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Implementing peace journalism: The role of conflict stages

Kurzfassung: Bei den Bemühungen um die Implementierung von Friedensjournalismus wurde bislang die Frage weitgehend ausgeklammert, welche Rolle in diesem Zusammenhang unterschiedliche Konfliktphasen spielen. Unter Bezugnahme auf ein empirisch basiertes Modell von sechs Einflussfaktoren auf die Produktion von Konfliktberichterstattung wird in diesem Artikel untersucht, wie sich die Produktionsbedingungen von Konfliktberichterstattung in drei Konfliktstufen unterscheiden: (1) in gewaltfrei ausgetragenen Konflikten, (2) in gewaltsam eskalierten Konflikten / in Kriegen, (3) in Nachkriegszeiten. Dabei wird aufgezeigt, wie sich die unterschiedlichen Produktionsbedingungen auf die Realisierungschancen von Friedensjournalismus auswirken.

Im Einklang mit anderen Forschungsergebnissen, die darauf hinweisen, dass Friedensjournalismus schwieriger zu realisieren ist, wenn das eigene Land akut in einen Krieg verwickelt ist, plädiert der Autor dafür, den Fokus zukünftiger Implementierungsversuche zunächst auf jene Konfliktphasen zu richten, in denen Konflikte (noch) gewaltfrei ausgetragen werden. Die Ideen von Friedensjournalismus müssen in einer Gesellschaft und im Mediensystem in friedlichen Zeiten fest verankert werden, nur dann werden sie eine reelle Chance haben, auch in Kriegszeiten nachhaltig Wirksamkeit zu entfalten.

Abstract: Efforts to put the ideas of peace journalism into practice have so far largely neglected the role of the different stages of conflicts. With reference to an empirically-based model of six factors that influence the production of conflict coverage, this article examines how the preconditions of news production differ in three different stages of conflict: (1) nonviolent conflict, (2) violent conflict, (3) aftermath of violent conflict. The author shows how the differing preconditions of news production impact the chances for realising peace journalism. In the light of findings that suggest that peace journalism is harder to realise in wartime and if the journalists' own country is involved, the author argues in favour of changing the focus of implementation towards nonviolent stages of conflict. The ideas of peace journalism must be anchored within a society in peacetime; only then will they have a chance of sustainable realisation in wartime.

1. Introduction

In recent articles and publications on peace journalism, scholars and practitioners have addressed a broad range of important issues concerning the implementation of peace journalism. These issues include:

- First of all, the question of *whether* or not peace journalism even should be implemented. This controversy has been fueled by the argument that contributing to peace is not the journalist's task (Loyn, 2007) and the criticism that peace journalism is nothing but old wine in new bottles (Hanitzsch, 2007; see the resulting debate in cco 2/2007).
- Secondly, the question of *how* peace journalism could be implemented. On the one hand, this concerns the well-advanced considerations of how the idea of peace journalism can be spread and how the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies can be taught, e.g., in training courses or at universities (ASPR, 2003; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Lynch, 2007).

On the other hand, this issue relates to the structural constraints that affect any kind of journalism and therefore the question of who or what has to be and can be changed in order to implement peace journalism for a broader audience: The individual journalist? General journalistic formats, norms and routines? The economic foundation of the media system? The audience itself? (Bläsi, 2004, 2006; Hackett, 2006; Hanitzsch, 2007). And even if we conceptualize this change as "a cyclical progression of mutual adjustment between reformed structural conditions and improved journalistic skills" (Peleg, 2007, p. 4) – a depiction with which I agree – we still need to specify how this progression can be realized in concrete journalistic practice.

While these debates are still going on, another issue has so far largely been overlooked, namely the question of *when* peace journalism could and should most reasonably be implemented. Does it make a difference if peace journalism is put into practice *before* the violent escalation of a conflict, *during* wartime, or *after* the cessation of military operations? Intuitively, one might agree that there must be differences due to the diversity of preconditions. However, these differences have not yet been dealt with in detail. Thus, in this article I will explore the ways in which different stages of conflict affect the chances for peace journalism. In a second step I will discuss the consequences for the future implementation of peace journalism.

