

Global and local journalism – and the Norwegian collective imagination of ‘post-conflict’ Colombia

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Introduction

Over the past 25 years, Norway has been engaged in various peace processes around the world, normally in the role of a ‘facilitator’ or ‘neutral mediator’. As a result, Norwegian foreign diplomacy has been credited with a number of international successes. Moreover, as might be expected, Norwegian media have not remained unaffected by the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The media have reported on efforts to facilitate peace in places as diverse as Sri Lanka, the Middle East, South Sudan, Cyprus, Guatemala and Colombia. This chapter seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between Norwegian foreign policy and Norwegian journalism. In particular, it will focus on aspects of the production of collective imagination of war and Norwegian understandings of how peaceful transitions from ‘conflict’ to ‘post-conflict’ can come about.

We know from research on journalism that not all voices are equally likely to be heard in the news media. Voices and perspectives from non-elites and from countries outside the global North are being systematically filtered out, misrepresented or misunderstood. The analysis of missing sources and perspectives is a fundamental aspect of source criticism (Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Simonson, 2013). A critical journalist and/or researcher should always ask herself how new information and alternative perspectives could alter the interpretation and understanding of a particular phenomenon. How could excluded voices affect the collective imagination we produce on causes for war and conflict and the possible paths to a peaceful future?

The ongoing peace process in Colombia presents us with a fine example of how to better understand the relationship between Norwegian diplomacy and journalism. The Colombian peace process could help us evaluate journalism as social activity capable of producing information that can facilitate an independent and critical public reflection on the engagement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This investigation begins with the killing of two unarmed indigenous guards by a group of guerrilla soldiers in Toribio, an autonomous indigenous community in Cauca, Colombia in

October 2014. It proceeds by analysing the causes for and consequences of the killings in a local and regional context, before moving on to a brief description of the many ways this violent crime was reported around the world. Although the conflict between the guerrilla organisation and the autonomous indigenous communities has many important consequences for the ongoing peace process and Norwegian facilitation in Colombia, Norwegian media generally were not capable of producing independent quality journalism on the significance and meaning of the killings in relation to the conflict and the peace process in Colombia.

In this chapter, I explore how the global media made sense of the assassinations in Toribio. This led to an exploration of the social imagination of peace that drives Norwegian mediation efforts in Colombia. Finally, I ask how these social imaginaries contribute to Norwegian journalism on Colombia.

Assassination and justice in Toribio: Media coverage around the world

Activist journalists connected to the indigenous organisations in the area spread news of the assassination of indigenous leaders in Toribio rapidly and effectively. The largest organisation, El Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC)¹ connects well over a hundred local autonomous administrative areas and can count on dozens of indigenous activist journalists (depending on the definition of ‘activist journalist’) to produce and distribute information on current issues. The assassinations took place in the early hours on 5 November 2014. On that day, the national indigenous organisation, La Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC)² had already run a piece on its webpage condemning the assassinations.³ This article contained detailed (and seemingly very reliable) information about what had taken place – it included the names of the victims and considerable background on the reason they had been assassinated. The blame was put squarely on the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (FARC),⁴ the largest of the Marxist guerrilla organisations in Colombia.

Almost immediately, traditional and indigenous media in Colombia put the events in historical and social context: for decades, faced with increasing pressure from the Colombian army, paramilitaries and left wing guerrillas vying for control over a strategically important region, indigenous organisations have been struggling to maintain autonomy in the region. As the negotiation between the Colombian government and the FARC in Cuba entered a decisive phase after 2012, the armed parties rushed in to convert territorial ambitions and claims into ‘facts on the ground’ in Cauca and elsewhere. FARC has long claimed to have a particular

role to play in the region. In fact, the Colombian Communist Party, often seen as a precursor to FARC, had been an early instigator of indigenous organising, dating back almost to the Russian revolution of 1917. Over the years, a significant number of teenagers, mostly indigenous, have joined the FARC as guerrilla soldiers. Nonetheless, the Constitution of 1991, which came as a result of a previous round of peace negotiations, grants the peoples of the region autonomy based on indigenous worldviews and ways of organising. Paradoxically, according to Colombian indigenous organisations, the ongoing peace process in Cuba – facilitated by Norway – threatens to undermine essential aspects of the previous peace agreements such as the collective right of indigenous peoples to resource-rich territories.

For these and a number of other reasons, global media found the assassinations in Toribio intriguing and important. A striking feature of the global media coverage is the many variations in frames and perspectives. Journalists and editors interpreted the news according to differing horizons of understanding available to them. Subsequently, in moving from an interpretation of the information of the killings to journalism based on that information, journalists around the world have sought ways to present the news within frames and existing narratives suited to their particular imagined audiences.

The South African *Pretoria News* of 7 November 2014 reported that the men had been killed in revenge for removing a FARC propaganda poster, and quoted the Colombian interior minister condemning ‘this indescribable act’. For the Malaysian *Utusan Borneo* of 10 November, the rich and colourful photos of the traditional indigenous procession and burial a couple of days later seemed to be the key aspect – a large photo of grieving faces and flags is accompanied by a short text explaining that FARC was responsible – it is hard not to sympathise with the anguished family members and friends of the dead men. The *China Post* ran a similar short story the following day, 11 November. The Kuwaiti *Arab Times* of 11 November informed its readers that unarmed indigenous guards had arrested those responsible for the killings. The guerrilla soldiers were found guilty by a traditional tribunal and sentenced to ‘40 to 60 years in jail and 20 lashes’, according to the *Arab Times*. BBC Online took full advantage of the possibility of linking the news of this event to stories the BBC had published previously. By following the links on the website, a pattern of repeated threats, violence and other forms of human rights abuse against indigenous activists emerges to show that this is not an isolated event and must be understood as part of a pattern, in historical context. At the same time, the BBC raised a different and equally interesting perspective: ‘The United Nations says it is concerned by the verdict handed down by an indigenous court

in Colombia to seven members of the FARC rebel group' (11 November 2014). The article is illustrated by a photo of seven handcuffed guerrilla soldiers appearing before some 3,000 members of the Toribio community. Other international media follow up on this aspect, focusing on the human rights of those sentenced for the killings – which indeed opens up a potentially rich terrain of reflection on the relationship between collective rights (as manifested in UN convention ILO 169, for instance) and individual human rights.

