Violence, Anti-Press Violence and Reporting Alternative Social (*Dis*)Order. Journalism, Neo-Paramilitarism and Citizenship in Colombia's "After War".

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<u>Dedication</u>

IN MEMORIAM

Luis Cervantes,
a journalist,
murdered in Tarazá, Colombia on 12 August, 2014;

Dorance Herrera,
a journalist and activist,
murdered at his home in Caucasia, Colombia on 23 November 2015;

and

Sergio Corgullo,
murdered in Caucasia, Colombia on 20 April 2016.

Acknowledgments

Abstract

This thesis presents the result of an ethnographic study drawing upon participant observation and life history interviews. The research was conducted in a region of Colombia referred to as the *Llano Verde* with several periods of extended fieldwork between 2013 and 2016. This research offers a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of the "non-formal" (Nordstrom 2004) networks of murder, extortion and drug trafficking in "the spaces of death" (Taussig 1984) at the margins of Colombian society. The study develops the work of Maria Clemencía Ramírez (2010) to document the alternative social (*dis*)order of Colombia's "after war", defined in part by the persistent and relentless nature of "privatised" and "democratised" (Koonings and Kruit 1999, 2004; Kaldor 2012; Defort 2013) violence. It also portrays the region's "divergent news ecology", which emerges in this (*dis*)order through the stories of five individual journalists living and working there. These reporters constitute a "distinct epistemic community " (Waisbord 2013, p. 199) founded on fear, defiance and resistance. This research deconstructs and problematises four over-simplified dichotomies in journalism studies scholarship: (1) amateur/professional; (2) legacy/alternative; (3) war/peace; and (4) victim/perpetrator. It concludes that individuals who engage in sustained acts of violence or journalistic practice are both exerting their "insurgent" citizenship (Holston 2008), which either "confirms" or "disconfirms" (Haugaard 2003) the socially, culturally and symbolically violent structures (Galtung 1964, 1990), which underpin this alternative social (*dis*)order. Journalism, it is argued, is a vehicle to resist against or overhaul these dominant structures. Building on the works of Stuart Allan (2013) and Clemencia Rodríguez (2011), it is argued that journalism embodies a *committed* act of *witness-resistance*. Through a process of *commitment*, based on an interpretation of the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, this involves the communitarian desire to better society through a peace-oriented practice, but also incorporates a direct individual assertion of one's own place in the world.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The "best job in the world"

      The Nobel prize-winning Colombian author and journalist, Gabriel García Márquez (1996), referred to journalism as *el mejor oficio del mundo* or "the best job in the World"[1]. Indeed most of us who have worked as a reporter would recognise the "insatiable passion" that Márquez says is fundamental for a successful career in journalism. It is easy to lose sight of this when narratives of journalism in "transition" and "change" have become the norm (Hardt 1996; Deuze 2005a; Williams and Delli Carpini 2011; Fowler-Watt and Allan 2013). Even journalists themselves have begun to project what Henrik Örnebring describes as "a narrative of decline" (2009, p.1) (see for example Greenslade 2003; Lloyd, 2004; Marr, 2004; Davies 2009).

      There is no doubt that these are "challenging times" (Fowler-Watt and Allan, 2013 p. i), but amid the hyperbole of "crisis" (Russial et al. 2015) apparently faced by journalism as an institution, the role of individual reporters has largely been ignored as a framework for analysis. The journalist and his or her individual contribution has been neglected in favour of the collective sum of their actions. Rather than close in on the individual reporter, journalism studies has largely concentrated on journalists as a collective or an "interpretive community" (Zelizer 1993). These studies have undoubtedly led to significant findings with regards to the construction of news and news values, in particular, which over the years have expanded journalism studies as a specialism within the academy[2]. However, as modern news ecologies evolve, these frameworks are no longer sufficient. Today's diverse news production requires a fresh and more open approach that can include the role of the individual as integral to its analysis. Even within the alternative journalism framework, which attempts to account for an increasing counter-hegemonic news ecology, the scholarship is generally based on a sense of collective authorship rather than on individual agency (see for example Atton 1999, 2002; Downing et al. 2001; Rodríguez 2001, 2011; Atton and Hamilton 2008). However, studies from Forde (2011) and Harcup (2005, 2013) counter the domination of this collective approach (see also Lee-Wright 2010 and Hummel, Kirchoff and Prander 2012). Therefore, with the few noted exceptions, the focus of journalism studies has been on the institution of journalism, the actual newsgathering process or on proposing alternative models of collective practice, as Chapter 2 will illustrate. Individual agency has been significantly bypassed.

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[1] All translations in this thesis are the work of the author.
[2] There is an extensive review of the relevant literature in Chapter 2.

Conversely, this thesis concentrates on the individual. It is preoccupied with journalists "at the coal face"; reporters whose zeal leads them to combat and question the dominance of violence in their societies. Their conviction and belief that journalism is a vital part of democracy leads to a distinct form of practice that becomes difficult to categorise using existing scholarship. Specifically, this thesis breaks down the dichotomies of "citizen" or amateur/professional and "mainstream" or dominant/alternative, which are present in much of the existing scholarship (see Chapter 2). The individuals in this study are both citizens and journalists. So-called "citizen journalism" is therefore exposed as a conceptually weak label. The aim is not to dismiss the contribution of "accidental" (Allan, 2013) reporters to journalism, but instead to draw a more nuanced approach to concepts of citizenship and how they relate to journalism and indeed violence. Equally, the limitations of what has become established in the West as "professionalism" are laid bare. Impartiality becomes a futile construct in times of "lived" conflict, which contrasts the dominant media's unwavering obligation to objectivity and its "parachute" (Pedelty 1995) experience of war. "Professionalism" is therefore realigned in this dissertation to account for models of journalism practiced by indigenous reporters who simultaneously live and work in what this thesis defines as "violently plural" societies or alternative social (*dis*)orders (Ramírez, 2010). In fact, this study will argue that the practice of journalism against such a backdrop is neither amateur nor professional, dominant nor alternative, but in fact a commitment to both citizenship and peace. It is an act of resistance.

We live in an unfortunate era where journalists are increasingly becoming targets of violence (Cottle et al., 2016). According to the International News Safety Institute (INSI), 115 journalists were killed in 2016. Of these, 60 were killed in "peacetime", 41 in international armed conflict and 14 in national conflict. 47 were local reporters (INSI, 2016). That is to say they live and work in the same place. Yet it is the assaults against international (usually Western) journalists, which receive more news coverage. In 2012, the tragic death (which turned out to be murder by the Syrian régime) of Marie Colvin in Homs received much more airtime that the assassination of Colombian newspaper journalist Orlando Sierra Hernández in the city of Manizales in the same year. It is not just journalists guilty of this bias. Academia, too, has a tendency to concentrate on the war reporting of so-called "parachute" reporters working for dominant media (see Morrison and Tumber 1988; Collier 1989; Pedelty 1995; Boltanski 1999; McLaughlin 2002; Knightley 2004; Tumber and Webster 2006; Rodgers 2012; Cottle et al. 2016). If we consider the statistics from INSI above, this attention is disproportionate. Very few studies consider the fate of indigenous reporters (see Gómez-Giraldo and Hernandez-

Rodríguez 2009; Correa-Cabrera and Nava 2011; González de Bustamante and Relly 2014; Hartwig and Bailey 2012) and even fewer focus their lens on what we might call peace-time scenarios (see Chalaby 2000; Waisbord 2002; Rockwell and Janus 2003; Requejo-Aleman and Lugo-Ocando, 2013).

The war/peace dichotomy is, however, unfortunately over-simplified in today's complex world, where increasingly societies may be considered "violently plural" (Ramírez 2010). Therefore, while we should not detract from the death of any journalist, we must remember that there are places in the world where journalists – and indeed all citizens - have consistently been targets for many years. These are places that may not fall neatly into categories of war or peace, such as Colombia.

This thesis also aims to problematise the dichotomised understanding of individual roles in violent contexts, specifically within the framework of anti-press violence. By defining a rigid binary of victim and perpetrator, the complexity of each of their experiences is excluded. In turn, this obscures the social structures, which underpin (anti-press) violence in the first place.

Using the analytical framework of citizenship, the perceived roles of journalist, victim, and perpetrator are simultaneously entwined and untangled in an attempt to identify and decipher their social, cultural and structural foundations. The anthropologist, Michael Taussig (1984) labels the margins of Colombia as "spaces of death". It is at the margins, where the experience of violence is more entrenched and more acute. It is also where journalism assumes an unfamiliar shape of advocacy and resistance. Journalism becomes an individual attempt to understand, challenge and convert the "space of death" in which one lives into a community of peace. This thesis argues that a deconstruction of how and why journalism is practiced on the margins can re-contextualise the dichotomised understanding of victim and perpetrator. It uncovers a "contentious co-existence" (Payne 2008) of citizen-agents who either "confirm" or "disconfirm" the prevailing violent social structures (Haugaard 2003). As Colombia embarks on its post-conflict trajectory, this nuanced and refined understanding of the role of violence and how it impacts on citizens and their communities is important for the long-term prospects of peace.

James Curran and others have written of the need to "de-westernise" media studies (Curran and Park 2000). Therefore, as we look for ways to revitalise journalism in a context of economic, political and technological transformation, this study suggests we look beyond our narrow borders and culturally imperialist prism for examples from elsewhere, where journalists have long been fighting against both direct and indirect violence.

Latin America also considers itself as "Western", yet insufficient attention has been paid to this region and its journalism by "Western" academia. Therefore, rather than "de-westernise", we need to acknowledge the dominance of scholarship, which is both about and produced in the Global North[3], and in so doing start to study journalism away from these geographical, cultural and social constraints.

The journalists at the centre of this study live and work in a democracy, but face the daily threat of violence and even death. This research project investigates why they continue, despite the risks involved. It will be argued that journalism in these circumstances becomes not just a "weapon" against violence, but also embodies a personal defence or coping mechanism. Journalism is remodeled as an assertion of citizenship and an act of resistance, which constitutes an attempt to overhaul dominant violent structures and bring about a lasting "positive" peace (Galtung 1964). The concept of "positive" peace will be defined and explored below.