In doing so, I will refer to a model of factors influencing the production of conflict coverage (Bläsi, 2006; first draft Bläsi, 2004). On the basis of 30 in-depth expert interviews with conflict reporters from radio, television and the print media, and by incorporating previous research on the news production process, six interacting factors were identified that influence the production of conflict coverage:

1. Journalistic system: this comprises at a basic level the dilemmas inherent in the system, such as the lack of space and time; at the meso-level organizational structures, norms and routines that manifest themselves differently in every media branch; at the macro-level the legal parameters, contents and structures of journalistic education and training, economic and technological determinants.

2. Individual characteristics of the journalist: personal attitudes, values, beliefs, motivation, experience, skills, knowledge and competence.
3. Lobbying, information management and propaganda: Attempts to exert influence by political actors, the military, industry, NGOs, religious leaders, etc.
4. Situation on-site: specific conditions that journalists have to face in the conflict area, e.g., language, geography, infrastructure, censorship, restrictions on journalistic activities, security and personal safety, etc.
5. Public climate: characterized by the kind of public attention the conflict receives, by the amount and type of political activity elicited, the amount of coverage given, the diversity of opinions, the degree of polarization and the potential sanctions imposed on dissenters.
6. The audience: their interests, expectations, habits and purchasing behavior.

As will be shown below, these preconditions (and partly also results) of conflict coverage vary depending on the stage of conflict. Thus, the opportunities for implementing peace journalism also vary with different levels of conflict intensity.

Conflict intensity can be classified on five levels of intensity (HIIK, 2008): (1) latent conflict, (2) manifest conflict, (3) crisis, (4) severe crisis and (5) war. While levels 1 and 2 might comprise verbal pressure, threatening with violence or the imposition of economic sanctions, they are still considered to be nonviolent. In contrast, level 3 (at least one of the parties uses violent force in sporadic incidents), level 4 (violent force is used repeatedly in an organized way) and level 5 (violent force is used with a certain continuity in an organized and systematic way) are defined as violent stages.

Accordingly, in the following I will differentiate between (1) preconditions of news production in a nonviolent conflict and (2) preconditions of news production in a violent conflict / in wartime. Furthermore, as another nonviolent conflict stage I will analyze (3) the preconditions of news production in the aftermath of violent conflicts.

The empirical basis for the following considerations is likewise provided by the in-depth expert interviews mentioned above. The expertise of the interviewed journalists originated in the coverage of conflicts and wars in different parts of the world, including the Gulf War (1991), the Balkans, Chechnya, Rwanda, Liberia, Indonesia, Israel/Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq (2003). The interviews were analyzed within the methodological framework of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) by applying the specific techniques of coding and categorizing recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1996; cf. Bläsi, 2006 for a detailed description of the research design and methodical approach).

2. Preconditions of news production in nonviolent conflicts

Table 1 shows how the preconditions of news production affect the chances for peace journalism in a nonviolent conflict. The table distinguishes features that seem rather to facilitate constructive conflict coverage from features that seem rather to hinder it.

In this and the following tables the focus is on the differences between conflict stages. Hence, influencing variables that persist largely unchanged over all conflict stages are not included. (This relates, e.g., to the status quo of journalists' education and training).

The kind of coverage that seems feasible without extraordinary efforts strongly depends on the degree of involvement of one's own country. When it is involved there are chances for solution-oriented coverage. The preconditions for news production can in the main be characterized as follows: reporters have high specific conflict competence and a facilitating professional ethos, dispose of the required resources, and an adequate amount of space and time. They face an interested, but still largely impartial audience. In such a situation, a type of conflict coverage should be possible that focuses on common rights and interests, humanizes all sides, points to the price of a potential war, reports on peace initiatives and actively searches for nonviolent conflict resolution (i.e., solution-oriented conflict coverage, see ASPR, 2003). However, this type of coverage becomes more difficult the more the public discourse is influenced by antagonistic conceptualizations and the closer the situation comes to violent escalation.