The intention here is not to identify, decode and describe the totality of existing frames, narratives or discourses found in the immense global media reporting on the assassinations in Toribio but, rather more modestly, to document and indicate some of the many very readable and informative ways of reporting on the issue found in the international media. A substantial range of options is available. The conclusion so far is no more than to note that media in very diverse localities did find ways to make the assassinations relevant for local audiences. All these different ways of covering the issue added something to the understanding of current events in Colombia in general and the ongoing peace process in particular; bringing new insights to the collective imagination of Colombian society and to audiences' horizons of knowledge. And they provide the background for an informed reflection on Norwegian journalism about peace issues in Colombia.

A short note on methodology

Building on Roy Bhaskar's and Norman Fairclough's (Fairclough, 2005) versions of critical discourse analysis, this research starts with defining a social problem: while Norwegian institutions do play a role in defining a future Colombian society, a Norwegian audience has only limited access to quality journalism critically and independently evaluating Norwegian institutions in a Colombia context.

I have chosen an explorative methodology for this study. This means that the research has moved through various phases where results have led to new questions and more investigation and search for sources of information. This qualitative design has been chosen in order to capture a broad diversity of perspectives, frames and discourses with a strong emphasis on hermeneutics (Gadamer and Silverman 1991).

The first step in the investigation process was to document indigenous media reporting online on the assassinations in Toribio. These organisations largely reproduce and disseminate articles produced by collectives of activist journalists operating from within local autonomous indigenous structures (through global networks of indigenous organisations and supporters,

these articles are likely to find a large and concerned audience). The second step in the investigation was to document the information disseminated by the FARC rebels, both online through FARC's own channels of information and through statements and interviews given to traditional media.

The third step was to employ Library Press Display to select relevant articles from 2,200 newspapers in 58 countries. To avoid ending up with an overwhelming load of information, I limited the search to articles dealing directly with the assassinations in Toribio. This global search resulted in a selection of 18 relevant articles on the case in Toribio: six from Colombia and 12 from various other places around the world. The selection is not designed to be representative and the results will not be used to speculate on universal frames, narratives or discourses but, rather, to document some of the existing diversity of journalistic reporting on the issue. Documenting diversity globally will help us to imagine how Norwegian journalism on the topic might look.

I have also employed Retriever, an online searchable database containing most Norwegian newspapers and online journalistic media to get an overview of Norwegian coverage of war and peace processes in Colombia since 1990. The total number is too large to handle with qualitative methodologies, but the overview helped me to choose the most relevant articles for a qualitative reading. In the end, the most fruitful step in the investigation of Norwegian media coverage proved to be the coverage in the two main television channels (NRK and TV2), including their respective webpages. With the kind assistance of the archives of NRK and TV2, I received a full list of all television reporting on Colombia and the peace process since the start of the latest round of talks in 2012.

According to critical realists such as Fairclough and Bhaskar, a major challenge in critical discourse analysis is to move from the empirical realm of descriptive documentation of events – for instance, what happened in Toribio – to the underlying natural, social, political, cultural and economic causes which operate in the realms of the actual and real and are therefore not directly accessible to us. Underlying causes must be sought through hermeneutical interpretation and theoretical reflection, which requires deep knowledge and first-hand experience. In the case of Toribio, it is therefore relevant here to mention that I first visited the village in 1996 as a journalist. I have since returned several times to Colombia and the Cauca region, and have interviewed and held discussions with a large number of both guerrilla and indigenous leaders. I am currently involved in a university project with

educational activities and research in Cauca, and regularly interact with ten Master's students from the indigenous media and a similar group of indigenous educators at Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural (UAIIN) in Popayan, Colombia.

Nevertheless, an interpretive process will always depend on the possibilities and limitations of the researcher and his or her horizon of knowledge and experience. In order to enrich the interpretation of the Norwegian coverage of the Colombian peace process, I have involved a group of Norwegian journalists from *VG*, *Klassekampen*, *Aftenposten*, NRK and TV2. The journalists and editors are all experienced and well-informed about Norwegian foreign policy and international relations in general – but they should not be considered to be ‘Colombia experts’ (if such a thing exists in Norway). Instead, they belong to a relatively small group of journalists who are the most likely candidates for proposing to produce, or agreeing to finance, journalism about Norwegian efforts to facilitate peace in Colombia. In my view, they are well placed to reflect constructively on structural constraints on journalism and on the possibilities of creative and critical reportage. It is hoped that by interviews and by drawing on the experience of seasoned foreign reporters, the interpretation of Norwegian coverage will become more robust (Ritchie et al. 2013: 182). The interviews have been open and qualitative, without predefined questions. Typically, the dialogue began with a general discussion on media coverage of the global South and Norwegian foreign policy, before the questions turned more directly to the Colombian peace process. I normally showed some of the reports published by the BBC on the assassinations in Toribio, inviting comments on the reports. Are they newsworthy from a Norwegian perspective? How could the issue have been made interesting for a Norwegian audience? The interviews ended with a discussion on the possibilities of the journalist or the editor getting funding for quality journalism of the sort produced by BBC.

