices in alternative media and I find it exciting, however, many blogs, documentaries, songs, etc. become somehow a way of just asserting our beliefs and friendships. We should look for media and cultural scenes which force us to question our thoughts, to get informed in a better way and to doubt. We need to train our minds to think critically about the information we receive and that is something you cannot simply improvise, you have to be trained.

*P@x: In your last book *Huellas de Paz en el Periodismo* ("Traces of Peace in Journalism") you offer tools to reconsider the reality and the information that, we, as audience, get from the mass media. After having carried out such a thorough analysis, do you believe that the mass media have the competence, ability and tools to listen to all the voices and actors (victims and perpetrators) in a conflict?*

M.C.: I think that the Mass Media are part of a complex society which is in constant flux and therefore changing. Nowadays there are means and tools that were unthinkable just a few years ago: pay-per-view TV, citizen journalism, posting your own videos in the internet, etc. The human being's creativity is amazing: we analyse the different characters of new North American series, we take part in cultural activities in Colombia such as *Teatro del Oprimido* (Theatre for the Oppressed, in English), we get into the "hip hop" music from Senegal, etc. And these are only a few examples which show us that there are always tools to make ourselves heard.

Unfortunately, "the medium is the message" and we end up being more interested in the topics that the power chooses and wants. As a result, we find normal and justified things that should be censurable. For example, changing the broadcast schedule of the Sundays TV news from a public television,

TVE 1, for a reason such as the televising of the Motorcycle Championship.

Nevertheless, I am not pessimistic, since there will always be new and unexpected horizons. I think it is just a matter of spending more time with different people, getting different information from different sources and then we will finally realise that every event occurring far away concerns us all. This constitutes a challenge in itself and a new kind of art.

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PhD candidate at the University of Deusto (Bilbao, Spain) within the Programme "Migrations and Conflicts in Global Society", where she is researching the Role of Media in Conflict Transformation. She is currently Junior Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies (University of Coimbra) within the Marie Curie Project SPBuild. Cristina Sala holds a University Degree Course in Journalism, Complutense University (Madrid, Spain), and mainly worked as journalist in press agencies and radios in Spain. In April 2008, she completed one year research period supervised by Kjell Ake Nordquist in the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Uppsala University (Sweden). From October 2008, she is responsible for the online course "Communication for Development, Social Change and Peace" at the Institute for Peace and Cooperation Studies (IEPC). She is also a member of the European Union Latin America Relations Observatory (EULARO) working as consultant and designer of social development programmes in Colombia.



## P@xes Observatory

### Resources to give voice/s through the media

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<http://www.justvision.org/encounterpoint>

## Peace Builders

### Internews. Empowering local media worldwide

<http://www.internews.org/global/er/default.shtm>

Formed in 1982, the Internews is an international media development organisation based in California, whose mission is to empower local media worldwide and to give people the news and information they need. It also aims to connect people and make their voices heard. The organisation currently works in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. Together with local partners, their activities include establishing and supporting media outlets, journalist associations, and broadcast networks. Internews has supported the development of some 4800 independent media outlets to date, including radio and television stations, newspapers and online news sites. Additionally, Internews has worked for the adoption and implementation of fair media laws and policies in 21 countries in order to enable independent media to fulfill their "watchdog" function.

### IWMF. International Women's Media Foundation

<http://iwmf.org/the-iwmf-network.aspx>

Founded in 1990, the International Women's Media Foundation is a global network dedicated to strengthening the role of women journalists as a way to further worldwide freedom of the press. IWMF programs cultivate women leaders, pioneer newsroom change and empower women reporters. The International Women's Media Foundation commissioned the study Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media to closely examine gender equity in the news media around the world.

**Knight Foundation. Informed and engaged communities**

<http://www.knightfoundation.org/>

Based in the USA, the Knight Foundation seeks to improve public media, discover new platforms for investigative reporting, increase digital and media literacy, promote universal broadband access, support a free and open media and help sustain democracy by building capacities among journalists. Their main areas of funding are Media Innovation, Journalistic Excellence and Freedom of Expression. Their publications (reporter analysis, field-wide research, policy papers, etc.) cover different issues on the topics of “Engaged communities” and “Journalism and media innovation”.