If one's own country is not involved in the conflict, the chances for constructive coverage decrease to a similar degree as the allocated resources are reduced. At the same time, the prospects worsen that appropriate coverage will be recognized by the individual media consumer and will enter the public discourse.

Preconditions of news production	Features facilitating peace journalism	Features hindering peace journalism
Journalistic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing conflict means increasing news value for a country, albeit still limited if not accompanied by other news criteria (e.g., elite-nation, personalization, proximity, overt violence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor allocation of financial and personnel resources Limited amount of space and time in news coverage Editorial departments have a comparatively low interest in reports by foreign correspondents, insofar as non-elite-nations are concerned At best sporadic reporting
Individual characteristics of journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondents with in-depth knowledge of the country, its people and existing conflict lines, with a sense for nuances and time for investigation Presumably more journalists who want to present developments on-site (and focusing less on themselves), more journalists who are interested in long-term processes and not just in short-term outbreaks 	
Lobbying, propaganda, information management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propaganda efforts are usually less prominent than in violent conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propaganda efforts increase the more obvious and greater the chances of war. But because they are more covert in nonviolent conflicts, journalists may pay less attention to their influence
Situation on-site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By and large, restrictions are less extensive than in wartime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the political system, even in peacetime journalists may face extensive restrictions
Public climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If own country is not involved in conflict: low public attention. This can be <i>favorable</i> for peace journalism inasmuch as normally no clear-cut hostile images of the conflict parties are produced and as there is room for differentiated reporting If the own country is involved in a conflict, even a not-yet escalated conflict can attract public attention. As long as a conflict is not defined by the majority as a win-lose process, there are chances for solution-oriented coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If own country is not involved in conflict: low public attention. This can be <i>unfavorable</i> for peace journalism if conflict is simply ignored and, due to a lack of public interest, the media decide not to invest significant resources in conflict coverage
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to an indeterminate public climate, the audience might still be open for solution-oriented coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrequent coverage of non-elite countries entails that these countries face low general interest in the audience

Table 1: Facilitating and hindering preconditions of news production in nonviolent conflicts

3. Preconditions of news production in violent conflicts/in wartime

Table 2 shows how the preconditions of news production affect the chances for peace journalism in a violent conflict.

Preconditions of news production	Features facilitating peace journalism	Features hindering peace journalism
Journalistic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocation of substantial financial and personnel resources Great amount of space and broadcasting time in news coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High time pressure, scarcely any time for a thorough investigation Stronger orientation to classical news criteria
Individual characteristics of journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing numbers of journalists who are experienced in reporting from combat zones, know how to cope with the risks of war and are capable of gathering information in highly restricted areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many reporters of the "parachutist type" with poor specific conflict competence Potentially more journalists who are eager to use war as a stepping-stone in their career, who are more interested in sensationalism than in differentiation and search more for lurid stories from the battlefields than for background information
Lobbying, propaganda, information management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibly propaganda is easier to identify in wartime than before and after war At any rate, much more attention is directed to this topic. Coverage of the information management and propaganda attempts of conflict parties has significantly increased during the more recent major wars with Western participation (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massive amounts of propaganda produced by all sides
Situation on-site		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy restrictions on journalists, attempts at intimidation, even blatant threats to use physical force Tightened censorship Under such circumstances, peace-oriented coverage of conflict parties, their actual interests and aims, the visible and invisible harm caused by war, but also of peace initiatives might hardly be realized <i>Groupthink</i> effects (cf. Janis, 1982) between war correspondents could limit and distort their perception and evaluation of conflicts, e.g., with the possible result that certain modes and options of conflict resolution might be labeled as unacceptable from the outset
Public climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If own country is not involved in the conflict: In the case of violent escalation, the chances of public attention increase even without the involvement of own country Initial impartiality in public discourse could open up perspectives for a peace discourse, e.g., by focusing on common rights and interests, by humanizing all parties, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If own country is involved in the conflict: Usually the development of a war discourse (cf. ASPR, 2003), accompanied by an antagonistic conceptualization of the conflict Majority of journalists assimilate to war discourse or push it further Explicit or implicit threat of sanctions for journalists who break with war discourse
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If own country is not involved in the conflict: Attention and interest of the audience are more pronounced compared to a conflict with a low level of escalation The audience is relatively impartial regarding the conflict parties and the options for conflict resolution, hence potentially open to solution-oriented coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If own country is involved in the conflict: Due to the prevailing public climate and the social psychological mechanisms that incline most recipients to war discourse, the chances are low that solution-oriented coverage will gain broad acceptance