I learned during the interviews that it can be difficult to make journalists and editors speak and reflect freely if they feel they are chosen to represent a newspaper or broadcaster, so I agreed not to use any quotes that could connect what was said directly to any particular news medium (a list of interviewees is, however, provided at the end of the chapter).

Norwegian imagination of peace and diplomacy – from Gandhian to pragmatic perspectives

The question of peace, peace negotiations, peace processes and peace agreements looms in the background of the stories told on the Toribio assassinations. In a Norwegian context,

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has had a strong influence on how peace is conceived and thus how a peaceful society can be imagined to come about. In the 1930s, for example, the first Norwegian university professor of philosophy, Arne Næss, introduced Gandhian perspectives on peace to a Norwegian audience (Gjefsen, 2012). Through Næss and others, Gandhian understandings of peace found a pivotal place within the Norwegian collective imagination of what peace is.

From a Gandhian perspective, peace is much more than ‘no war’; peace should also be seen to include freedom from hunger, poverty, exclusion and various forms of structural violence. Further, Gandhi’s philosophy and practice of nonviolent resistance rejects separating means and ends, and violence can therefore not be used to obtain peace.

Although Gandhi’s philosophy has influenced Norwegian understandings of peace, there are also other, more pragmatic, perspectives. On several occasions the Nobel Peace Prize, for instance, has been awarded to political and military leaders who have employed violent means to achieve their goals. And while one tradition within the Norwegian collective imagination of what it means to be a Norwegian includes a vision of Norway as a particularly peaceful society, a tradition which at least can be followed back to the 1890s and the struggle for independence from Sweden, the Norwegian foreign policy after WWII has been predominantly pragmatic. Norway is considered a reliable member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and has loyally supported NATO’s engagements in Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere.

A recurrent theme in the literature on Norwegian international engagement is precisely this seemingly unresolvable conflict of being caught somewhere between what appears to be altruistic engagement for peace and justice in ‘faraway places’ such as Guatemala, Colombia, Sudan or Sri Lanka and egotistic maximisation of national interest (Dale, 2000; Lange, Helge, & Øyvind, 2009; Leira & Borchgrevink, 2007). Some, for instance Norwegian researcher Terje Tvedt, has described the resulting foreign policy regime as both egotistic and altruistic at the same time, because even acts of outwardly pure goodness in reality must be understood in a realist context of national interests (Tvedt, 2004, 2006). How will altruistic acts of goodness further Norwegian national interests to be seen internationally as a particularly peaceful nation?

Practical experience with war and peace mediation has shaped and formed a Norwegian model for this type of international engagement. Experiences during the Guatemalan civil war

in the 1980s and 1990s had a particularly strong influence on the official Norwegian discourse of peace ‘facilitation’ (Krøvel, 2000; Nissen, 2011). From documents in the archive of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is clear that much Norwegian activity in the 1980s was based on a Gandhian understanding. Norwegian NGOs worked on the assumption that it was necessary to first do something about the causes of war, which were understood to be related to extreme poverty, social exclusion, structural violence, racism and so on. In Guatemala, the NGOs therefore supported housing projects for the urban and rural poor, supported health clinics and built schools for Mayan children. However, while the NGOs felt that these activities were important and valuable, the Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Peoples Aid and others gradually came to the conclusion that the war itself undermined the efforts to remove structural violence and exclusion as causes for the civil war. In Guatemala, the 1980s in particular was an extremely violent period in the long history of civil war. Hundreds of villages, mostly indigenous, sometimes with housing projects and health clinics, were destroyed by the counter insurgency and hundreds of thousands families fled for their lives. Understandably, Norwegian NGOs felt like Sisyphus, forever destined to be rolling an immense boulder up a hill. Ending the war thus came to be seen as a pre-condition for doing something about the underlying causes of the war.

At the same time, a reassessment of Norwegian foreign policy took place in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. In a white paper from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1989), the then foreign minister, Thorvald Stoltenberg, redefined Norwegian interests from focusing mainly on Europe and regional security issues to a more global perspective. According to this way of thinking, Norwegian wellbeing was increasingly linked to global security issues, global health issues, environmental issues and rights issues. Others closely related with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance Jan Egeland, connected Norwegian security in a globalised world and peace and conflict issues even more explicitly. According to Egeland, a superpower would not be a very effective mediator in wars and civil wars around the world because it would inevitably be associated with colonial histories of various types and vulnerable to the suspicion of serving neoimperial interests. A small state such as Norway, in contrast, could be much more effective because it would be seen as an honest broker (Egeland, 1988).

This argument gained influence for two main reasons. The first was because Egeland (as many others from Norwegian NGOs and academia) was recruited to a top position in the state department. As secretary of state in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Egeland was in a position

to convert his theory into praxis, and, indeed, he was involved in efforts to facilitate a number of peace processes, most notably in Guatemala and the Middle East. The second was because of the apparent success of the 'Oslo Back Channel', which led to an agreement between Israel and the PLO in 1993. The signing of the Oslo Accords was interpreted by many, internationally and in Norway, as a massive diplomatic success for Norway and Norwegian diplomacy (Bauck & Omer, 2013; Waage, 2000).

The engagement in peace processes around the world encountered resistance from hard realists inside and outside the state department. The early 'successes', such as the signing of the Oslo Agreement (1993) and the peace accords in Guatemala (1996), convinced many of the importance and value of such engagements but the resulting strategies for Norwegian engagement in such processes should nonetheless be seen as a compromise between realists – mostly concerned with Norwegian security interests – and a more idealist camp which saw engagement for peace as a social responsibility and a valuable activity in itself.