1.2 Why journalism? Why Colombia?

I am both a researcher and journalist. I began a career in academia after 10 years working in the news and television journalism industry. While carrying out the fieldwork for this research, I simultaneously filmed a documentary and produced a journalistic investigation for *Insight Crime*[4]. As Chapter 3 will illustrate, the tension between these two roles, whilst not without its challenges, has enhanced this thesis. The roles of research and journalism may be governed by different rules and expectations, but these conventions are not opposed. A researcher's final work may take different form to that of a journalist, but their motivations and goals are arguably shared more than either would probably care to admit. The specific research questions guiding this research will be outlined below, but the important factor to stress is that either as a researcher or a journalist, my overall goal has been the same: to experience the life of a certain group of journalists in one region of Colombia and establish why they become targets of violence and how they respond to it. Indeed this immersive and self-reflexive approach forms part of my methodology and the participant observation, as I will explain in Chapter 3.

I became interested in Colombia after my first visit there in 2008. This research is the result of my ongoing affection and fascination with the country.

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[3] It should be said that Colombia is also in the northern hemisphere, but the reference to the Global North refers to the division between the North and South in terms of their economies, based on GDP per capita, as depicted in the "Brandt Line" of the 1980s.
[4] Inside Colombia's BACRIM is an investigation I carried out and produced with colleague James Bargent for Insight Crime. It is available at the following link: http://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/inside-the-bacrim.

Combined with my passion for journalism, the aim of this thesis is to shine a light not just on the reporters battling with violence on a daily basis, but also on the regions where they live and work; regions that as Colombia rushes to peace, increasingly find themselves ignored by both the Colombian government and the country's national media.

At the time of writing, Colombia is celebrating an end to more than 50 years of conflict with the country's largest rebel group, the FARC[5]. As its members surrender their weapons and prepare to be reintegrated into Colombian society, there are still many regional communities of Colombia, where peace remains a distant hope, regardless of the peace deal. Two guerrilla groups remain active: the ELN[6] and the EPL[7] and many communities remain under the control of what have become known as *bandas criminales*, or criminal gangs, the BACRIM. These armed groups are made up of former paramilitary forces who either refused to give up arms during the demobilisation between 2003 and 2006 or rearmed soon after this process was over. As we will see below, there is some debate about whether these groups are entirely criminal with some arguing they remain influential political actors. There is a brief exploration of the Colombian conflict in the appendices.

While my dissertation acknowledges the sometimes seemingly insurmountable problems that Colombia faces, the aim is not simply to highlight just another thing that does not work in the country. Colombia is tragically probably more divided that it ever has been, which questions Daniel Pécaut's assertion that many more Colombians are involved in building peace than war (Pécaut 2001, p.19). However, despite "all the challenges, limitations, vulnerabilities and risk" (Rodríguez 2011, p.32), there are individuals and communities who seem more determined than ever to bring about peace. The purpose of this PhD, therefore, is not only to decipher the context in which journalists in Colombia work and the issues and difficulties this raises as a result, but also to understand these individuals who, against the odds, pursue their journalistic convictions, and to inquire why and how, in the face of such adversity, they continue.

Subsequent sections of this introductory chapter will explore the complexities of

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[5] FARC is the acronym for *the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionares de Colombia* or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. They are Colombia's largest leftist guerrilla group. See the appendices for more detail.
[6] ELN is the acronym for *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* or the National Liberation Army, which has existed in Colombia since 1964. In 2017, it began peace talks with the Colombian government. See the appendices for more detail.
[7] EPL is the acronym for *Ejército Pupular de Liberación* or the Popular Liberation Army. It has been operational since 1967. Though it was officially disbanded in 1991, dissident members remain operational in the department of Norte de Santander.

so-called "post-conflict" Colombia and present a brief historical overview of four generations of Colombian paramilitary actors. First, however, I will outline the specific research questions, which are directing this thesis.

1.3 The research questions and argument

The research questions relate directly to a specific region of Colombia. For ethical and safety reasons, the region remains anonymous, as Chapter 3 explains. The region is however located within the department of Antioquia (see Maps 1 and 2) and contains several of the municipalities listed among the 125 so-called "priority zones"[8]. These are areas identified by the Colombian government and other international agencies as those, which will need most resources and strategic effort during the country's peace process. The dissertation refers to this region as the *Llano Verde*.

Guiding this research are three key questions:

RQ1: What is the nature of violence and how/why is it perpetrated against journalists?

RQ2: What is the nature of journalism and how does the violence targeted at journalists impact both on them as individuals and also on their work?

RQ3: What are the broader implications of this (anti-press) violence (and the response to it) for wider journalistic practice and so-called "post-conflict" Colombia?

The first question allows for the extent and nature of violence in the marginal communities of Colombia to be explored against a dominant rhetoric of peace and "post-conflict". The aim is to provide an analysis of the specific context created by neo-paramilitary actors and investigate why they target journalists directly. It considers (anti-press) violence within a framework that extends beyond the straightforward criminal. It also introduces the context in which people live and work as "spaces of death" (Taussig 1984).

The second question aims to ascertain if this violent context inspires a particular model of journalism and explores the motivations and behaviours of those who take great risk for a story. It will investigate how notions of journalism and citizenship are closely related, and illustrate how journalism can be an act of citizenship and even resistance for the indvidual reporter living in a "violently plural" world (Ramírez 2010).

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[8] These regions have been identified by the Colombian government working with the United Nations and other international actors as part of the *Reconciliación Colombia* consortium. See http://reconciliacioncolombia.com/historias/detalle/644/estos-son-los-125-municipios-del-posconflicto-segun-la-onu

The third question, though broad, enables the research to draw generalisations and highlight the implications for other journalists and indeed journalism as a whole in so-called "post-conflict Colombia" and beyond. It also helps identify the some of the structural challenges in trying to establish a "positive" peace, which will be defined below (Galtung 1964).

The overall aim of this research is therefore to explore the impact of violence and anti-press violence more specifically. The focus is on the citizens who both live and work in a violent context. Theories of citizenship are employed in order to link the implications of violence and anti-press violence with the motivations and structures, which underpin it, in a more explicit form. Such analysis helps better understand the actions (and agency) of both the perpetrator and the victim of anti-press violence. It also promotes an understanding, which goes beyond the implications of anti-press violence to provide a more nuanced approach to why such violence might occur in the first place.

Through what this thesis argues is a process of "commitment", individual journalists not only assert their own presence by "acting" or "performing" in a violent world, they do so in the interest of their community and wider humanity. Commitment, which is based on Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy of *engagement*, is therefore not just the acute awareness of one's own existence, but also a promise to better society through seeking reform against the current structures in which one finds oneself. One attributes purpose to one's existence by seeking to improve all of humanity and by resisting the dominant structures in which one lives. Journalism in these circumstances is therefore about more than simply reporting the news. It becomes the vehicle to achieve or assert one's citizenship. It becomes an act of resistance. Let us now consider the particular approach of this study in more detail.

1.4 What this research entails

This dissertation presents the findings of an ethnographic study, which involved several periods of extended fieldwork between 2013 and 2016. Chapter 3 sets up the study methodologically, but the study employed participant observation and ethnographic life-history interviews.

This dissertation acknowledges that ethnographic research has made a large contribution to knowledge about newsroom production and newsroom cultures (Cottle 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen 2009). Indeed it has shed light on "the routines, values and professional practice of journalism" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, p. 21). For Simon Cottle (2007, p. 1), the ethnography of news production has provided invaluable to

counter inaccurate generalisations made within journalism and media studies. From the "first-wave" of classic newsroom ethnographies identified by Cottle (2000), including Warren Breed (1959), Edward Epstein (1973), Gayle Tuchman (1978), Peter Golding and Phillip Elliot (1979) and Mark Fishman (1980) to more recent studies from, Marc Pedelty (1995), Ulf Hannerz (2004), Jenny Hasty (2005) and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2007), ethnography has complicated accounts of news production and warned against making convenient assumptions and over-simplified generalisations. Yet as Cottle (2000) and Wahl-Jorgensen (2009) observe, newsroom ethnographies tend to favour homogenisation over differentiation. That is to say that whilst these later ethnographies, which are mentioned above, do much to enhance a more international understanding of diverse models of journalism, their contribution remains limited by a "structural blind spot" of their chosen method, which privileges particular "ethnographic locations" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, p. 26). Whal-Jorgensen's main point is that the ethnography of news production has been dominated by studies of the "over-determined setting" of the newsroom (2009, p. 23). She refers to this as "newsroom-centricity". She argues that little attention in journalism studies has been paid to the "spaces, places, practices and people at the margins of this spatially delimited news production universe" (2009, p. 23). This study is an attempt to correct that. Not only does this research make an important contribution to rethinking what might constitute an ethnographic "field" (see Chapter 3), it also addresses the imbalance of "studying down" (Nader 1972; Wahl-Jorgensen 2009) within journalism studies, which tends to see scholars engaging in "elite research" (Conti and O'Neil, 2007) and paying "a disproportionate amount of attention to elite individuals, news organisations and journalistic practices within them" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, p. 27). If the preoccupation of newsroom ethnographies has thus far been the routine and the ordinary, then this study aims to "study up" (Nader, 1972; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009) and consider individual journalists, who work outside mainstream corporate structures in environments, where they face both direct and indirect forms of violence, and where the emphasis becomes the extraordinary, the unpredictable and the personal. Before this chapter provides an overview of the structure of this thesis, subsequent sections will introduce the reader to the complexities of "post-conflict" Colombia. First, there is an introduction to the particularities of the Colombian mediascape.

1.5 The Colombian mediascape

In Colombia, media ownership is highly concentrated among a few groups of private investors and wealthy families (Rey and Nuñez 2012; Zuluaga and Martínez

2012; MOM 2016; RSF 2016b). As Jésus Arroyave and Marta Milena Barrios (2012, p. 401) write, "there has been no such thing as an independent press in Colombia". Television is the dominant news medium with a national penetration of 85.3 percent of households (Zuluaga and Martínez 2012, p.21). A joint project between FECOLPER (the Colombian Federation of Journalists) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF)[9] found that three corporations account for 57% of market reach across traditional media (RSF 2016b), as Table 1 illustrates (see Appendix I). It also highlights the lack of publically available market data and concludes that concentrated ownership puts "freedom and democracy at risk" (RSF 2016b).