**Global Voices. The world is talking. Are you listening?**

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/>

Founded in 2005, Global Voices is a community of more than 400 bloggers and translators around the world, who work together using more than 30 languages to bring the audience reports from blogs and citizen media everywhere, with emphasis on voices that are not ordinarily heard in international mainstream media. At a time when international English-language media ignores many things that are important to large numbers of the world's citizens, Global Voices aims to address some of the inequities in media attention by leveraging the power of citizens' media. Specifically, Global Voices has an advocacy website and network to help people speak out online in places where their voices are censored. Global Voices also runs the project “Rising Voices” to help marginalised communities use citizen media to be heard, with an emphasis on the developing world.

**Contrast**

<http://www.contrast.es/>

Contrast is a collective of journalists committed to the design of communication projects with social aims. The main assumption of this collective is that journalism constitutes a tool for the transformation of societies. Based on the idea that journalism has a relevant role in peacebuilding and social reconstruction, their focus is on the people instead of the elites as well as on human rights (in conflict and post-conflict zones) and on initiatives of social transformation all around the world. Their project “What comes after official peace?” is a serial of documentaries on Bosnia, Lebanon, Argentina, Cambodia, South Africa and Rwanda.

## Book Review

Fonseca, Linsu (2008, 3rd edition), *Una Colombia que nos queda*. Bucaramanga: Women and Future Foundation and Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

Although violence in Colombia has been a common theme since colonisation, it is forever surprising the manner in which the people, the victims, have faced the problems head on, and have managed to triumph over pain to reconstruct their lives, creating new ties, networks and possibilities in a fragile environment characterised by adversity and the emergence of multiple obstacles.

In this transformative journey violence has influenced in different ways the different social groups, regions and Colombian territories. It is due to this permanent influence that women have become both the victims and the agents of change. The myriad of roles that women play in the armed conflict in Colombia has placed them in a unique position to act as the protagonists and guarantors of the social changes that lead to peace, as the managers of the day to day co-existence, and as the constant generators of opportunities and avenues through which life is defended and maintained. This is what motivated Linsu Fonseca, social communicator and journalist from Bucaramanga, to visit various regions in Colombia in order to tell the life stories of twelve women, who as part of the project '1000 Women of Peace' were nominated for the 2005 Noble Peace Prize, a global initiative intended to highlight and value the work carried out by many women on the planet.

'*The Colombia that will remain*' is not a book about violence, although violence is a constant presence in its pages. It is not a book about suffering, although in the recollections of the events that have marked the lives of these women moments of real terror are re-created. It is not a book that simply re-hashes events. On the contrary, it uses the female body and soul as a means to demonstrate how violence seeps into the guts and skin, like a poison that must be expelled before it takes over.

This is not a book about static people; it narrates the story of a group of women who in the midst of armed conflict - conflict that is still occurring today in many rural areas of the country - were able to shake off the inherent difficulties of displacement in order to re-gain their land, initiate productive projects, offer their children education and work, venture into the political arena and meet with local leaders. All this in order to confront the illegal armed groups living on the margins of the law and therefore avoid new human rights violations as well as to turn over a new page in their life story and in the story of their community.

Along with the horrifying stories of these women, the reader will also find serious and clear summaries on the processes of violence in Colombia, on the experiences of the armed groups after disarmament, living on the margins of the law, and on the new institutional and social structures that have been set up to address the consequences of the structural violence that Colombia has lived for centuries. "*Although to many, this will sound like a fairy tale, these women believe that they are part of a small group of people who are helping to construct a Colombia that will remain. A Colombia that still bleeds, but resists.*"

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## Invisible women: an endless conflict

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### Why should women be invisible?

Generally, the actual relationship between the media, women in conflict situations and positive peace is poor and even unproductive. In fact, the links between two or three of these elements are often sporadic and irregular. In order to understand this situation as well as to find paths to potential solutions it is necessary to address thoroughly and as many times as necessary the question “Why”.

Probably the first and main question to ask ourselves is why it is necessary to make a link between the media, women in conflict situations and positive peace.

Rita Santos (2008) explained it clearly: “The mass media hinder the comprehension of the violence phenomenon and as a result of this its eradication by not contemplating the diversity of the women involved in these violence situations, nor the explanations and contextualisation of violence.”

In order to find a path to a sustainable peace we have to analyse the causes of violence, motives, public and private justifications of the involved parties as well as other stakeholders. We need to know who are the main actors, women and men; the perpetrators of violence as well as the victims (who sometimes are the same people); the leaders and their supporters at all levels; the influences and economic, strategic, power, cultural, social interests, etc.