Table 2: Facilitating and hindering preconditions of news production in violent conflicts

In violent conflicts some preconditions are reversed. The allocation of personnel and financial resources increases significantly compared to the nonviolent conflict level. In addition, much more space and broadcasting time is made available for coverage of the conflict. On the other hand, the pressures of time and timeliness increase enormously. All in all, the journalistic system does not offer more auspicious preconditions for peace journalism than before wartime.

Compared to the conflict stages before and after a war, in wartime we often find a numerical predominance of war reporters who are so-called "parachutists." This is the type of reporter hurrying from war zone to war zone, thus very experienced in war reporting, but lacking expert knowledge of the specific conflict. His attention is directed to stories from the battlefield rather than to background information and long-term developments.

With regard to conflict reporters, I have elsewhere introduced the concepts of general conflict competence and specific conflict competence (Bläsi, 2004, 2006). *General conflict competence* means, on the one hand, the theoretical knowledge a journalist has about conflicts: types of conflict, conflict dynamics, methods and techniques of conflict resolution, etc. Furthermore, it encompasses certain social and self-reflexive skills: for example, the ability to empathize with people on-site and the ability to reflect on one's own biases. On the other hand, general conflict competence encompasses more practical know-how, e.g., knowing how to behave as a journalist in a conflict area. This includes, for example, knowing the necessary security precautions, the ability to investigate in a highly restricted environment and to deal successfully with concerted attempts by the conflict parties to influence news coverage. *Specific conflict competence* is the knowledge a journalist has about the concrete conflict and the conflict parties, including knowledge of a region's history, culture, religion, language, society, political and economic system, actors and their interests and motives.

According to this categorization, it can be assumed that in wartime more reporters are engaged who dispose of high practical conflict competencies, but low theoretical conflict competencies, rather low self-reflexive skills, and low specific conflict competencies. Moreover, within the group of *parachutists* we will presumably find more reporters with a basic motivation that is not really conducive for peace journalism. For example, if war reporting is primarily deemed to be a stepping-stone in one's career, or if searching for adventure and a craving for sensationalism are the main driving forces of journalists, then constructive conflict coverage cannot be expected.

Altogether, the characteristics of the predominant reporters in wartime make solution-oriented coverage far less probable than in nonviolent conflict stages. However, some features of de-escalation-oriented coverage, such as critical distance from the militants on all sides and an undistorted evaluation of the rights and aims of all sides, could be realized even by reporters lacking specific conflict competence and without any peace-related self-concept as a journalist. De-escalation-oriented conflict coverage, as described by Wilhelm Kempf (ASPR, 2003), by and large meets the accepted standards of quality journalism. These standards have to be met even by journalists who report on war primarily to promote their own career. Otherwise they will fail to gain the recognition of their colleagues.

Nonetheless, de-escalation-oriented coverage is rarely to be observed in wartime. Besides the massive attempts by all conflict parties to influence media coverage, this is most notably due to the effects of the public climate. At the least this applies to conflicts where one's own country is actively involved.

In wartime, the entanglement of a society in the war typically triggers certain social psychological processes in its members. These processes involve cognitive and emotional changes that diminish the chances for a realistic and self-critical evaluation of one's own actions and respect for the rights and aims of the opponents (ASPR, 2003). Unless these social psychological processes are not consciously reflected on and deconstructed, journalists – as members of their society – also undergo these changes. As a consequence, their conflict coverage is likely to be correspondingly biased. The change and convergence of the public climate in wartime is typically accompanied by negative sanctions for journalists who deviate from the public and journalistic mainstream (Bläsi, 2004, 2006). Thus, the prospects for balanced and unbiased coverage of the opponent and for criticism of their own side are reduced even more.