Independent and privately owned print and broadcast media are generally free to express a variety of opinions and cover sensitive issues without official restrictions, but links between the media owners and the country's politicians (as in much of Latin America) are strong[10] (Waisbord 2000a, 2000b; Lugo Ocando 2008; Martens at al. 2014). Between 1886 and 1994, 22 of 28 Colombian presidents had previously been employed as media directors, columnists or newspaper owners, including current President Juan Manuel Santos, whose family owned the country's biggest daily *El Tiempo* until 2007 (Herrán 1991; Arroyave and Barrios 2012, p. 401). The U.S. based independent media watchdog, Freedom House, rates Colombia as "partly free" with a score of 55 out of 100 on its scale of press freedom[11].

All print media in Colombia are privately owned. There are only two national daily newspapers (*El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*), but there are many other dailies with regional circulation based in the country's large cities. Colombia's difficult geography has traditionally hindered nation-wide circulation (See Appendix I).

The government operates three public television stations (*Canal Uno*, *Canal Institucional* and *Señal Colombia*), but the two private free-to-air networks (*Caracol* and *RCN*) dominate the ratings and together account for 78% of TV advertising revenues (RSF 2016b). In addition, there are several regional TV channels (see Appendix I).

The pattern in radio is similar, with the two public national radio stations (*Señal Radio Colombia* and *Señal Radionica*) attracting a small audience share. The two private networks (*Caracol* and *RCN*) have hundreds of affiliate stations in the

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[9] The Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) project is available online: http://www.monitoreodemedios.co.
[10] The current editor of the weekly investigative magazine *La Semana* is the current President's nephew. See *The Financial Times* assessment of the history and politics of Colombia's media: https://www.ft.com/content/621bcdfc-9de5-11e2-9ccc-00144feabdc0?mhq5j=e7.
[11] The Freedom House assessment of press freedom in Colombia is available online at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/colombia.

regions and dominate the space. There are also several stations focusing on news and sport: *W-Radio*, *Blu Radio* and *La FM*. The Colombian army owns two further national radio stations and the police, one. There are in addition several regional stations owned by the security forces (see Appendix I).

Colombia also has a history of investigative reporting or "watchdog journalism" (Waisbord 2000b). The country's largest daily *El Tiempo* created its first investigative unit in 1978. In the 1980s and 1990s, *El Espectador* defiantly took on the drug cartels. The day after its offices were bombed in 1989, the newspaper answered by keeping its presses rolling and by running the headline, "We will carry on." And in the 1990s, various publications carried investigations into the 1994 election campaign and the alleged links between President Ernesto Samper and the cartels (Waisbord 2000b).

Colombia has a rich history of alternative journalism from the publications *Alternativa* (created in 1974) and L*a Nueva Prensa* (founded in 1961) to the *Contravía* TV series, which first aired in 2003. By "alternative", this is a journalism that defines its mission in terms of defending and championing specific causes. Gabriel Garcia Márquez wrote of his time at *Alternativa*:

> I think I have found a form of political participation (*militancia*) that I sought for years. Serious journalistic work, deeply and clearly committed to reality" (1978, p. 31).

In recent years, there has also been an increase in digital "alternative" news sources, which will be explored further in Chapter 2 (see for example *La Silla Vacía*, *Las 2 Orillas*, *Kien y Ke*, *Café Picante*, *Tras la Cola de la Rata, La Verdad Abierta, Censura*). These are online news portals, which those who run them prefer to call "independent" or "small" rather than "alternative" (Léon 2013; Elvira 2013). *La Silla Vacía*, for example, was founded in 2009 by journalist Juanita Léon, who became tired with "the restrictions" placed on her by the so-called mainstream or dominant news organisations (Léon 2013). *Las 2 Orillas* is another online news portal founded by a consortium of journalists to "champion independent journalism" (Elvira 2013) and *La Verdad Abierta* is a digital offshoot of the investigative weekly, *La Semana*, which focuses specifically on Colombia's armed conflict (see Appendix I). In 2013, just over half of Colombians had internet access (51.7%) (International Telecommunications Union 2015), but these "digital natives" have made little impact (see Appendix I). It is therefore easy to question the impact of online digital news organisations. Juanita Léon says *La Silla Vacía* has between 250,000 and 400,000 unique users a month, depending on the election cycle and that its audience is

predominantly in the public sector of Bogotá, including NGOs, academics and civil servants (Léon 2013). This would question the website's contribution to the "democratisation" of news, if we are to believe that alternative or independent sources are supposed to be counter-hegemonic (see Atton and Hamilton 2008; Forde 2011; Harcup 2013). Recently, however, *La Silla Vacía* has launched regional editions of its website to counter this problem.

a). Regional and community media in Colombia

There is a long tradition of community media in Colombia as there is in Latin America including radio stations and not-for-profit television channels (Baquero et al. 2011; Rodríguez 2011). Local media depend heavily on advertising by regional and municipal government agencies to stay in business, encouraging collusion among media owners, journalists, and officials. Often these community stations provide the only news coverage for people and spaces ignored by dominant news (Rodríguez 2001, p. 3). However, many of theses local broadcast channels face difficulties and threats from Colombia's various armed actors, and as a result, many choose not to include news or journalism in their programming (Rodríguez 2011).

Community media expanded dramatically in Colombia in the 1990s. Article 20 of the 1991 constitution guarantees the right of every Colombian to establish their own mass media. In 1995, Ernesto Samper's administration passed decree 1447, which allowed the Ministry of Communications to begin assigning community radio licenses. In 1999, under President Andrés Astrana's government, *Acuerdo 006* was approved, legalising community television (Téllez 2003; Colombian Constitutional Court 2015). Given such proliferation, "heterogeneity" is the norm (Rodríguez 2011, p. 31).

b). Zones of "silence"

Despite the expansion of community media outlined above, local journalism has not enjoyed a similar growth. In fact, as much of these community media organisations depend on the co-operation of local authorities for advertising and other support, it means that this has come at a cost (FLIP 2017a). Local authorities have not enjoyed being held to account and, as Clemencia Rodríguez has noted, often community media are used as "loudspeakers" for local political élites (Rodríguez 2011, p. 26).

In its annual survey of press freedom in the country, FLIP[12] has begun to measure what it calls "silence". It has identified nine departments and two sub-

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[12] *Fondación para la Libertad de Prensa*/Foundation for Press Freedom.

regions of Colombia, which it says constitute the country's conflict zones[13]. Their list of 220 municipalities within these areas largely corresponds with that outlined by the government and international agencies (described above), though it contains an additional 95. FLIP estimates there are 2,460,000 citizens without access to local news in Colombia. In Chocó, Bajo Cauca, and Catatumbo, 50% of residents have no access to local media. In Putomayo, Cauca and Caquetá, the figure is 40% (Flip 2017a, p. 66). In these regions there simply is no local journalism. FLIP's findings show that there are 142 "silent" municipalities; 60 with "insufficient" news and 18 with "sufficient" journalism being produced (FLIP 2017a, p. 74). "Silence" is defined as the absence of local media or where there is local media, it does not cover the whole municipality and it does not produce journalism. "Insufficient" is outlined as the existence of one media organisation, which covers the whole municipality and contains journalism. "Sufficient" accounts for the existence of more than one organisation, which both covers the whole area and produces news. This silence has obvious severe democratic consequences and contextualizes the *Llano Verde*, which is the setting for this study. Before the introduction outlines a brief history of paramilitary actors, it will first decipher the notion of a "post-conflict" Colombia.

1.6 "Post-conflict" Colombia

It is important to stress that the aim of this thesis is not to explore the long and bloody history of Colombia[14]. Instead, this section offers an overview of what is now largely refered to as the country's "post-conflict" era and questions the extent to which violence in Colombia has truly ended.

A report carried out for the Colombian government in 2014 concluded that the country's internal conflict killed 260,000 people between 1958 and 2012. Perhaps one of the most alarming facts about these statistics is that 80% of these victims were civilians. The number of people displaced by the fighting is 6.9 million, the biggest in the world (Centro Nacional de Memoría Historica, 2014).

During the years of internal conflict many marginal communities across Colombia were occupied by leftist rebels or ultra right-wing paramilitaries. Guerilla organisations solidified their position in civilian communities by acting as a parallel state, mediating everyday conflicts between locals, regulating land tenure disputes and taxing legal and illegal economic operations. Paramilitary occupation was

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[13] The departments are Guaviare, Putumayo, Chocó, Casanare, Cauca, Caquetá, Nariño, Amazonas, Vichada and the sub-regions are the Bajo Cauca and Catatumbo.
[14] Appendix I provides a brief overview of the historical context from which the current violence in Colombia has evolved for those readers unfamiliar with the country.

accompanied by the imposition of a set of cultural values based on conservative Catholicism, family values and heteronormative morality (Simons 2004; Leech 2011; Karl 2017). By most accounts, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the government was barely in control of one-third of Colombian countryside and had ceded a sanctuary the size of Switzerland to the guerrilla[15] (Meacham et al. 2014, p. 5).

Just seven years later, Colombia had doubled the size of its armed forces and the government presence had extended into 90% of national territory (Gates and Santos, 2008). FARC forces were reduced from 18,000 in 2001 to just over 8,000 in 2011 (*El Tiempo*, 2013). Furthermore, since 2002, the murder rate has fallen by half and annual kidnappings have been cut by 85% (Bargent, 2013). All of this success is in large part due to a bilateral initiative with the US government named *Plan Colombia*[16], as well as other mainly military programmes launched during Alvaro Uribe's two presidential terms between 2002 and 2010.

In 2017 Colombia's largest guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the FARC, demobilised. This was the climax to a five-year peace process, which began in Oslo in 2012 and was completed despite a rejection by the Colombian people in a referendum in 2016. The demobilisation was hailed as the end of more than half a century of conflict. Also, in 2017, the Colombian government entered negotiations with the National Liberation Army, the ELN, the second largest guerrilla group in the country. As a result, there has never been such a concerted effort by both public and private institutions to promote peace and "post-conflict" in Colombia.