Women represent half the global population as well as half of the forcibly displaced population in conflicts [1]. How is it possible to solve their situation without counting on these women?

Likewise, the mass media, with their news agenda setting role, intentionally or unintentionally, influence the way societies perceive conflicts. The risk of developing a journalistic work without having into account this fact means contributing to a context of primacy of violent solutions to conflicts.

The bias in the explanation leads to the simplification of the causes, contexts and the oppositional parties themselves and to the sensationalist presentation of violence and the justification of the acts from the “good” side versus the ones of the “bad” side. In other words, the mass media can make the mistake of not using the principle of objectivity which should always rule every journalistic work, along with other professional ethics.



Virtual tool specialised in the conflict of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). ACNUR Euskal Batzordea.

### Women are visible

Since 2006, ACNUR Euskal Batzordea (AEB) has been developing qualitative analysis about the media coverage of the so-called forgotten conflicts, which are labelled as such as a result of the limited international attention they receive. For example Darfur conflict (Sudan) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The analysis developed so far by AEB is mainly focused on the written press released in the Basque Country but it has also been examined written and digital newspapers in Spanish and English originated from several countries from Europe, Africa and Asia, and having coherent results.

In the course of the analysis, the AEB observed that the media have made constant but still.

insufficient advances in terms of the presence and quality of information about these conflicts. However, the media coverage of the women involved in these crises remains inadequate.

Apart from some respectable exceptions, according to the information offered by the press, the conflicts of Darfur and the DRC are still a matter of men only. Women who are involved in these conflicts are only portrayed in two ways: as passive victims of war or involuntary violence perpetrators; and as unimportant figures, that is, without having an opinion about the situation or peace proposals. By comparing this perception of reality with other sources one realises that it isn't real and needs to be changed.



Refugee woman at Iridmi camp, East Chade. ACNUR/  
H. Caux

### **Obstacles and the limits to the visibility of women**

Now it is time to ask ourselves for the second time the same question: "Why?"

Based on the aforementioned analysis, the AEB created in 2008 a Specialised Informative Service (in Spanish SIE) [www.darfurvisible.org](http://www.darfurvisible.org), focused on the conflict of Darfur. Likewise, the SIE [www.congordvisible.org](http://www.congordvisible.org) was started in 2010, with a focus on the DRC conflict.

Through these initiatives and other complementary actions, the AEB works on spreading information about these conflicts and promoting an adequate media coverage which will lead to the search of solutions by including the gender perspective in the analysis. Since March 2011 both SIE have their specific.

Gender and Peace Institutes.

AEB's work revealed the main trends in the way the mass media condition the coverage of conflicts in general and specifically the invisibility of women involved in them. Below is a summary of AEB's main findings:

1. Every time a specific event of political or international significance occurs within a geographically remote conflict, other national media tend to increase their coverage. However, even in its early stages, women remain invisible and mute.
2. The news focus is normally the conflict outbreak, rather than the previous signals, causes, context or the possible solution alternatives.
3. The media tend to favour official points of view which are, to a great extent, biased in favour of an androcentric perspective.
4. The foreseen strategies for peace analysed by the media are mostly traditional, masculine, oversimplified and short term-oriented. Of course, these strategies are easier to digest by the general public.
5. The media address the involvement of women in these conflicts only within the typical framework of stereotyped gender roles: passivity, victimisation, weakness and sensitivity towards the others' grief.
6. The availability of local information sources such as women with a leading role in the conflict or specialised ones (experts on gender, conflicts and conflict transformation, for example) favours a different media coverage.
7. The linkage between the news and both local events and the participation of people who are perceived by the audience as close to them, makes the inclusion of news about "distant" conflicts in local media agendas easier.
8. More attention is given to assistance initiatives, whose targeted public is basically benefactor, to the detriment of those ones which demand from the audience an approach of responsibility or at least of self-examination.

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Likewise, some journalists and media directors from the Basque Country interviewed in the course of AEB's work claimed that they shared this view about the role played by the mass media. However, they expressed some difficulties in changing this current situation as a result of "the overwhelming quantity of conflicts in the whole world in need of coverage". They also pointed out limitations such as the lack of economic resources, time, publishing support or even different publishing interests and priorities.