In contrast, the public climate and the closely linked behavior of the audience carry a different meaning for conflict coverage when one's own country is not directly involved in a conflict. In this case an increase in public awareness is more likely to go along with an unbiased attitude towards the conflict parties. In sum, the involvement or non-involvement of one's country can reverse the chances for peace journalism if we look at respectively nonviolent and violent conflicts. While in nonviolent conflicts the chances for peace journalism increase if one's country is involved and decrease if one's country is not involved, it is exactly the other way around in violent conflicts.

4. Preconditions of news production in the aftermath of violent conflicts

Table 3 shows how the preconditions of news production affect the chances for peace journalism in the aftermath of violent conflicts.

Preconditions of news production	Features facilitating peace journalism	Features hindering peace journalism
Journalistic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time for thorough investigation and background coverage • Diminished orientation to classical news criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest of editorial departments decreases • Decreasing allocation of financial and personnel resources
Individual characteristics of journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly correspondents with extensive knowledge of the country and its people • Presumably more journalists who are interested in long-term processes, specifically in the postwar development of the conflict parties, the society and its individual members 	
Lobbying, propaganda, information management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in war propaganda • In the case of an ongoing peace process, political information management focuses on overcoming prejudices and the demonization of the other side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of peace propaganda, of downplaying still existing differences, of ignoring traumas and the long-term damage that war has left behind
Situation on-site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political change and trust building usually lead to considerably improved working conditions for journalists 	
Public climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to peaceful conflict resolution • Peace initiatives are now presented in a positive way, serving as examples for others • No sanctions for journalists who report about the peace process, because they are now back in the mainstream of coverage 	
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to intense coverage during periods of violent conflict, the audience is sensitized to and for some time interested in further developments • If the audience's country has been involved in conflict, a change in politics and public discourse gradually increases openness in the individual recipient for solution-oriented coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the audience's country has not been involved in the conflict: • How long the audience will stay interested in post-war developments is open • Possibly after a while the audience may become satiated by coverage of this specific conflict and turn its attention to another conflict area^a • Thus, the time-frame for solution-oriented coverage that can reach a broad audience might be limited

a. At the end of the 1990s, for example, the German media audience apparently experienced satiety with respect to reportage on the Balkan states after years of intensive coverage of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia. Today, the German public's interest in current developments in the Balkan states seems rather low. However, besides other factors, this might also be a result of the prevailing sort of post-war coverage.

Table 3: Facilitating and hindering preconditions of news production in the aftermath of violent conflicts

After a violent conflict, the preconditions for news production appear comparatively auspicious regarding the implementation of solution-oriented conflict coverage. In this conflict stage, editorial demands more often permit free space for in-depth investigation and the depiction of processes and developments. The time and space available for conflict coverage, as well as the allocated personnel and financial resources, are reduced following the end of a war, but for quite some time they remain above the pre-war level.

The type of correspondent who reports from a postwar area presumably resembles the correspondent in a not-yet escalated conflict, possessing extensive specific conflict competence and interest in long-term developments. The information management of conflict parties and the mainstream of public discourse now aims at de-escalation, trust building and reconciliation with the former enemy. Hence, the chances are good for a kind of conflict coverage that humanizes all sides, focuses on the suffering and harmful effects of the war for all sides, reports on peace initiatives and reconciliation perspectives and points out the benefits of a jointly created future.

In this conflict stage solution-oriented conflict coverage can play an important role by facilitating the peace process in a proactive manner whilst not playing down existing differences or endorsing a naive "peace propaganda" that calls on the

conflict parties to reconcile with each other without recognizing the complexity of the conflict.