"Post-conflict" is, however, a rather mysterious and curious term in this context, especially when one considers that the conflict in Colombia has not ended. The FARC may have demobilised, but the ELN and government forces continue to fight each other, even though they are engaged in direct peace negotiations. A third guerrilla group (although small) also continues to operate – the Popular Liberation Army, the EPL. This begs the question why is the dominant discourse concentrating on what happens "post-conflict" when it should be focused on actually ending the violence first? Perhaps this slightly misses the point. The concept of so-called "post-

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[15] As part of failed peace negotiations between 1999 and 2002, then Colombian President Pastrana agreed to create a demilitarised zone in the region of El Caguan. However, the FARC did not live up to their side of the bargain and used the ceasefire to regroup.
[16] Plan Colombia is the name of a controversial U.S. military and diplomatic aid initiative aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups in Colombian territory. The plan was originally conceived between 1998 and 1999 by the administrations of Colombian President Andrés Pastrano and U.S. President Bill Clinton, with the goals of ending the Colombian armed conflict and creating an anti-cocaine strategy (see Rojas 2015 and Cosoy 2016).

conflict" is much broader, especially when a UN document on preventative diplomacy and peacemaking from 1992 is taken into account (Boutros Ghali, 1992). The basic argument is that "post-conflict" is not just the period immediately after a war has ended, but also includes the process in preparing for the ceasefire and a cessation to the hostilities (Boutros Ghali 1992; Rettberg 2002, 2012; Ugarriza 2013; Rettberg and Ugarriza 2015).

In the Colombian context, post-conflict first emerged in 2002 as part of a research project between the Foundation for Peace Ideas (FIP) and Bogotá's University of the Andes. The plan was to start to consider what possible peace might look like, and to suggest ways to bring about that peace, "even when war is raging around us" (Rettberg, 2016). In her edited volume, Angelika Rettberg highlights five reasons for this: (1) to avoid further deterioration of the conflict; (2) to identify and prepare for future challenges; (3) to highlight alternatives to conflict; (4) to create institutional links to support the peace and reconstruction efforts; and (5) to attract the attention of international stakeholders and allies (2002, p. xix). In summary, "post-conflict" is therefore not just the period, which begins when the conflict is over, but it is an actual process, which continues while the conflict still wages in order to prepare and construct peace.

Preparation for "post-conflict" in Colombia therefore began in 2002 and by 2006 an official demobilisation of the country's paramilitaries was complete. Serious flaws during this process such as the Colombian government's failure to monitor and verify the identities of those involved and a lack of preparation for the re-integration of paramilitaries (including very few employment opportunities) allowed many to remain active or re-arm (Pardo Rueda, 2007; Hristov, 2009, 2010, 2014; Nussio, 2011; Richani, 2013; Ronderos, 2014). They formed new successor groups, which continue to engage in human rights violations, as the next section of this chapter explains.

Critics of the current peace process warn of similar failings with the demobilisation of the FARC. The continuing presence of dissident groups is evidence that the rebels' disarmament has not been total (Acosta 2017; Bargent 2017). These "criminal" or "privatised" factions (Koonings and Kruit 1999, 2004; Kaldor 2012; Defort 2013) remain one of Colombia's biggest challenges as it struggles on its path to "positive peace" (Galtung 1964).

a). The "privatisation" of violence in Colombia

Juan F. Vargas and Raul Caruso refer to Colombia as "an exceptional laboratory for researchers interested in crime, conflict and more generally, in violence" (2014, p. 1). Indeed the distinction between what we might call classic

conflict and organised crime or privatised violence has become blured (Pécaut 2001; Sánchez G 2001) and interconnected. Nancy Hughes and Philippe Bourgois refer to such interconnections as the "slipperiness" of violence (2004a, p.1), which in Spanish has become known as *el deborde de la violenceia*. Political violence, instead of being a marginal form of violence among others, must now be recognised as the context in which the reproduction of all other forms of violence occurs. Writing before the FARC demobilisation, Gonzalo Sánchez G. notes, "the war has entered into an accelerated process of privatisation" (2001, p. 25) to such an extent that this becomes a "war against society" (Pécaut, 2001) (see also Kaldor 2012; Defort 2013). As Sánchez argues:

> One of the peculiarities of Colombian violence is the fluidity between the voluntary and coercive, the legal and illegal, the institutional and para-institutional, the revolutionary and the criminal. There is not only a blurring of these dichotomies, but a growing political complexity in dealing with them as well (2001, p.11).

Similarly, Koonings and Kruijt to highlight the "democratisation" of violence:

> Whereas old violence revolved around defending or challenging the power of the state and the position of certain regimes, new violence entails in a way its 'democratisation' in the sense that a variety of social actors pursue a variety of objectives on the basis of coercive strategies and methods (Koonings and Kruijt 1999, p. 11).

In other words, this "new violence" occurs simultaneously "with the adoption of democracy, citizenship and the rule of law as norm and goal" (Koonings and Kruijt 2004, p. 8). "New violence" does not aim at conquering state power or changing or defending a regime per se, instead there is a permanent "uneasy coexistence" (Koonings and Kruijt 2004, p. 8):

> On the surface, the institutions and practices of democratic politics, civil society and the rule of law hold sway; at the core, these very notions are undermined by violence (Koonings and Kruijt 2004, p. 8).

There is no doubt that constructing peace in Colombia will be a long and difficult process. With a persistent presence of (neo-)paramilitary actors and dissident guerrilla groups, which operate outside the realm of official conflict, but who continue to affect the lived experience of thousands of Colombians, it becomes questionable to what extent a peace deal with the FARC and ELN will actually have on levels of

violence in Colombia, especially if we consider violence to be a "democratised" multifaceted phenomenon (Koonings and Kruijt 1999, p. 11).

The Colombian government may not consider the neo-paramilitary forces they prefer to call the BACRIM (see below) or dissident FARC rebels as armed actors within the country's internal conflict (Reuters 2017), but there has to be a recognition that the social structures in which these actors both originated and performed continue. This encapsulates the key difference between "negative" and "positive peace" as outlined by Johan Galtung, where the former constitutes the "absence of violence, the absence of war" and the latter "the integration of human society" (1964, p. 2).

In "post-conflict" settings, even if there is technically "peace" due to a political settlement, state and society continue to operate through the institutions that were generated in and by the war. The so-called "post-war" phenomena of rising crime figures, violence and ongoing human rights violations continue despite a political settlement (Nordstrom 2004, p. 145). In short, a conflict may end, but violence does not, and as subsequent chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, violence is shaped by more than direct physical assault and murder. It can be structural, cultural and symbolic (Galtung, 1990).

The dominant framework used for research into the incessant cycles of violence, which afflict Latin America, is that of democratisation or democratic consolidation. That is to say that the contradiction between the democratic ideal of peace and equality and the continued reality of insecurity and violence in Latin America has led to a consensus within political science that the democratisation process in the region is somehow "incomplete" or "imperfect" and that the violence is symptomatic of this (Gledhill 2000; Arias and Goldstein 2010).

In addition to political science, conflict studies also emphasises the role of the state in terms of its use of legitimate force, as defined by Max Weber (1978). This perspective uncovers the institutions of failing government, struggling to maintain the monopoly over violence on the one hand, with non-state armed groups or NSAGs fighting against them on the other (see for example: Davis 2010; Sullivan and Bunker 2011; Sullivan 2012a, 2012b, 2014). Instead, the state must be defined as something more than having the legitimate right to use force (Jessop 1990).

Conflict studies is preoccupied with the intrastate nature of Colombia's internal conflict and questions the extent to which it might be considered a civil war (see for example: Fischer 1999; Gutiérrez-Sanín 2016). Contemporary theories define three general categories of intrastate conflict (Le Billon 2009; Carpenter 2013; Ross 2013). They are: (1) "ideological-revolutionary conflict"; (2) "identity secession

conflict"; and (3) "factional-economic conflict" (Carpenter 2013, p. 147). While the latter category may go some way to understanding the role of drug trafficking or what Rachel Ehrenfeld (1990) refers to as "narcoterrorism" within Colombia's internal conflict, it does little to conceive of the structures and agency, which underpin this violence.

On the contrary, some anthropologists have long characterised Latin America's violence as "structural" (Farmer 2003), "cyclical" (Girard 1977) or a "continuum" (Bourgois 2004). This "bottom-up" approach does much to explain the lived experience of violence in the marginal communities of Latin America, which becomes the focus of Chapters 4 and 5. By using the analytical framework of citizenship, this thesis hopes to bridge the gap between political science, conflict studies and anthropology by suggesting an inter-disciplinary approach through the framework of journalism studies.

b). An endemic violence

Violence, therefore, instead of being conceived as the antithesis to democracy, should be considered as a real and inherent part of the democratic process in Colombia. Rather than understanding the country's endemic violence as simply a failure of democratic governance, it should be considered an element integral to the existing social and democratic structures, but one that is permeable (Roldan, 2011; Arias and Goldstein, 2010; Ramírez, 2010). In the honeymoon of "post-conflict", the extent to which violence has affected the collective social practices and civic traditions in parts of Colombian society, permeating the everyday citizen experience with fear, violence, crime and impunity (Rotker, 2002), is discounted. It is therefore better to discern the context of violence in Colombia as an "after war". This argument is introduced in the next section, but will be further developed in Chapter 4.

c). "After war"

The complexity and nuance of "post-conflict" has been explored in some detail above. "Post-conflict" has become the dominant discourse when describing or analysing contemporary Colombia. However, in the *Llano Verde* and the many other communities in the "spaces of death" (Taussig 1984), this "post-conflict" rhetoric, which stresses the success of the political settlement with the FARC guerrilla, alienates citizens who continue to live in extremely violent circumstances. Indeed many of the behaviours and structures, which existed during "war" remain during "peace", if indeed the Colombian internal armed conflict can be considered a "war", and the contemporary period as "peaceful".

Human rights groups warn of continued violence in the areas that were once FARC strongholds as other armed groups move in to capitalise on theses territories. The ELN, the *Urabeños*[17] and dissident FARC groups are battling for control of the "criminal economies", namely coca cultivation, drug trafficking and illegal mining (Bargent 2017b). One group says there have been 61 mass displacements affecting 9,902 people in 2017 despite an end to the conflict with FARC (CODHES 2017). According to the UN, this is a 16% increase on the previous year (UCHA 2017). Therefore, this thesis argues that it might be more appropriate and even accurate to refer to a discernible "after war" that acknowledges the persistence of violence in its structural, symbolic and cultural forms (Galtung 1969, 1990), as Chapter 4 will develop further. This encapsulates the key difference between "negative" and "positive peace" as outlined by Johan Galtung and defined above (1964).