Keeping these in mind, we have to take into account the point of view of the media groups; though in this context it is important to highlight those mass media whose objective is the peaceful integration and a well-balanced visibility of conflicts. Nevertheless, unfortunately these media are neither the most productive nor the ones with bigger audiences.



Displaced woman at Kabati camp. Food distribution comes after the intensification of the armed conflict in North Kivu, forcing the displacement of thousands of people. ACNUR/ P. Taggart / November 2008

These considerations lead us to ask ourselves for the third time: "Why?" Which are the reasons for this and who benefits from this kind of media?

### Why?

Gender and conflict transformation theories need to be taken into account in order to develop a journalism whose objective is peace and not war. So here is my proposal: start by accepting, no matter how difficult it can be, that our own ideas could not be "the true ones"! We have to question the problem from the beginning again, bearing in mind its whole context and circumstances: causes, motives as well as public and private justifications of all parties involved; the main figures, women and men; the violence perpetrators and victims; the

leaders and their supporters at all levels; the influences and economic, strategic, power, cultural and social interests. In other words: let's pave the path to the transformation.

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Greta Frankenfeld is journalist, specialist in "Communication for Development, Social Change and Peace" (IEPC), responsible for the communication of the Basque Committee of ACNUR. Currently, she manages the project "Making Forgotten Conflicts Visible for Peace". She has held the position of editor of the newspaper ETORKINEN AHOTSA, a publication of the Basque Country dedicated to migration and cooperation for development issues. She has been working for 20 years in several mass media in Argentina and Spain.

### Notes

[1] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d9.html>

### References

Santos, Rita (2008), "Keeping an eye on the press", *P@x*, 10, June. <http://www.ces.uc.pt/publicacoes/p@x/pdf/P@x10en.pdf>

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## The journalistic coverage in Spain of the social conflicts in Peru related to the mining of gas and oil. The case of Bagua.

One of the most important tools available to monitor conflicts in Peru is the 'Report on Social Conflicts' that is prepared by the Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo, in Spanish). The most recent publication of this report, in June 2011, identifies 217 active social conflicts in Peru. 55.4% of these cases have been identified as social-environmental, caused by the mining of gas and oil, which harms local communities and their natural resources. On the other hand, recent statistics show that Peru's macro-economic growth over the last few years has increased at a rate of 5% - on average - which translates into millions in income for the country's coffers;



Production mining units and exploration projects in Peru, 2011.

money which originates primarily from the mining industry. Therefore in Peru conflict and mining are intimately linked. The main root of these conflicts lies in the fact that the exploitation of resources harms the poorest strata of the country's population, which are essentially those people living in the high Andine regions and in the Amazon. Not only have these communities failed to receive any of the benefits of the economic growth but on top of having

witnessed the steady erosion of their land rights, they have suffered the contamination of their lands, rivers, lakes and subterranean waters. This situation is not unknown to the local and foreign media.

### Conflict in the Amazon

The environmental conflicts in Peru reached their peak during the clashes between the local populace and the state's armed forces that took place in the city of Bagua – Northeastern Peru – on the 5th June 2009. Over a period of months Bagua became the centre of the protests as thousands of amazonian inhabitants called for the repeal of a group of laws, which had been approved by the state in 2007 and 2008 and which benefited oil and gas mining companies. Of the group of laws two in particular threatened the local inhabitants rights; one known as the 'Forest Law' (Law 1090) allowed any land, regardless of its current use, to be appropriated as long as the reason for its appropriation was deemed to be 'in the national interest'; the second, a provision, Law 1064, stated that the use of or transfer of land for the purposes of mining did not require a consultation process with the inhabitants of the territories to be exploited. The ensuing violence resulted in 33 dead (23 police, 10 amazonian activists) and over 200 injured.

These events were widely covered both at a national (in Peru) and international level. This article will focus on the coverage of the Spanish media, as Spain and Peru have strong ties not only for historical reasons but also of an economic and trading nature. Despite the great number of headlines and articles that addressed these events, the information provided by the two most important Spanish newspapers – *El País* and *El Mundo* – lacked a trustworthy explanation of the causes of the conflict. Furthermore, depending on the ideology of each newspaper, in other words the different affiliations and relationships that

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each newspaper had to the actors involved, they assigned differing and opposing levels of responsibility for the violence.