This compromise was hammered out in the form of strategies and policies, and came to be known as 'the Norwegian model'. It is noteworthy for some of its particular features. First, the model combines efforts from NGOs and state departments to the extent that many people have been circulating between the two (Tvedt, 2004, 2006, 2008). Quite often, Norwegian NGOs will be financed directly by the state department to implement activities within the overall framework of Norwegian engagement. Sometimes, the state department prefers to have NGOs deal with activities that would be too sensitive from a diplomacy perspective, or might cause diplomatic problems. Second, the Norwegian strategy is to have the fighting parties sign a binding agreement of some sort, which presumably will begin a process of mutual interaction and interdependence and which will lead to mutual understanding. In the talks between Israel and PLO in 1993, for instance, the most difficult issues, such as the return of refugees and land reform, were left to be solved at a later stage. The most urgent issue, then, is to have 'no war' so that international society and local parties can begin to do something about the underlying causes of the war. Third, based on this line of reasoning, it is of great importance to talk with 'everyone', even those labelled terrorists in the international community. From a Norwegian perspective, mediators must pay particular attention to those who command the armed groups. At crucial points in the peace processes, the state department have invited the two strongest armed parties to secret talks in tranquil surroundings in Norway. The purpose has been not only to facilitate talks, but also to build

trust and, perhaps, friendly relationships between the enemies on the battlefield (Krøvel, 2011).

The Norwegian model has historically given priority to activities aimed at the military leaders of both sides. From a Gandhian perspective, a number of problems emerge. Gandhian peace scholars, for instance Johan Galtung and Jake Lynch, insist on not reducing the conflict to a war between two parties (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Instead, mediators and journalists alike should seek to understand and engage with a broad variety of involved parties as a necessary background for understanding the many complex underlying causes of conflict formation.

While the Norwegian method came about as a pragmatic response to the harsh realities ‘on the ground’ in Guatemala and the Middle East, it has become increasingly vulnerable to criticism for focusing excessively on military and political leaders, thereby enabling these elites to define the parameters of future nation-building processes. An increasing number of Norwegian scholars have criticised aspects of Norwegian efforts in the Middle East (Waage, 2000), Sri Lanka (Sørbrø, 2011), Sudan (Piene, 2014), Guatemala (Krøvel, 1999; Nissen, 2011) and elsewhere for failing to lay the groundwork for more peaceful societies to emerge.

Social imagination of conflict and peace processes

In the remainder of the chapter, I will employ the term collective or social ‘imagination’ in order to discuss how experience and knowledge are being employed in order to respond, react, transform and transcend crisis or war (Hall & Lamont, 2013). My use of the term encompasses the horizons of knowledge which make interpretation and understanding possible (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991), but offers in addition a terminology to discuss more specifically how relationships between causes and effects are imagined. It also underlines the social or collective aspects of producing such imagination, and thus invites analysis of the contributions from different groups or individuals – for instance, diplomats, NGO representatives, journalists, media and academics. The social imagination resulting from these various contributions cannot be reduced to the sum of individual contributions. Nonetheless, it is necessary and valuable to study contributions from one group or institution – for instance, journalists or the media – to the collective process of producing a Norwegian social imagination of peace and peace processes. The relationships between social imagination and particular contributions should, however, be seen as interrelated in the sense that contributions build on existing social imagination at the same time as they contribute to developing and changing them.

Existing theories on Norwegian journalism are relevant as a starting point for a reflection on the contributions from journalism to social imagination of the peace processes in Colombia. Tvedt (2004) has demonstrated the close relationship and interdependency between the Norwegian model and Norwegian journalism on development issues. Norwegian journalism about the world outside Europe and North America depends to a large extent on support from state institutions, while individual journalists often circulate between the media, state institutions and NGOs. Elisabeth Eide and Anne Hege Simonsen argue that the world is being 'constructed from home', meaning that the ways the media report on global issues are designed to conform to already existing Norwegian worldviews – news from around the world is being domesticated (Eide & Simonsen, 2008). Anne Karin Sæther shows how media coverage of Latin America has decreased over the last decades and is now mostly restricted to a few limited topics (Sæther, 2007). The Norwegian media coverage of the Guatemalan peace process conforms to these general trends: the focus was on Norwegian activities and Norwegian mediators. Norwegians, or those closely related to the Norwegians, were the leading sources cited by journalists. Norwegian journalists in general did not question or challenge the analysis and framing of the conflict presented by Norwegian sources in the state department and the NGOs involved in the peace process. Media coverage was entirely subsumed within the dominating narratives and discourses produced by the state department and the NGOs (Krøvel, 2011). Only much later did a few critical voices begin to be heard.

Indigenous media and the FARC: framing, narrative and horizon

The regional indigenous media related the news from Toribio as an episode in a longer culturally embedded narrative of indigenous struggle for autonomy, dignity and peace against repression and external dominance. The main theme of the narratives is a collective will to survive as a people by constructing collective autonomy. This collective will is sometimes formulated as a right enshrined in international conventions such as the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 (1989) and The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), but is always reflected in a persistent emphasis on the intimate relationship between individual and community identity and autonomy. The news is embedded in histories of indigenous culture, society and the struggle of previous generations for identity and autonomy. As Rappaport (1990) has shown, these histories are malleable and living; they are adapted and reconstructed to fit the needs of new eras as they are being retold by new generations. The indigenous media online tell numerous stories of heroic struggle and martyrdom. It is not surprising that the assassinations in Toribio are told within this culturally

embedded narrative – as are countless other politically motivated killings of indigenous leaders in Cauca over the last three to four decades. The perpetrators come from different sectors of Colombian society, the Colombian army, right-wing paramilitaries and various leftist guerrilla organisations, but the motive, according to the indigenous media, is always to break the will to collective autonomy in order to militarily dominate a region which is rich in natural resources as well as strategically important for the armed groups.