In efforts to promote the political successes of demobilisation, the social and structural underpinnings of violence are rebuffed. The next section offers a brief historical overview of paramilitary forces in Colombia because these are the predominant actors in the *Llano Verde,* where this study takes place.

1.6 Paramilitaries, neo-paramilitaries and the *BACRIM*

Paramilitary actors in Colombia have been the most violent. Using the argument that farming families "supported" the guerrillas, paramilitary groups assassinated, massacred, disappeared and generally terrorised whole communities. Between 1990 and 2000 the paramilitary were responsible for 4,757 violent actions against civilians (35% of the nation's total), while they only engaged in 176 combat actions against other armed groups (González, Bolívar and Vásquez, 2003, p. 102). In 1980, before the emergence of second generation paramilitary and self-defence groups, there were twenty-one homicides per hundred thousand inhabitants in Colombia, three times higher than the homicide rate for the rest of Latin America. Paramilitary violence in the 1980s and subsequently multiplied that figure by four until it reached a rate of eighty homicides per hundred thousand inhabitants (Romero 2003a, p. 27. See also Romero 2003b and Valencia 2007).

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[17] The *Urabeños* are Colombia's largest (neo-paramilitary) BACRIM group. The *Urabeños* take their name from the region of *Uraba*, where the group originated. They also call themselves the *Autdefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* (The Gaitanista Self-Defence Force), which is reminiscent of the paramilitary organisations of the 1990s and reference to the presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, who was assassinated. The Gaitán family has requested the neo-paramilitary group not to use their name (Gaitán 2016). The Colombian government now refers to the *Urabeños* as the *Clan Úsuga* (named after the gang's leader, Dairo Antonio Úsuga David, alias Otoniel) and more recently as the *Clan del Golfo* in an effort to de-personalise the group. This thesis uses the name Urabeños as this is how they are referred to locally by the informants of this study.

a). Four generations of paramilitary

Scholars tend to demarcate four generations of paramilitary actors in recent Colombian history (Civico 2016; McDermott, 2014a, 2014b). The first generation corresponds to the period known as *La Violencia*, which was a bloody civil war between the elites of the Conservative and Liberal parties in the 1950s (see Appendix I). It was during this period that Conservative political chiefs recruited hitmen known as *pájaros* or "birds" (Guzmán Campos, Borda and Luna 1962, p. 184; Roldán 2002, p. 109; Civico 2016, p. 36. See also Karl 2017.).

The second generation was established at the start of the 1980s in the Middle Magdalena region with the specific mission to combat the FARC guerrilla. These self-defence groups were established to protect private property. Simultaneously, drug traffickers, facing a wave of kidnappings by leftist guerrilla groups, decided to create a death squad they called *Muerte a Secuestradores* (MAS) or "Death to Kidnappers". This illegal group assassinated not just the kidnappers, but any supposed member of the rebels' infrastructure, which included many innocent civilians, activists, union leaders and politicians (Romero, 2003).

There was a vast expansion of these militia groups in the mid 1990s when they effectively became legal. In 1995, then President Samper introduced Law 365, which created the so-called called CONVIVIR arrangements, an acronym for *Servicios Especiales de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada* or Special Vigilance and Private Security Services (Huhle 2001; Rozema, 2007). This law allowed for alliances to be formed between land and business owners and the military in the name of self-defence or neighbourhood watch. CONVIVIR proved highly controversial. The then Governor of Antioquia, Alvaro Uribe (who would later become Colombian President) and whose father had been killed by the FARC during a kidnapping attempt in 1983, gained notoriety for his open support and promotion of the CONVIVIR at the time.

However, rather than protect civilians from the transgressions of the guerrillas, many of the groups simply worked for drug traffickers and or at the behest of large landholders. The alliance with these powerful economic interests gave paramilitary groups access to weapons, cars and communications equipment. What began as a counter-insurgency initiative became criminal as involvement in the drugs trade increased (Berquist et al, 2001; Civico, 2016).

These groups provided a model for the third generation of paramilitary, the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, the AUC. This was an umbrella group established at the end of the 1990s. It became a coalition of right-wing death squads that used the conflict to camouflage their illicit

economic activities. These included drug trafficking, displacement, kidnapping and extortion. The AUC once operated in two-thirds of the country with approximately 30,000 soldiers (McDermott 2014a).

Originally created exclusively as a response to guerrilla abuse, paramilitary organisations later evolved into a "morality police" taking on the responsibility of countering what they saw as "excessive concessions and privilege given to ethnic, cultural and gender minorities" (González González 2014, p. 547). Indeed, as Koonings and Kruijt have noted, what sets paramilitaries apart from insurgent guerrillas is that they are usually linked to conservative elite sectors (2004, p. 27). A 2001 Human Rights Watch portrayed the AUC as "the sixth division" of the Colombian army (HRW 2001). Indeed Civico (2016) describes an "intertwinement" between the state and the paramilitary actors.

The paramilitaries' legacy extends beyond security. AUC members infiltrated the state and political parties, which has led to a series of high profile investigations. The investigations continue to this day and several prominent legislators have been charged, in what has become known as the *parapolitica* scandal. Indeed in August 2014, 32 politicians were arrested in the Urabá region of Colombia for alleged ties to former paramilitary forces (El Tiempo 2014a). The AUC eventually demobilised between 2003 and 2006, during the government of Álvaro Uribe (see the previous section).

In more recent years, new units have emerged known by their acronym, the BACRIM (*bandas criminales* or criminal gangs). This fourth generation operate in the same areas once dominated by the AUC and continue to engage in human rights violations. A 2006 Amnesty International report on Colombia reads:

> Media reports suggest that over 30,000 paramilitaries have demobilized. However, paramilitaries in supposedly demobilized areas continue to operate, often under new names, and to commit violations. There is also strong evidence of continued links between paramilitaries and the security forces. There were also fears that government policies designed to reintegrate members of illegal armed groups into civilian life risked "recycling" them into the conflict (Amnesty International 2006, p. 6).

And a February 2010 Human Rights Watch report refers to these current illegal armed units or BACRIM as the "paramilitaries' heirs". It reads:

> The successor groups are committing widespread and serious abuses, including massacres, killings, forced disappearances, rape, threats, extortion, kidnappings, and recruitment of children as combatants. The most common abuses are killings of and threats against civilians, including trade unionists,

journalists, human rights defenders, and victims of the AUC seeking restitution of land and justice as part of the Justice and Peace Process' (Human Rights Watch 2010, p. 39).

According to official state discourse and the media in Colombia, paramilitary groups no longer exist. With the invention of the term BACRIM, the Colombian government has managed to virtually erase the presence of the paramilitary from the picture of the armed conflict. Indeed during a presidential address to the National Police Commanders in 2007, then President Uribe ordered officers to erase the word paramilitary from their vocabulary (Valencia and Ávila 2016).

In 2009 the Colombian police force estimated that the non-guerrilla armed groups had some four thousand members and had a presence in 173 municipalities in 24 of Colombia's 32 departments. In 2014, the country's human rights ombudsman or *la Defensoria del Pueblo*, said the BACRIM had extended into 27 departments (*El Tiempo*, 2014b). According to Human Rights Watch (2010), the BACRIM have some ten thousand members across Colombia, but current President Santos claims that members of the BACRIM have been reduced by 48% and that the total number of crimes committed by these groups had fallen by 25% in just one month of 2014, thanks to the launch of a specialist police unit (*El Espectador*, 2014).

b). The BACRIM: criminal agents or political force?

If the BACRIM constitute the fourth generation of paramilitaries, then they also form the third generation of drug trafficking organisations or DTOs (McDermott, 2014a). Just as politicians argue about the nature of the BACRIM, so do scholars. The question looms: are they criminals or a political force? (Spencer, 2001).

The growing role of the Mexicans[18] in the international drugs trade means the earning power of the BACRIM in the cocaine trade to the US is but a fraction of that of the first and second generation DTOs. The BACRIM now deliver cocaine shipments destined for the U.S. market to the Mexicans, usually in Central America. This has contributed to the diversification of the BACRIM's criminal portfolios. Whereas the first and second-generation DTOs earned the lion's share of their money from the exportation of cocaine, the BACRIM perhaps gain half of their revenue from this. This means that their structures and capabilities are far different from those of their predecessors, which were designed solely for the production, transportation and sale of cocaine on international markets. The BACRIM are now

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[18] With the demise of the Cali and Medellín cartels in Colombia, much of the organisation of the drugs trade shifted to Mexico, which has become home for the region's most sophisticated and violent organised criminal gangs. Much of what is now produced in Colombia is shipped to Mexico for international distribution.

engaged in a wide range of criminal activities including extortion, gold mining, micro-trafficking[19], contraband smuggling and human trafficking, among others (Bargent and Charles 2017; McDermott, 2014a, 2014b).

Whereas the first generation DTOs were vertically integrated and hierarchical organizations and the second generation were federations of baby cartels and paramilitary groups, the BACRIM are criminal networks that operate like franchises. They are made up of many different groups or "nodes", all operating under the same umbrella, but often dedicated to different activities (Bargent and Charles 2017; Restrepo, 2015; McDermott, 2014a, 2014b).