### Analysis of the media coverage

It is useful to examine the coverage of *El País* and *El Mundo* of the conflict in Bagua as it highlights the inadequacies of the very coverage. With this in mind, the analysis will focus on the coverage of the week commencing on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June, the newspaper *El País* published an article entitled “Police killed in an indigenous protest”. The title focuses on the death of a police officer, ignoring the civilian victims, who are mentioned in the main body of the article but only as ‘collateral damage’. This text is based mostly on official sources – the state and the police – without consulting the representatives of the people protesting.

On the same day, the newspaper *El Mundo* published a full-page article entitled “Massacre in the Peruvian Jungle”. Unlike the previous headline no reference is made to the victims or the perpetrators. What is noteworthy about this article are the contrasting sources used, which include testimonies of the locals, their representatives and human rights organisations as well as official sources. Over the next couple of days both newspapers continued to cover the unfolding events, with *El País* giving it the largest coverage.

From the 8<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> June *El País* published six articles on the news story, whilst *El Mundo* published two. *El País*'s output included an opinion piece that stated that the cause of the conflict was the repeal of laws that allowed the “creation of biofuels”. The opinion piece speculated that the intervention of Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, in the conflict was an attempt to instigate some kind of indigenous revolution on the continent. *El País* also published a report that speculated about the possible causes, but did not go into detail. In turn, *El Mundo* covered the end of violence, the subsequent control of the region by the police, the asylum of the indigenous leader of the movement – Alberto Pizango – along with some reports on the disappearance of dozens of amazonian inhabitants.

### The Challenges of pursuing Peace Journalism

Having compared the coverage of the two newspapers it is evident that they took opposing sides in the conflict: the side of the Peruvian state and the other the side of the amazonian population. *El País* based its reports on the official version of events, whilst *El Mundo* contrasted the official version with that provided by the representatives of the protesting population, emphasising the latter. The causes of the conflict are dealt with superficially by both newspapers and are basically reduced to the refusal of the Peruvian state to repeal the laws in question, without going into any depth as to the reasons behind

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Map of hidrocarbon exploitation in Peru, 2011.

the refusal and the unwillingness of the state to open a dialogue in order to reach a compromise.

In other words, neither newspaper attempts to offer solutions or to act as a channel for possible solutions to the conflict, which is exactly the task that journalists and the media should be carrying out, putting in to practise what is known as 'Peace Journalism'. This approach was initially proposed by Johan Galtung, conflict mediator, sociologist, and political scientist, who, amongst other things, advocates for a media's coverage of conflicts that not only explains the causes of the conflict, but more importantly, searches for and suggests possible solutions. In an interview published in the Mexican magazine 'Etcetera' Galtung said "In Peace Journalism a journalist has to ask two questions when in presence of violent conflict: 'What type of conflict is this and what are its causes?' and 'What is the solution to this conflict?'. These are the questions that are feared by politicians."

Journalists who aspire to work according to these rules must themselves be convinced of the importance of their role – and of the media's –in helping to find solutions to conflict. At a time when war, confrontations and conflicts threaten our world with violence and desolation, this role is more important now than it has ever been.

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Varillas, Nilton T. (n.d.), "Conflicto en la Amazonía peruana: El caso de Bagua", Trabajo de Investigación, Pós-graduação "La Comunicación de los Conflictos y de la Paz", Universidade Autônoma de Barcelona.

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## P@x Attic

## Publications

**Freire, Maria Raquel** (2011), *Política Externa: As Relações Internacionais em Mudança* (Ed.). Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.

**Freire, Maria Raquel** (2011), “USSR/Russian Federation Major Power Status Inconsistencies”. In Volgy, Thomas, Corbetta, Renato, Grant, Keith e Baird, Ryan (orgs.), *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

**Freire, Maria Raquel; Simão, Licínia** (2011), “ENP and Post-Soviet Transition in the South Caucasus: Triangulating Democracy, Security and Stability”. In Bosold, David, Drulák, Petr e Hynek, Nik (orgs.), *Democratization and Security in Central and Eastern Europe and the Post-Soviet States*. Berlim: Nomos Verlag.

**Nascimento, Daniela; Mendes, Carmen Amando; Iturre, Maite** (2011), “O 'factor' Taiwan na política externa chinesa em África e na América Latina”, *Estratégia*, XX, 69-86.

**Roque, Sílvia; Cardoso, Katia** (2011), “Overcoming Marginalization and Securitization: An analysis of the potential causes of collective youth violence in Bissau (Guinea-Bissau) and Praia (Cape Verde)”, *Oficina do CES*, 365.