However, the killing of the unarmed guards in Toribio resonates with a second strong narrative with a shorter history within the indigenous movement. As the story is told by indigenous media and activists alike, the indigenous movement has armed itself to defend indigenous autonomy at many points in history but most recently in the 1980s (Supelano, 2010, 2015). This most recent experience with armed resistance, although initiated by indigenous activists and closely associated with some sectors of the indigenous movement, leads to a number unforeseen problems, most notably a tendency to increase the influence of military commanders over the indigenous movement. Increased influence of military commander resulted in stronger focus on military needs and considerations at the expense of the longer-term social, cultural and political interests of the indigenous peoples. The armed resistance thus led to processes that, over time, shifted the internal balance of power within the indigenous movement, and civilian leaders grew increasingly sceptical about the ‘armed method’. Around 1990, the armed organisation and the indigenous movement joined ongoing talks between the Colombian government and several Marxist guerrilla organisations (the FARC and ELN did not participate). The talks led to peace agreements with a number of armed insurgent organisations, among them Movimiento Armado Quintin Lame, which again was enshrined in a new constitution. This earlier peace process granted the indigenous peoples of Colombia substantial rights over political, social and cultural matters. Again, not surprisingly, the indigenous media interpreted the killing of the unarmed guards in Toribio as yet another attempt by an armed organisation to demolish the autonomy granted in the peace process of the early 90s. The killings were seen not only as an attack on autonomy but also on the principle of peaceful resolution of conflicts. In the understanding of the indigenous movement, the FARC sees its interests best served by reigniting violence and intensifying conflict in a region which had grown more peaceful.

A third theme is also visible in the indigenous media – a method for nonviolent resistance. Since the demobilisation of the armed indigenous insurgents, the indigenous leaders have become vulnerable to violent attacks, which have led to a search for alternative mechanisms

to protect indigenous activists. International solidarity has had some effect, but the indigenous communities have, by and large, had to find ways of defending themselves. The unarmed indigenous guards play a pivotal role in the defence of local communities and leaders and have become something indigenous peoples of the region feel proud about. In reportages in mainstream media⁵ and documentaries produced by national and international media,⁶ the bravery of the guards and the nonviolent method itself have been turned into models for admiration and emulation. The killing of two unarmed guards is therefore interpreted as a deliberate attack on nonviolence as a method.

These three themes – histories of struggle for autonomy, rights enshrined in already existing peace agreement and nonviolent method – come together in the indigenous critique against the ongoing peace process between the FARC and the government, supported by Norway and taking place in Cuba. From an indigenous perspective, the suspicion is that both the Colombian government and FARC see their interests best served by rolling back indigenous autonomy and territorial rights. Being excluded from participating in the Cuba talks further stokes suspicion among indigenous organisations. They fear that the assassinations in Toribio are part of a campaign by FARC, which will create ‘facts on the ground’ and lead to territorial hegemony in the region, something which seems to resonate well with FARC’s strategy at the negotiating table. FARC seems to envisage a post-conflict Colombia where FARC and its demobilised guerrilla soldiers are granted communal rights to govern a substantial number of territories, some of which overlap with indigenous territories. Indigenous activists see this as a danger to existing autonomy and a source of perpetual future conflict.

The indigenous media, then, explicitly link the events in Toribio to the ongoing peace process between FARC and the government. The peace process is seen as inseparable from the military strategy on the ground and as causing military commanders to act against civilian indigenous leaders to strengthen FARC’s negotiating position. The event in Toribio is also explicitly connected to upholding the promises of previous peace agreements and directly interpreted as an attack on nonviolence as a method.

FARC runs a fairly advanced information machinery, including a webpage publishing fairly well-written articles.⁷ From the perspective of the FARC, the events in Toribio and the issue of indigenous autonomy look very different from the version told by indigenous media. FARC has historically been closely associated with the Colombian Communist Party, which has a long history of organising among the rural poor, including indigenous communities in

Cauca. In fact, a number of revered early leaders of the indigenous movement in Cauca were educated by Communist organisers (Rappaport, 1990). The very lively organisational life we observe among indigenous peoples today owes at least some of its success to the courageous and persistent labour of members of the Communist party. The FARC still believes it exerts considerable influence in the region and it rejects being supplanted by indigenous organisations – and it also claims to speak for all working men and women in Colombia in the class struggle against capital. According to this view, there should not be any distinction between workers of different races or ethnicities and permanent special rights to indigenous peoples might produce divisions and conflicts within the band of working men and women. Instead, labourers of the world should unite under the leadership of the Communist Party in order to prevail in the struggle against capital.

In the demands presented at the negotiations in Cuba, FARC raises the issue of indigenous poverty, racism and structural exclusion but indigenous peoples are not given special treatment – rather, they are mentioned as only one of many groups suffering repression and exclusion. Structural violence against indigenous peoples is framed as one of many aspects of capitalist exploitation. The solution would be to abolish the capitalist system, not to introduce permanent special rights for one group.