Figure 1. The command structure of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM.
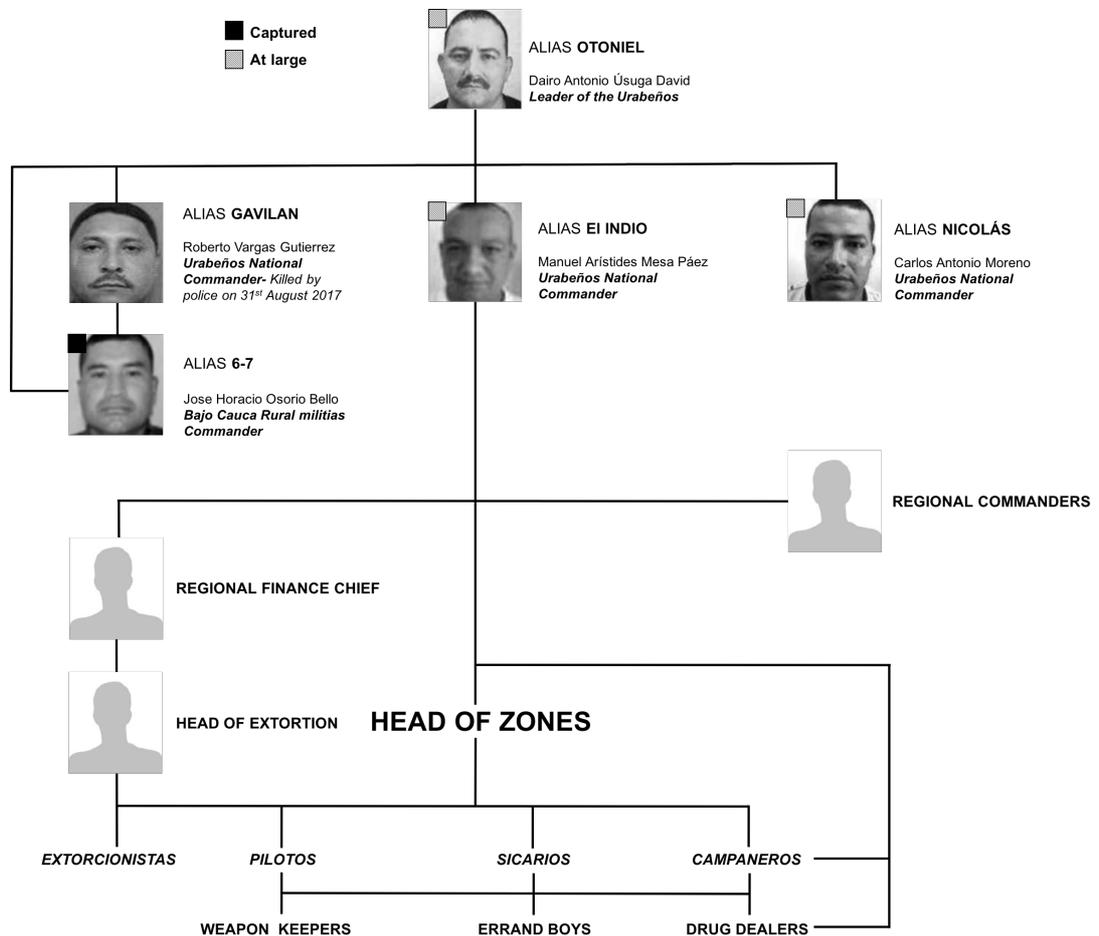
Criminal networks are far more fluid enterprises than the cartels or federations, with members coming and going depending on the services they offer and the criminal market that exists for those services. The current head of *los*

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[19] Micro-trafficking involves the sale of small quantities of drugs in local communities where dealers are not part of larger networks. They can sometimes even be minors.

Urabeños, Dario Antonio Usuga, alias "Otoniel", does not have direct control over even a tenth of the units that currently call themselves *Urabeños* and only a tiny fraction of elements have any contact with Otoniel and his command node that sits at the heart of the *Urabeños* network (McDermott, 2014a and 2014b; Bargent and Charles 2017).

A dominant argument in the literature maintains that the BACRIM remain paramilitary in nature (Hristov, 2009, 2010, 2014; Nussio, 2011; Pardo Rueda, 2007; Richani, 2013; Ronderos, 2014). This is largely because of their continued illegal activity, but also because many of their leaders come from former well-known paramilitary organisations. Garry Leech (2009) quotes one of the leaders of the Afro-Colombian movement on the Pacific Coast (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, or PCN), as saying: "Only the name is different. They are the same people. The top commanders have gone; the new commanders are those who previously were second and third-level commanders" (2009, p. 32). As a result and following the example of recent scholarship, this thesis prefers to refer to these BACRIM groups as "neo-paramilitary" (Pardo Rueda 2007; Hristov 2009, 2010, 2014; Nussio 2011; Richani, 2013; Ronderos, 2014).

However, while the line from paramilitary to BACRIM is easy to trace, and in many places the BACRIM are simply known as the same old *paracos* (common slang for paramilitaries), the truth is that the BACRIM are very different from their AUC predecessors, even if, as Hristov notes, that AUC also had some criminal elements before their demobilisation (Hristov, 2010).

The AUC's control of a region involved a highly visible presence with patrols carried out by uniformed troops carrying high caliber weapons, employing roadblocks and bases. The AUC had a professed anti-subversive ideology, and an ambitious political project that saw up to a third of Colombia's congress stacked with their allies. The BACRIM, on the other hand, lurk in the shadows, with civilian clothing and small arms. They are more reliant on intelligence networks than a visible military presence. Their commanders are faceless and hidden, with their names whispered throughout the communities in which they operate. While they certainly backed candidates for the congressional elections in March 2014, they did this on an ad hoc basis, with different "nodes" seeking to get allies into power in their areas of influence (McDermott, 2014a and 2014b; Restrepo, 2015). However, they did this more for the protection these politicians could provide for their criminal operations than for any political program.

The neo-paramilitary BACRIM, unlike the AUC, do not have the military capability to take on the guerrillas, and they have no real desire to do so either. While

the *Urabeños* still have some units of shock troops they can deploy, most of their members do not have the same military training that the paramilitaries once boasted. The military wing of the BACRIM is now the *sicarios* or hitmen, and while they are able to carry out sophisticated assassinations, they are not capable of military style attacks in a rural setting against the guerrillas. There have been few cases of serious BACRIM/guerrilla clashes, and those registered have been motivated by competition over criminal resources, such as coca crops (*La Verdad Abierta*, 2015). In fact, it is more common for the BACRIM and guerrilla to co-operate. An example of this is the 57th Front, which sits astride the border with Panama. The *Urabeños* deliver drug shipments to the guerrillas, who then move them into Panama, where they are received by other members of the *Urabeños* network (*El Tiempo*, 2012).

The BACRIM's social role and integration into communities has also changed substantially compared with the AUC. Members of the AUC were commonly integrated into the business and social elites of many regions, who often invited them in to combat kidnapping and extortion by guerrillas. A number of prominent AUC commanders began as businessmen or members of the social elite (Pardo Rueda 2007; Hristov 2009, 2010, 2014; Nussio 2011; Richani, 2013; Ronderos, 2014). The same is not true today.

There is a perception in certain regions that the BACRIM are a political force, since their violence often targets unionists, land restitution activists, and social movements that threaten business interests. The most likely reason for focusing their violence on these groups, however, is that the BACRIM operate as guns for hire. They are utilised by business and criminal interests to terrorise or eliminate opponents, but this does not mean these "political" actions are an inherent function of their existence (McDermott, 2014a; Bargent and Charles 2017).

c). The neo-paramilitary BACRIM: hybrid actors

The most dominant perspective in recent scholarship considers paramilitarism as a consequence of a weak state, which is threatened by insurgency (Romero 2003; Pizarro 2004; Arjona and Kalyvas 2005; Rangel Suárez and Ramírez Tobón, 2005; Alvaro Rodríguez 2013). But, as Jenny Pearce (2007, 2010) warns, while violence in Latin America is often treated as state failure, we may in fact be seeing something more dangerous: the emergence of particular forms of state. This conceptualisation highlights the state's dedication to the preservation of elite rule. This state at times combats and at times concedes space to aggressive new elites emerging from illegal accumulation, in which permanent violent engagement with violent "others" plays into the broad project (Pearce 2010, p. 288). These "pre- or parastate" conflicts (Pearce, 2010) bear resemblance to what John Keane (1996)

has termed "uncivil wars". Keane differentiates between a civil and uncivil war, where the former is a "conflict within a society resulting from an attempt to seize or maintain state power and its symbols of legitimacy by extralegal and violent means" (1996, p. 133) and the latter has been characterised by Waisbord as a "localised, unstructured, scattered violence" that lacks logic (2002, p. 100). This is what Giraldo Ramírez says constitutes a "postmodern" civil war in which the focus becomes the *partidos* and their self-interests (2009). They co-exist with the state and may have no interest in overthrowing the state at all. As Nordstrom has noted, "not only is organised crime more organised than the state, but also the presence of organised crime is more tangible than the state" (2004, p. 133).

Therefore, this thesis argues that what it calls the neo-paramilitary BACRIM (or BACRIM for ease) are hybrid in nature, representing criminal interests while maintaining a significant political history and considerable political power and influence over society, its structures and its citizens. Before this chapter concludes, it will outline the structure of this thesis.

1.7 Structure of this PhD

Chapter 1 has introduced Colombia and the complexity of the country's so-called "post-conflict" era. It has also presented the Colombian mediascape and a history of paramilitary actors, including what this thesis refers to as the neo-paramilitary BACRIM.

Chapter 2 examines definitions of journalism and identifies the hiatus in existing journalism studies literature, with regard to local, indigenous journalists who both live and work with violence. It considers both "normative" and "occupational" assumptions of professionalism, as well as journalistic epistemology, principally through the works of Silvio Waisbord (2013), Mark Deuze (2005b), Barbie Zelizer (2004) and Thomas Haniztsch (2007, 2011). The rise of the so-called "citizen reporter" is presented through an analysis of the work of Stuart Allan (2013) and Clemencia Rodriguez (2011), who have both re-defined ideas of citizenship and how they relate to journalism specifically. Allan highlights the notion of journalistic witnessing to "complicate some of the more pejorative dismissals of the individuals involved in newsgathering processes" (2013, p. 205) and "to elaborate upon epistemic commitments that resist rigid categorization on either side of the professional versus amateur divide" (2013, p. 201). Rodríguez (2011) constructs a theory of citizens' media, which is characterised by "open communication spaces where cultural processes, art production and storytelling repair torn social fabrics, reconstruct social bonds, reappropriate public spaces and strengthen strategies of

non-violent conflict resolution" (2011, p. 22). Finally, Chapter 2 presents the alternative journalism framework, which places counter-hegemonic practice at the core of its approach and is a "critique in action" of more dominant forms of reporting (Atton 2009, p. 284) This analysis is based on the works of Atton (2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2017), Downing et al. (2001), Forde (2011) and Harcup (2003, 2012) among others.