**Santos, Rita** (2011), “Género (masculinidades e feminilidades) e Operações de Manutenção da Paz”, in Reginaldo Nasser (org.), *Os Silêncios das Missões de Paz*. São Paulo: Educ.



## Activities

## MAY

**Katia Cardoso** was a visiting researcher at the *Center for Human Rights and International Justice*, Boston College, May and June 2011.

**Sílvia Roque** presented a paper on “**Para além dos bandidos, polícias e milícias: jovens 'normais' e violências em Bissau (uiné-Bissau)**”, Sípósio Interdisciplinar Violencia urbana, los jóvenes y la droga, Monte Verità, Suíça, 01st to 6th de May 2011.

**Maria Raquel Freire** and **Licínia Simão** organised an International Seminar on *The EU's Role in the South Caucasus. From Cooperation to Partnership through Reforms: Challenges and Opportunities*, in collaboration with Yerevan State University (A.Markarov), under the scope of the project “Early Warning Systems: from Analysis to Action”, Improving Institutional Capacity for early Warning Cluster (IICEW Cluster), Initiative for Peacebuilding (IfP), CES/Yerevan State University, Erevan, Arménia, 12th May 2011.

**Sofia José Santos** and **Cristina Sala** presented a seminar on “**Performing the difference: media discourses and uses in multicultural contexts**”, within the Masters in International Migrations, University of Deusto Bilbao, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011.

## JUNE

**Sofia José Santos** presented the communication “**Media e Interculturalidade: uma proposta de agenda de investigação**”, III Jornadas de Sociologia, Instituto Piaget, Mirandela, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

## JULY

**Daniela Nascimento** presented the communication “**Os desafios actuais da cooperação internacional para o desenvolvimento**” (co-author Paula Duarte Lopes), Centre for Iberic Studies Summer Course: *Diálogos Ibéricos e Cooperação: terras, gentes, culturas*, Guarda, 8th July, 2011.

**Tatiana Moura** co-organised an advanced training course on “**Lives and history: a comprehensive course on biographies and society**”, Lousã, 17-22 July 2011.

## AUGUST

**Maria Raquel Freire** presented the communication “**(Des)articulação nas abordagens ao terrorismo: o caso UE-Rússia**”, XI Congresso Luso Afro Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais *Diversidades e (Des)Igualdades*, Salvador, Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA), Brazil, 8th August 2011.

**Daniela Nascimento, Maria Raquel Freire e Paula Duarte Lopes** presented the communication “**The ‘multi’ in multidimensional peace missions’ mandates and activities: a critical appraisal**”, conferência do World International Studies Committee (WISC), Porto, 17th August 2011

**Maria Raquel Freire** presented the communication “**Russian Foreign Policy towards its**

**Neighbourhood: A Complex Mosaic of Relations**", 3<sup>rd</sup> Global International Studies Conference, World International Studies Committee (WISC), Porto, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

**Sofia José Santos** presented the communication "**Media and Interculturality: the imperative for further research**", 3<sup>rd</sup> Global World International Studies Committee (WISC), Porto, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

**Daniela Nascimento** presented the "**Humanitarianism, development and security: (un)tying the knots?**", 3<sup>rd</sup> Global World International Studies Committee (WISC), Porto, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

## SEPTEMBER

**Tatiana Moura** co-organised with the international research group "Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict" (SVAC) the international seminar on "**Perpetrators – Reactions and Responses**", Centre for Social Studies, Coimbra, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

## NEW PROJECT

2011 - 2013 - "**Women, Peace and Security: the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 in Portugal**", coordinated by Tatiana Moura and Teresa Cunha, and funded by the Citizenship and Gender Equality Commission (CIG).

This Project aims at critically analyse the current EU countries National Action Plans of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 with particular focus on the Portuguese case. The Project intends to draw a diagnosis of today's reality regarding training in gender equality, violence and security aimed at the military, public security and development aid actors in Portugal, and assess the impact of the firearms dissemination in the lives of women in Portugal. The main products of the project include an International Conference on Gender, Peace Missions and the UNSCR 1325; an online database of national and international resources on Women, Peace and Security; awareness raising kits on the UNSCR 1325, as well as the Portuguese National Action Plan, and a training curricula and manual on gender equality, violence and armed conflict aimed at the military, security forces and development aid agents.