Covering Toribio as something more than an episode

Making sense of the assassinations in Toribio is a demanding task that is understandably difficult for a journalist who is not intimately familiar with local context. An outside observer would have to draw on knowledge and insights from various disciplines in addition to having a solid grasp of Marxism-Leninism and indigenous cultures. Most media outside Colombia limit themselves to mentioning only the immediately and directly accessible aspects of the event. Many focus on the anguish and pain felt by those left behind, accompanied by photos of grieving faces. Others highlight the combination of grief and the colourful dresses of the funeral procession. There is certainly, in the reporting from around the world, a sense of Orientalism (Said, 2003), of representing the other as very strange and different.

Among the international media observed here, the BBC, however, tries to provide some historical context to the information by providing short news items with links to other relevant news items. This opens the possibility of moving from episodic framing to thematic framing. By providing a web of links to previous news items, the BBC makes it possible for the reader to look for patterns or structural issues in the series of interlinked news items. However, the

potential for a historical understanding of the various episodes is rather shallow, as each individual news item concentrates on the visible and directly accessible, to the detriment of underlying structures and invisible causes. What emerges from reading the interlinked episodes is far from a critical history. Instead, it resembles what professional historians would call a 'chronicle' – a list of events, but lacking in analysis of deeper structures or causes. Linking various episodes does not in itself produce a fully-fledged thematic framing of the issue (Scheufele, 1999).

Toribio is not on the agenda in Norway

At first glance, Norwegian media seem to have paid significantly more attention to Colombian issues after Norway became involved in the latest round of negotiations on a peace agreement (the number of newspaper articles mentioning Colombia increased by approximately 40 per cent from 2013 to 2014). However, the number of articles mentioning FARC actually decreased after 2008. This finding indicates less media interest in the peace process than in the war, as the number of articles correlates well with spectacular and bloody events on the battlefield. It seems, then, that war and death are still strong news values in Norwegian media. Nonetheless, the Norwegian media do cover FARC and the peace process. The five non-Colombian names mentioned most often in these articles are 'Norway', 'Havanna', 'Børge Brende',⁸ 'Oslo' and 'Sri Lanka' – the dominating media frame for war and peace in Colombia is a culturally embedded Norwegian narrative, a longer history of Norwegian peace making from Guatemala and the Middle East to Sri Lanka and Colombia. The peace process is the real narrative, while other actors are ascribed to the different "act spheres" depending on the roles they are seen to play in relation to the negotiations in Cuba (Prince, 2003, p. 92). News values are attributed to events based mainly on their perceived importance in relation to the peace process.

I believe this is key to explaining the most puzzling finding in this study: from studying the Norwegian database retriever.no and the international PressReader, it is fair to conclude that Norwegian media is much more interested in Colombian affairs than are most other media – but no Norwegian newspaper has registered an article dealing with the assassinations in Toribio even though the Norwegian News Agency disseminated a piece entitled 'FARC soldiers convicted for killing Indians' ("FARC-soldater dømt for drap på indianere (FARC-soldiers convicted of killing indians)," 2014).

The Norwegian agenda as set by the media

Norwegian media do have some coverage of Colombian issues. NRK has dedicated a section online to Colombia.⁹ Five of 45 articles on nrk.no (30 September 2012 to 31 December 2014) deal with general poverty in Colombia, earthquakes and other issues not directly related to the ongoing peace process. Two or three others see current affairs through the lens of the peace process. The presidential elections in 2014, for example, were mainly interpreted in light of what they might mean for the ongoing peace process. The vast majority, however, deal directly with the negotiations in general and refer directly to the Norwegian efforts as a crucial component. Overall, close to 90 per cent of the articles in the section 'Colombia' are directly related to the peace process and the possibilities of finding a peaceful solution to the violent conflict. Superficially at least, these findings seem to be in line with the general recommendations of the peace journalism model promoted by Galtung (Galtung, 1996) and Lynch (Lynch & Galtung, 2010), as journalists are advised to pay as much attention to peace stories and the search for possible peaceful solutions to the conflict as to traditional war reporting.

NRK Sápmi (Sami) is an interesting exception to the rule. NRK Sápmi broadcasts in Sami, an indigenous language, to an indigenous Norwegian audience. It is perhaps not surprising that indigenous journalists broadcasting to an indigenous audience demonstrate a greater capacity to identify with indigenous peoples around the world. In June 2014, NRK Sápmi¹⁰ quotes Colombia's United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): 'in the five months to May 2014, ten cases of mass displacements resulting in 4,500 indigenous people from five different states were forced to leave their homes'.¹¹ The article points to legal and illegal mining as one important cause of the forceful displacement of indigenous peoples. Another cause, according to the article, is the armed conflict between guerrillas and the Colombian army. The article is noteworthy for dealing with the displacement of indigenous peoples and the underlying causes without necessarily connecting them to Norway's perceived role as a fixer of the problem (the article does not appear under the banner 'More on Colombia'). Another interesting article, and possible exception to the rule, is 'They are damn tired of the war' published before the start of a round of negotiations in Oslo.¹² According to the reporter, the inhabitants of Toribio are sick and tired of being terrorised by army, paramilitaries and guerrillas. Locals are given time and space to criticise all the warring parties, leaving the impression that a peaceful solution is needed urgently. The negotiations in Oslo (from 17 October 2012) are only mentioned briefly but seem to be the reason NRK has travelled to Toribio and published an article on the situation there. However,

while the article conveys some of the local frustration with the war and the warring parties, it does not mention indigenous critique of the peace process – for instance, the disappointment over being excluded from the dialogue on peace and the future of Colombia, and the fear that the peace process will undermine autonomy and indigenous territorial rights. From reading the article it is difficult to imagine why indigenous organisations would criticise a peace process, even one that excludes indigenous peoples from having a voice. Later, the national evening news NRK *Dagsrevyen* follows up with a short video documentary on demobilising guerrilla soldiers, another key issue from an indigenous perspective.¹³ Although indigenous organisations have protested against guerrilla demands to establish zones for demobilised guerrilla soldiers on indigenous territories, the documentary does not discuss such potentially problematic issues.