Chapter 3 sets up the study methodologically. It clarifies my position as both a journalist and a researcher through an exploration of standpoint epistemology, and provides a justification for the chosen ethnographic methods of participant observation and life history interviews. There is an explanation of how the methods were employed and an evaluation of the challenges faced during this study. The chapter ends with a reflection on carrying out research in dangerous environments.

Chapter 4 is the first of two chapters to present my findings. It addresses how and why the neo-paramilitary BACRIM decide to attack or threaten journalists by speaking directly to those who have perpetrated this violence. Through what Clifford Geertz (1973) conceptualises as "thick description", Chapter 4 also explores the wider context of violence in Colombia, which is considered as *routine*, not exceptional, *complex*, not uniform and *frequent,* not rare. The case is made that violence is not something, which simply disrupts, contests or challenges democracy, but instead is an inherent part of the democratic systems and structures of marginal communities in Colombia. Such persistent levels of violence create an alternative social (*dis*)order (Ramírez, 2010) and bring into question the suitability and perhaps even politicisation of the term "post-conflict".

Chapter 5 focuses on the individual journalists who are the focus of this study. Each of the reporters illustrates an empirical response to difficult and violent surroundings as part of what this thesis refers to as a "divergent news ecology". This ecology is presented through an application of Hantizsch's (2007, 2011) "universal theory of journalism cultures". Though each reporter may differ in how they practice journalism, they all see the purpose of journalism in the same way: to openly call for change. For the journalists involved in this study, journalism and citizenship and are intrinsically linked through their existence. It is argued that in such a context, journalism materialises as resistance.

Chapter 6 concludes the study with an exploration of its wider theoretical implications. The research attempts to build on the work of Clemencia Rodríguez (2011) and Stuart Allan (2013) and presents a theory of "commitment". The argument will be made that journalists are inherently citizens and that in fact, journalism constitutes an act of citizenship. Through the notion of "commitment", which is

founded upon the existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre and citizenship theories of Hannah Arendt, it will be argued that journalism constitutes "witness-resistance". This embodies an act of citizenship aimed at the betterment of society, but also simultaneously encapsulates a coping mechanism and an assertion of one's own place in the world. The chapter concludes that the notion of "commitment" is not intended as another alternative practice of journalism, but instead is an attempt to account for agency, where the journalist has the power to either reproduce or challenge dominant social structures. First, however, let us begin our discussion of journalism, and examine how recent scholarship has been dominated by dichotomies of "citizen" or "amateur" versus "professional", and "mainstream" or "dominant" versus "alternative".

Chapter 2 Defining Journalism and Journalists in the Colombian Context

2.1 Introduction

The vast literature on journalism considers it as a profession, defined by a code of ethical practice and occupational norms based on impartiality and accuracy (see for example Zelizer 2004, Deuze 2005b; Waisbord 2013); as an institution or watchdog over democracy, charged with holding the powerful to account (see for example Wheeler 1997; Schudson 2002, 2008; Curran and Seaton 2003; Charles, 2013; Fenton, 2013; McNair, 2009; Muhlman, 2010; Cushion 2012); as a set of practices, guided by particular (if sometimes varied) news values and editorial judgment (see for example Harcup and O'Neill 2001; Atton 2002, 2003; Waisbord 2002, 2009; Atton and Hamilton 2008; Berkowitz 2009; Shoemaker and Reese 2009; Harrison 2010; Marsh 2013; Ray 2013; Harcup 2016); as content, created for its audience, usually in the shape of news (see for example Coleman et al. 2009; McManus 2009); and as a people with distinct motivations or ideologies (see for example Tumber, 2006; Dare 2007; Allan and Thorsen 2009; Steiner 2009; Forde 2011; Harcup 2013). However, as Barbie Zelizer highlights, none of these categorisations or approaches is mutually exclusive and "each is invoked in accordance with broader understandings affixed to journalism" (2004, p. 32). Indeed Silvio Waisbord (2013) asserts the hybrid nature of today's journalism, which includes different forms of reporting, a diverse ethical practice and varied ideologies. Katrin Voltmer (2013) goes even further to describe a journalistic landscape characterised by competing journalistic cultures, which Robert Hackett and Pinar Gurleyen (2017, p. 54) denote as "shifting, diverse, malleable and sometimes contradictory practices and organisations" (see also Hanitzsch 2007, 2011; Arroyave and Barrios 2012 and Mellado et al. 2012). This thesis therefore argues that contemporary news ecologies are perhaps more complex than the rigid overarching theoretical debates, which pit amateur against the professional or the dominant against alternative, might suggest.

The focus of this study is a particular group of individual reporters from one region of Colombia, which as Chapter 1 explains, has been identified as a "post-conflict" priority. The aim is not to identify a monolithic practice, but instead to understand the multifarious nature of journalism. If frontline correspondents in dominant Western scholarship are the "unacknowledged aristocracy of journalism" (Marr 2004, p. 327) because they are revered and admired for their bravery and professional prowess, then the journalists at the heart of this study are the forgotten proletariat. The majority have no qualifications, often work alone and for very little

reward or recognition and they face great risk to do so. Indeed in Colombia, covering violence and conflict is not the pinnacle of a reporter's career that some in "the West" might assume it is, as we will see below.

As Chapter 5 will demonstrate in some detail, it becomes difficult to categorise the individual journalists at the centre of this study. Of the five reporters in question, only one studied at university and only two finished school. The majority are self-taught reporters. They describe themselves as "empirical" or "vocational" journalists. Fed up and frustrated with violence, journalism has become a way of trying to fight it. These reporters are both citizens and journalists. They adhere to ethics, which most scholars would consider "alternative" or "anti-professional", yet they are performing the duties that dominant media neglect. This thesis therefore shares the assertion by Erik Ugland and Jennifer Henderson that a definition of journalist (or indeed journalism) should not be oriented around "a single definitional threshold", but instead it should identify and take into account the "unique goals, tactics and values" of the individual communicator (2007, p. 241). This claim is the essence of this chapter and will be developed as the thesis progresses. The five reporters in this study are not presented as a collective with a uniform practice, but conversely as individuals.

There is perhaps an unconventional approach to the literature review in this dissertation, where the aim is to link journalism scholarship directly to the context of this particular study. The research agenda is not presented in its own terms, but of relevance to this thesis. This is an attempt to focus the analysis and elaborate conceptually on the theory that is presented. This approach also identifies more clearly the space(s) this study is attempting to fill. It is hoped that the findings of this research, which are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 and concluded in Chapter 6, can help cover some of these inadequacies, and contribute to a deeper understanding of the rich diversity of journalism in the contemporary world. In so doing, this thesis exposes a hiatus in the existing literature on several fronts.

First, with only a few exceptions, there has been insufficient attention paid by "Western" scholars to journalism in Latin America (see Cole 1996; Waisbord 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2006; Bonnilla and Tamayo 2007; Lugo Ocando 2008; Matos 2008; Mellado, Moreira, Lagos and Hernández, 2012; Martens, Vivares and McChesney 2014) and even less to Colombia (see Bonnilla and Patiño, 2001; López, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005; Rincon and Ruiz, 2002; Giraldo, Roldán and Flórez 2003; Bonilla and Narváez Montoya 2008; Gomez and-Giraldo and Hernandez-Rodríguez 2008, 2009; Legatis 2010; Ronderos 2012; Serrano 2014, 2015, 2016).

Second, with a few noted exceptions (see for example Waisbord 2002, 2013; Bonilla and Narváez Montoya 2008; Kodrich 2008), frameworks of "professionalism" also fail to account for the specific historical context of Latin America, where the regime of objectivity has traditionally not been as entrenched. Instead the focus is on the structure of the media system and the commercialisation of news, rather than specific journalistic practice (see for example Cañizales and Correa 2003; Conagahan 2005; Kodrich 2008; Rockwell and Janus 2002).

Third, the plethora of war reporting literature predominantly considers international, usually Western "hotel-room warriors" (Hedges 2002, p. 143) and "parachute"(Pedelty 1995), "roof monkey" (Tumber and Webster 2006, p. 92) reporters. It fails to take into account the indigenous journalists who *report* violence or conflict, and simultaneously *live* with it. Where "situated journalism" has been explored, defined by Donald Matheson and Stuart Allan as "taking people to the war zone" rather than "bringing war into the living rooms" (2009, p. 75), it does little to account for the reporters and audience whose living room *is* the war zone.

Fourth, the scholarship of war reporting use the terms "war", "conflict" and "violence" interchangeably. There is insufficient nuance in its analysis and insufficient consideration of violence in "peace-time". Howard Tumber and Frank Webster (2006) distinguish "information" from "industrial" warfare, which includes some consideration of "enemies without states" (Giddens, 1994: 235), but the conceptual framework remains rigidly anchored in the international arena. Even Anthony Gidden's definition of "enemy without state" focuses on international terror networks, and not paramilitary or urban gangs confined within national borders (Rogers and Muggah, 2009; Rogers et al. 2009; Wolf 2010, 2017; Cruz, 2011; Sullivan and Bunker 2011; Sullivan, 2012a, 2012b, 2014), as is characteristic in so-called "post-conflict" Colombia (see Chapters 1 and 4).

The analysis in this literature review is embedded within two dominant theoretical frameworks: (1) the binary of "citizen" or amateur/professional journalist, where the former is largely and crudely considered to be temporary and even "accidental" (Allan 2013), and the latter, rather controversially, as a distinct set of practices and values; and (2) the dichotomy between the so-called mainstream (or what this thesis prefers to call "dominant" or "legacy" media) and alternative models of journalism, where the former is loosely defined by business and commercial interests and the latter by its social advocacy and inclusion. While providing a useful starting point to analyse contemporary journalism and journalists, it is argued that these dominant approaches within much of current journalism scholarship emanate

over-simplifications and fail to take into account the complex nature of contemporary news ecologies. These dichotomies will be deconstructed throughout this chapter.