Due to intensive reporting in wartime, audience interest in the course of the conflict is probably more marked than before the outbreak of war. It seems that changes in the political climate and the reorientation of public discourse will step-by-step increase the acceptance of solution-oriented conflict coverage – even if beforehand one's own country was involved in an antagonistically conceptualized and highly escalated conflict. Putting to rest possible doubts, recent studies have showed that the media are not only capable of producing solution-oriented coverage, but have already done so on a variety of occasions (Annabring, Bläsi & Möckel, 2004; Bläsi & Jaeger, 2004; Bläsi, Jaeger, Kempf, Kondopoulou & Paskoski, 2005; Bläsi, Jaeger, Kempf & Spohrs, 2005; Jaeger, 2004, 2005). However, the realization of postwar solution-oriented coverage is limited, inasmuch as the patterns of interpretation prevalent during a war usually cannot be very easily changed. This is especially true for conflicts where the wartime public climate was built upon societal beliefs associated with intractable negative cognitions and emotions towards the opponent (Bar-Tal, 2000).

4.1 Case study of postwar coverage: Greek media after the fall of Milosevic in 2000

Accordingly, historical examples show that up to now attempts at constructive postwar coverage remained mostly ambivalent, inasmuch as solution-oriented elements of reporting went together with persisting stereotypes of the other side. An instructive example is the Greek media discourse after the fall of former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. During the Kosovo war in 1999, Greek media reportage was clear-cut: pro-Serbia, anti-NATO (Kondopoulou, 2002). With respect to the Serbian people and Milosevic, the Greek media expressed nearly unconditional solidarity. After the Serbian people overturned their own government, Greek media discourse had to be repositioned. The Greek media managed to develop a constructive stance towards the changing political climate in Serbia, inasmuch as solidarity with the Serbian population was maintained, but solidarity with Milosevic and the former government was abandoned. While the Serbian people were followed sympathetically on their path of democratic transformation, Milosevic was assigned the role of the despotic ruler who had inflicted great harm on his people. On the other hand, the Greek media could only very hesitantly distance themselves from the previous anti-NATO discourse and the conceptualization of the "malevolent Albanians." Especially when conflicts between the different ethnic groups re-emerged, Greek media discourse quickly returned to the old patterns of black-and-white coverage (see Bläsi, Jaeger, Kempf, Kondopoulou & Paskoski, 2005).

5. Implications

If the prerequisites of news production vary in the ways described above, depending on the conflict stage and the degree of involvement of one's own country, this clearly has implications for the practice of peace journalism.

5.1 Implications for the individual journalist

First, these implications can be considered from the perspective of the individual journalist. A journalist striving to do peace journalism should take into account that his efforts face different preconditions depending on the stage of a conflict. He should be aware that the chances of realizing a certain story are strongly influenced by these preconditions. The influences are noticeable throughout the entire chain of news production, news publication and news reception: They concern the possibilities of investigation and information gathering, of arousing interest in the editorial staff at home and of influencing public opinion.

The issue of changing prerequisites is nothing fundamentally new for experienced journalists. In principle, the same applies to a journalist trying to report on the machinations of investment bankers, to name a current and topical example. Before the worldwide financial crisis there were very different preconditions for producing news about the "activities of investment bankers" (for example, in terms of allocated resources, available broadcast time or number of lines, public climate, audience interest) compared to the preconditions at the zenith of the crisis or in the aftermath of the crisis.

Thus, we can act on the assumption that journalists are generally used to handling such changing preconditions. Nevertheless, it is certainly advantageous if journalists reporting from conflict areas have extensive knowledge about the specific preconditions of news production in times of escalating conflicts and war. Knowledge of possible constraints and hindrances constitutes the basis for developing creative counter-strategies (for a synopsis of possible counter-strategies see Bläsi, 2006).

5.2 Implications for the implementation of peace journalism in general

Besides the practical implications for individual journalists, the changing preconditions of news production entail more gen-

eral theoretical considerations concerning the implementation of peace journalism. In the academic discussion of how to put the ideas of peace journalism into practice, so far the significance of differing preconditions in differing conflict stages has scarcely been addressed. Taking for granted that these preconditions are indeed different depending on the conflict stage and the involvement of one's own country, one can ask if there might be both favorable time frames and rather adverse time-frames for the implementation of peace journalism.