A superficial analysis of the media coverage of the Colombian peace process would seem to confirm that Norwegian journalists pay as much attention to peaceful solutions as to war reporting, but a more detailed reading reveals that the coverage systematically ignores minority perspectives and criticism. Peace is presented as the opposite to war, the peace process as the pathway to a peaceful society, whereas according to Galtung and Lynch candid peace journalism should strive to take account of all relevant voices. In the case of Norwegian journalism on Colombian issues, the social imagination of peace and the Norwegian role in the peace process becomes a filter that excludes important perspectives and hinders the construction of what Arne Næss calls ‘total view’ (Næss quoted in Brennan & Witoszek, 1999, p. 22). Instead of a total view, the collective imagination is produced by a chain of individuals and collectives, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, journalists and NGOs, employing limited horizons of understanding and serving multiple interests besides informing about the prospects for real peace.

Structures, patterns and the possibility of creativity

So far, the narrative has focused on the structure and pattern of Norwegian coverage (or lack of it). Such considerations invite reflections on emergent structures such as financial constraints on the free carrying out of journalistic ideals. However, the interviews soon came to revolve around the many creative ways journalists find to produce stories, in spite of structural constraints. My focus had to change from emergent structural constraints, to also include the possibilities of innovation and creative production of journalism.

A number of the interviewees wanted to underline the importance of the many efforts to cover Colombian issues, as well as Norwegian engagement. Some of the larger newspapers and broadcasters rely on journalists based in the US – or elsewhere in America – to report about Colombian issues. These journalists will sometimes have the possibility to visit Colombia and do research there. Smaller newspapers rely mainly on freelancers to report from Colombia. While none of the media represented in this selection have a permanent presence in Colombia, one editor emphasised that today journalist and editors can follow and communicate directly with Colombian sources without necessarily being present. These journalists and editors did not feel unescapably restricted by a perceived lack of interest from the imagined audience. In different ways, they all expressed the social responsibility of journalism to cover stories simply because they are deemed to be ‘important’. They also believed in the possibility of telling important stories to catch the interest and imagination of the audience even though the audience did not know in advance that they wanted to, or needed to, hear that story. If they were told well, a Norwegian audience would be interested in stories about peace and war in Colombia and about Norwegian involvement. However, all the interviewees emphasised that creative stories are needed to capture the imagination of the audience, especially stories concerning a country few Norwegians know much about.

To interpret the findings so far, both structural constraints and the possibility of creative reporting must be considered. How can the creative potential of socially responsible journalism be unleashed?

First of all, we must recognise that very few Norwegian journalists would claim to be expert on Colombia – it is unlikely that a small country such as Norway would be able to maintain a reasonably large group of expert journalists in any country of the world. The overwhelming majority of Norwegian journalism on Colombia comes from enlightened generalists. The journalists and editors chosen for this chapter all belong to this select group of enlightened generalists, prime candidates for producing future critical journalism from a place such as Colombia. However, although all the interviewees are exceptionally well informed about international relations, and Norwegian foreign policy in general, at the time none possessed the knowledge about Colombia needed to discuss in-depth the possibilities of peace and Norwegian involvement. None of them knew the details of the previous peace accords, the existing indigenous autonomy and the violence committed against the indigenous peoples. I believe such in-depth knowledge must be considered a crucial component for journalistic creativity to ignite – an understanding probably influenced by the fact that the department (of

journalism and media studies) where I work, defines 'knowledge' as one of three key dimensions of learning global journalism (alongside 'skills' and 'competences').¹⁴ Therefore, I was particularly interested in enquiring and developing further any theme or example that emerged during the interviews that could teach me more about the creative processes behind producing journalism about such issues as peace and war in Colombia. Many examples emerged during the conversations. One young journalist at a large newspaper told how friendship with Latin Americans and previous backpacking in Latin America had equipped her with a network of contacts. When a Mexican student in Norway at the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony in Oslo made a spectacular protest against killings and abductions of students in Mexico, seeing the possibility of using the network to travel to Mexico and investigate further. At least one of the editors of the newspaper where the journalist works, had independently developed the idea that the newspaper needed to explain to the audience the background of the protest in Oslo. When skills and local knowledge met the desire to produce investigate reporting, the editorial team made the necessary funding available for the journalist to cover an issue that was deemed newsworthy but which had previously been reduced to short episodic news items with very limited context. Similarly, the editors of two smaller newspapers explained that they regularly held meetings with staff members who wanted to report from localities in the global South. Normally, the ideas for such reporting would come from the journalists, based on their interests and knowledge, whereas the discussions would revolve around financing and how to make the topic relevant and interesting for a Norwegian audience. A journalist at one of the major broadcasters explained during the interview that the journalists do come up with a large number of such ideas every week but, mainly because of financial constraints, the number of journalists dedicated to international reporting was too small to follow up on more than a few 'salient issues'. Based on the interviews, I believe existing knowledge and experience among journalists is a key ingredient in the creative process, contributing to setting the agendas and producing frames and perspectives, especially at a time when the business is experiencing financial crisis.

The financial restrictions on global journalism are real. As Champagne (2005: 51) noted, the journalistic practices that best conform to the journalists' ethical codes are very often simply not profitable. The restrictions are closely related to those emergent structures that hinder the creative process of journalism. A much more continuous observation of Colombia (including permanent presence in Latin America) would probably be needed to cover issues such as the violence against indigenous peoples in Colombia.

