



International Conference & Practice Workshop

**Memory as a resource in conflict transformation:
The role of media and journalists in peacebuilding**

Bogotá, Colombia – 20-21 September 2023

Call for Contributions



Responsible coordinators / contact persons

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Memory as a resource in conflict transformation: The role of media and journalists in peacebuilding

This 2-day-event aims to bring together international scholars and media practitioners with a view to assessing the role of (different sorts of) media and journalists in peacebuilding processes after violent conflict and crimes against humanity. The main objectives are to provide a venue to share relevant up-to-date knowledge and critical reflections on the role media and journalistic practices play in finding constructive responses to legacies of mass violence, particularly in dealing with the past, and to identify lessons learned and fruitful experiences in strengthening collective memory processes as strategic resources for conflict transformation.

Building peace after violent conflict or mass human rights violations means a multi-dimensional process that embraces personal and intersubjective agency levels, in institutions, public political life, and many formal as well as informal societal arenas. While peace agreements are a prerequisite for the implementation of formal transitional justice measures, the actual feasibility and sustainability of peace processes in local contexts depend to large extents on whether social trust and a shared inclusive identity can be restored or constructed across different conflict actors in the general population. The ways in which memories of the past conflict are represented in the wider public influence the shaping of new collective identities. Hence, reconciliation processes require that measures act together, addressing the committed crimes (transitional justice), the resulting deficits in societal security (trust building) and the narratives of what happened to be remembered (memory discourse and peace education). In this vein, the problem of how the legacy of mass violence and human rights violations committed during the preceding conflict should ideally be tackled and transformed, leading to more stable and peaceful relations, includes amplifying the victims' voices, articulating their perspectives, needs and demands. Against this backdrop, the conference sets out to assess the use of memory as a strategic peacebuilding tool. We are particularly interested in the agency of media institutions and – crucially – of individual journalists in their everyday conflict coverage.

The presentations and discussions shall set the focus on the work of media and journalists in view of the underlying key potential they have in addressing and representing victims' perspectives, needs and demands, but also in presenting the ways in which different social groups make sense of the past and experience attempts at reconciliation. Understanding media and journalists as intermediary agents in the context of peacebuilding arenas is an essential step towards developing concepts for transformative communication practices in violence-torn societies. Media possess power in framing different positions and are often criticized for taking sides: Whose knowledge counts and is amplified? Which actors are sidelined? – Through their coverage and the way their practices are employed, media can play a constructive role just as much as it can a destructive one.

To facilitate progress in building peace after a history of mass violence, questions about what the (different) conflict experiences may mean to future generations must be tackled publicly. A reflective remembrance culture requires historical accuracy but also recognition of the complexity that belies the notion of there being just one collective memory. An essential factor for the use(fulness) of memories of violent pasts in peace processes is whether or not it

is possible to foster a level of awareness which goes beyond simplistic codifications of good and evil and which considers instead the multipart complexity of political violence more precisely, to pave the way for future social coexistence.

During two days – **20 & 21 September 2023** – we want to examine the following question from different angles: how, and under what conditions, do which media and journalistic practices shape peacebuilding? Presentations are invited to compare different forms of journalistic practices and media-related peacebuilding efforts in various cases around the globe, and to examine hypotheses relating to different patterns of dealing with the past and their effects. As an event that brings together scholars and practitioners, the aim is to advance the integration of peacebuilding research with that of media and memory studies and transitional justice research to contribute to debates surrounding civil society's share in sustainable and positive peace. Depending on the number of academic vs. more practically oriented proposals, the event may be divided into a one-day international conference and a second day devoted to presentations of applied practices.

We invite contributions that explore, inter alia, the following topics:

- What is the current status of media coverage of different groups' perspectives in dealing with past violence/human rights violations?
- What are successful media strategies to communicate complex discussions on restorative justice, symbolic reparations, etc.?
- What media strategies are used by spoilers of peace processes?
- What are the conditions different media and journalists need to support the development of shared narratives of a violent past? What are the challenges?
- How can we conceptualize media interventions that strategically work in favour of building peace and (transitional) justice?
- Can media practitioners be legitimate facilitators of reconciliation, help set the intellectual and policy agenda to deal with a violent past and the history of conflict and to contribute to conflict prevention?
- How should the work of local media and journalists be understood when it comes to representing contested narratives of remembrance at community levels and/or in conflict regions on other scales?
- What are effective methods or lessons learned in employing media and journalistic practices to overcome societal and political divides in violence-torn societies?
- What role do alternative (local / communitarian / 'social' / ICT) media and multiplier practices play in challenging official versions of the remembered violence, e.g. by constructing counter-narratives?

Possible formats

We welcome proposals for academic papers but also for practical presentations, films, performances, or poster presentations. To submit a proposal, send your abstract and/or description (approx. 1/2-1 page) of what your proposed contribution shall entail to eventos@instituto-capaz.org by **31 January 2023**.

Venue & Travel

The event will take place in Bogotá, Colombia. The conference languages will be Spanish and English. A limited budget is available to enable the participation of peacebuilding practitioners from Colombia. All other participants have to take care of their travel expenses and logistics on their own.