As has been shown above, each conflict stage – nonviolent conflict, violent conflict and the aftermath of violent conflict – is accompanied by both specific facilitating and specific hindering preconditions. Therefore it cannot be expected that there will be any time frame that is clearly the most favorable one to put peace journalism into practice. Apart from that, it is understood that implementing peace journalism is not a matter only of identifying a particular most suitable conflict stage in order to concentrate all efforts on this stage. It is self-evident that the relevant considerations have to concern all conflict phases and possible levels of conflict intensity.

However, it seems that the focus of implementation has been much more on violent conflict phases than on nonviolent ones. When researchers and practitioners argue about the chances of peace journalism and talk about why the idea of peace journalism is so urgently needed and why it will undoubtedly fail, the subject matter at stake is usually war.

In the following, I will argue in favor of changing the main focus of consideration towards nonviolent conflict stages. The empirical work of the Constance Peace Research Group has shown that elements of peace journalism have already been realized in postwar periods (Projektgruppe Friedensforschung Konstanz, 2005). Although studies in this field are too rare to draw final conclusions, such constructive approaches are probably more likely to be found in times of nonviolent conflict and in the aftermath of violent conflicts. This is at least suggested if we compare the results of the rather small body of research on the media coverage of nonviolent conflict stages with the results of the large body of research on the media coverage of wars (e.g., Carruthers, 2000; Eilders and Lüter, 2000; Small, 1994; Taylor, 1998). An explanation for this phenomenon might be that for several reasons (some of them named above) journalists have to work harder to do peace journalism within a war discourse than within a peace discourse. Comparing the characteristics of war and peace discourses, Wilhelm Kempf has concluded that solution-oriented conflict coverage can become widely accepted only in the aftermath of violent conflict (ASPR, 2003), thus pointing to the crucial role of public climate and the audience, to use the terminology presented above.

In the light of these findings, it seems rather surprising that efforts to put peace journalism into practice should start with a focus on wartime. To illustrate this point I will refer to the clearly different but still related topic of conflict intervention and violence prevention at the interpersonal level. It is clear that we need concepts, methods and techniques for direct intervention in violent conflicts, but at the same time it is indispensable to take measures in the field of violence prevention, e.g., to create arrangements and learning opportunities that reduce the probability of future violence. This is where a focus on nonviolent stages is crucial.

Learning from programs of violence prevention would mean to acknowledge that people can much more easily change their attitudes and behavior in times that are free of acute threats and fear than in times when they experience massive physical or mental threats.

The analogy I see with respect to the implementation of peace journalism is that a society, with all its subsystems, is much more likely to be prepared to accept the ideas and practices of peace journalism in a nonviolent conflict stage than in wartime. Hence it might be reasonable to focus more seriously on the implementation of peace journalism in nonviolent conflict stages than has been the case so far. I conclude that the chance to find exemplars of peace journalism in the next war increases almost proportionally with the occurrence and scope of peace journalism that can be observed in a society in peacetime before that next war. This is not to say that there is any kind of automatic link in the sense that when peace journalism is practiced in nonviolent periods it will also be practiced in wartime. The social psychological processes that take place in a society when it resorts to war cannot simply be switched off, and obviously there are still other hindrances, as described above. However, the assumption is that the chances for peace journalism to be practiced in wartime could be increased if journalists, editors, the public and the individual recipient could get used to it in nonviolent conflict stages, i.e., if the idea of peace journalism can be anchored in a society in peaceful times. In contrast, it is much more difficult to anchor this idea in wartime.

Taking into account that the still small community of practitioners and scholars striving for a broader implementation of peace journalism has only limited resources, it might be desirable to prioritize future efforts. For the reasons mentioned in this article, in my view practitioners and scholars would be well advised to give priority to the implementation of peace journalism in nonviolent conflict stages.

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