Concluding remarks – a fractured reflexive

Covering violence against indigenous peoples in Colombia would lead journalists to ask questions about indigenous peoples and their role in Colombian society. As a result, it could lead to an interest in indigenous perspectives on the peace talks in Cuba. Questions would have to be asked about who is participating and who is not, and questions would have to be asked about the possible consequences of supporting talks that grant privileges to armed parties to the detriment of nonviolent parties.

Academics and journalists have grown increasingly sceptical towards Norwegian efforts in places such as Guatemala, the Middle East, Sri Lanka and Sudan, which was also my general impression after doing the interviews mentioned above. A growing number of critical studies of Norwegian engagement have been published over the last few years.¹⁵ However, these are mostly critical reflections from a historical perspective, formulated with the privileged perspective of hindsight: Guatemala is now ridden by general violence at more or less the same level as before the peace agreement. The process in Sri Lanka broke down, leading to extreme levels of violence. The war in South Sudan has returned, albeit in new forms. It is also hard to support the argument that the Oslo Accord led to a lasting peace in the Middle East, although regional politicians have been sprinkled generously with numerous peace awards for their efforts.

The public deliberation on Norwegian engagement with such peace processes might best be understood by the term ‘fragmented reflexive’ (Archer, 2003). In individuals, a fractured reflexive happens when someone ‘cannot conduct purposeful internal conversations and thus design purposeful courses of action’. The internal conversation breaks down into bits and pieces. A fragmented reflexive does not lead to autonomous reflection and meta-reflexivity. The collective public conversation on peace processes in Norway has not yet developed a meta-reflexive perspective capable of learning from previous experiments with similar processes.

The fragmented reflexive has resulted in a false dichotomy between war and peace. The Norwegian social imagination produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the media and others constructs post-conflict as something very different from the vision handed down in the Gandhian tradition. From a Gandhian perspective, the insights from previous peace processes seem to teach us that the peace process itself can become an obstacle to peace. A peace

process that excludes important voices risks cementing social injustice and power structures, thus laying the groundwork for future conflicts.

Norwegian journalists need to ponder how to produce critical journalism that can have an impact while the peace process is still ongoing. Journalism has a crucial role to play if Norwegian society is to heal the broken reflexive. It is necessary to develop holistic perspectives and provide critical information that is not framed by Norwegian special interests or biased because of underdeveloped horizons of understanding. From the interviews and the theoretical reflection above, I believe action should be taken concerning two specific challenges.

First, the model for financing journalism is in crisis and is not likely to be able to fund the production of the appropriate knowledge and experience necessary to educate and maintain a critical mass of journalists with the capacity to produce independent and creative journalism on Norwegian peace efforts around the world. Alternative models for financing a necessary build-up of knowledge and experience must be considered. Currently, financing is provided by some NGOs, by independent foundations such as Fritt Ord and by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). These efforts by agents positioned outside the media business must be intensified to counteract the structural constraints imposed on the production of journalism. At the same time, these efforts should be scrutinised in order to strengthen the autonomy of journalism in confronting these forms of alternative funding.

Of equal importance is the role of education in fostering knowledge, capacities and skills to produce creative and critical journalism on peace-related issues in Colombia and similar places around the world. The interviews cited here indicate strong willingness – among both journalists and editors – to produce independent and critical journalism on peace issues. However, such journalism requires not only willingness and generic journalistic skills but also deep knowledge of the local historical, social, cultural and political context. Knowledge is a necessary ingredient for journalistic creativity to erupt and the provision of such education should be seen as part of the social responsibility for journalism education. Nonetheless, education is a lifelong process that cannot be confined to schools and universities. Collective efforts by communities of journalists are also needed if Norwegian journalism is to become able to produce critical perspectives independent of the influence of the state, of NGOs and of business.

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Acronyms

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

CRIC - El Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca)

ELN - Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)

FARC EP - Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army)

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NRK – Norsk rikskringkasting (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation)

NGO - Non-governmental organization

NORAD - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

ONIC - La Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia)

PLO - Palestine Liberation Organization

UAIIN - Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural (The Autonomous Indigenous Intercultural University)

OCHA - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

WWII – Second World War (1939 – 1945)

¹ The Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca.

² The Colombian National Indigenous Organization

³ <http://cms.onic.org.co/2014/11/onic-rechaza-muerte-de-guardias-en-toribio-y-exige-que-grupos-armados-no-involucren-a-poblacion-indigena-en-el-conflicto/>

⁴ The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l4gKvDUCC4>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpKf7Cfxx2U>

⁷ <http://farc-epeace.org/>

⁸ The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs 2013 –

⁹ <http://www.nrk.no/emne/colombia-1.572455>

¹⁰ <http://www.nrk.no/sapmi/fordrivelse-truer-urfolksstammer-1.11783291>)

¹¹ <http://colombiareports.co/4500-indigenous-people-colombia-displaced-5-months-un-report/>

¹² <http://www.nrk.no/verden/de-er-mokk-lei-av-krigen-i-colombia-1.8349413>

¹³ <http://www.nrk.no/skole/klippdetalj?topic=urn:x-mediadb:20410>

¹⁴ <http://www.hioa.no/Studier-og-kurs/SAM/Bachelor/Journalistikk/Programplan-for-Bachelorstudium-i-journalistikk-2015/IB3000-Globalisering-og-internasjonale-emner-for-journalister-2015>

¹⁵ For instance http://www.nrk.no/verden/_gir-noreg-skuld-for-krigen-i-sor-sudan-1.12244383/ / <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/sri-lanka/brente-det-norske-flagget/a/244157/> / <http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/2004/04/27/396884.html>