The literature review is divided into three broad sections. First, it briefly discusses epistemological and normative divides within journalism studies, including a brief exploration of the "Schudson-Carey debate" (Anderson 2017). This is followed by an examination of the notion of professionalism, based on the scholarship of Zelizer (2004), Deuze (2005b), Waisbord (2013) and Hanitzsch (2007, 2011). The focus then shifts to the specific difficulties and challenges of reporting "war" and violence in the Colombian context through an analysis of "bearing witness". This analysis is based largely on the work of Allan (2013) and Cottle (2013). Second, attention turns to the relationship between citizenship and journalism, which has been described as "symbiotic", but "not synergetic" (Papacharissi 2009, p. vii). If this study is attempting to decouple amateur/professional reporters from their collective practice or set them aside from journalism as an institution (even if only temporarily), then the conceptual framework of citizenship becomes invaluable. This section builds on the previous analysis of "bearing witness" and examines Allan's theory of "citizen witnessing" and the "civic compulsion to intervene" (2013), as well as Cottle's "injunction to care" (2013). It also explores the work of Rodríguez (2011) on citizens' media in Colombia. Finally, Chapter 2 ends with an investigation of the alternative journalism framework, which is based mainly on the studies of Atton (2002, 2003, 2007, 2009), Downing et al. (2001), Forde (2011) and Harcup (2003, 2013) and includes a brief examination of Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick's (2005) theory of peace journalism. There is also an assessment of the implications for so-called "post-conflict" Colombia.

2.2 Journalism: an epistemological divide

Maks Eström asserts that "the legitimacy of journalism is intimately bound up with claims to knowledge and truth" (2002, p. 260). Hanitzsch (2007, 2011) argues that epistemological considerations constitute "the question of whether or not the news can provide an objective and value-laden free account of the truth, and if so how such truth claims are to be justified" (2011, p.40). He classifies epistemologies of journalism with respect to two dimensions: "objectivism" and "empiricism" (2011, p.40), where epistemology is defined as "the inquiry into the character of knowledge, the nature of acceptable evidence, and the criterion of validity that enables one to distinguish the false from the truth, the probable from the actual" (Anderson and Baym 2004, p. 603 cited in Hanitzsch 2007, p.375). Within each dimension, Hanitzsch demarcates two poles: high and low. A journalist in pursuit of the "ultimate

truth that ought to be mirrored and not created, invented or altered in any way" would place at the high pole of objectivism. Such a journalist would advocate and believe in the complete separation of facts and values. Hanitzsch refers to this as "precision journalism" or "correspondence". This would be opposed to "extreme subjectivism", which acknowledges that "journalists inevitably create their own realities" or that the "truth" is to be found in a complex web of subjectivities (Hanitzsch 2011, p. 40). See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Epistemologies of journalism.
(Source: Hanitzsch 2011).

High

Precision
Journalism

Extreme
Subjectivism

Low

Objectivism

High

Empiric
Justification

Analytical
Justification

Low

Empiricism
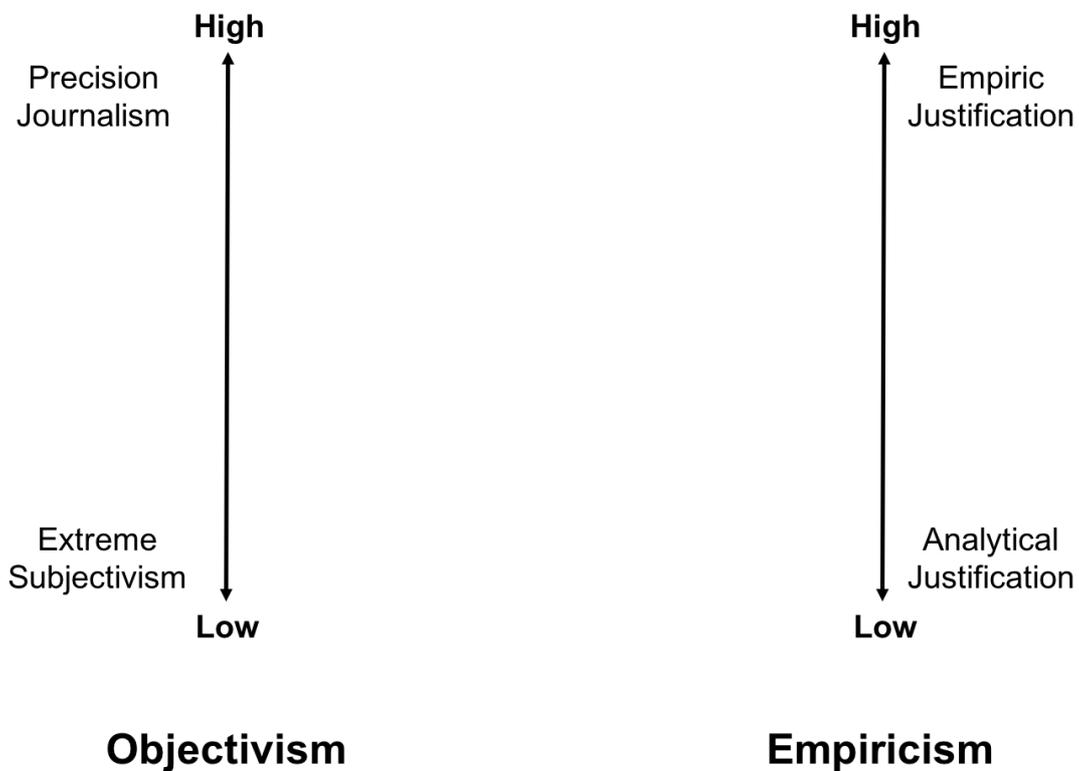
In the second dimension, "empiric justification" is grounded in the practice of fact-checking, investigation and other similar methods because there is an acceptance that "truth" is grounded in fact. Conversely, "analytical justification" manifests itself in commentary and opinion. In other words, "truth" is independent of the facts (Hanitzsch 2011, p. 41). Further aspects of Hanitzsch's theory will be explored in the context of "professionalism" below.

Eström (2002) takes what he calls a more sociological approach towards epistemology, however, and suggests 4 lines of pragmatic inquiry: (1) the form of

knowledge (what are the characteristics of the knowledge that journalism produces and offers its audiences?); (2) production of knowledge (what rules, routines, institutionalised procedures and systems of classification guide the production of knowledge and how do journalists decide what is sufficiently true and authoritative?); and (3) the public acceptance of knowledge claims.

Investigating the relationship between journalism and epistemology may appear abstract, but it matters because at stake is "the quality of knowledge produced" and the "influence" journalism has over the audience (Eström 2002, p. 260. See also Corner 1999). This in turn has normative consequences for the perceived role of journalism within society. An affirmation of this epistemological divide therefore fosters a deeper understanding of the journalistic theory and practice outlined in this thesis. Furthermore, by considering journalism and its epistemologies, it allows us to analyse journalism's various norms and cultures and to assess the extent to which journalism might be considered a universal practice. First, however, there is a discussion of the normative implications confounded in this epistemological divide.

2.3 Journalism: a normative divide

The so-called "Schudson-Carey" debate epitomises the normative divide within journalism studies. In short, what is journalism for? This thesis lacks the space to painstakingly outline the intricacies of the debate, but instead summarises the key positions relevant to this particular study and the context of Colombia. Each side of the debate is closely linked to a particular epistemology outlined above.

For Michael Schudson (2002, 2008), journalism is the provision of current news and information. The citizen simply needs to be *informed*. Journalism adopts a "monitorial" role within democracy (Keane 2010). Schudson defends professional expertise and the "regime of objectivity" (Maras 2013, p. 22). Hackett and Zhao (1998) argue that this "regime" is comprised of five aspects, which (briefly) are: (1) a normative ideal, which indicates the goals and values reporters should strive for; (2) an epistemological stance, which constitutes the belief that it is possible to report the news without bias; (3) a clear set of newsgathering practices; (4) a measure or way in which the audience can assess the performance of journalists; and (5) an institutional framework characterised by news organisations, which are independent of the state and with legal guarantees on press freedom (see also Hackett and Gurleyen 2017, pp. 54-55).

James Carey (1978, 1989, 1997, 2000), on the other hand, is an "anti-professionalist", who believes that professionalisation is linked to prestige, status

enhancement and class control, which ultimately damages the public sphere and has a negative impact on democracy (Anderson 2017). For Carey, the citizen needs to be *involved*. Journalism assumes a "facilitative", "radical" and "collaborative" role (Christians et al. 2009), endorsing a model of participatory and deliberative democracy. For Carey, objectivity impinges dramatically on the independence of the journalist and their traditional roles of advocacy and critique (1997, p. 138). For Carey, modern journalism has become bound to the function of reporting, which manifests an artificial commitment to balance or what journalist Geneva Overhosler (2006) refers to as "a tyranny of evenhandedness. Little more than he said, she said journalism".

Carey warns that democracy is not a "self-perpetuating machine that will run itself" and calls for journalists to abandon their "agnostic" stance "to prevent us from unconsciously lurching back into domination" (2000). Carey makes a call to action in which he asks journalists to take a stance and reject the "regime of objectivity" in favour of more interpretive and advocacy styles of storytelling. In times of what this thesis will define in Chapter 4 as an alternative social (*dis*)order, journalism has a responsibility to reject neutrality and look for ways to support and sustain "positive" peace (Galtung 1964), as defined in Chapter 1. Indeed, this is a challenge that journalism in Colombia appears to have accepted, as we will see below. This normative divide therefore extends beyond the debate between Schudson and Carey, as further examination of "professionalism" will demonstrate.

2.4 "Professional" journalism

Proponents of professionalism argue that it offers clear normative values about what journalism should be (Rosen, 1999; Hughes 2002; Schudson 2002, 2008; Kovach and Rosenstiel 2003; Beam et al. 2009; Davis, M. 2010). It is, in other words, "shorthand for the kind of journalism that is desirable in democracy" (Waisbord 2013, p. 95). Critics, however, question professionalism and argue it is not an appropriate model to shape the purpose of journalism and is in fact antithetical to the democratic ideals of expression, diversity, participation and criticism (Carey 1978, 1989, 1997, 2000; Aldridge and Evett 2003; Carpentier 2005; Dent 2008; Dodson, 2010; Shaw, 2012). Stuart Allan has argued that the expansion of professionalism internationally suggests "the reconfiguration of what counts as journalism in the global network society" (2003, p. 31), but it is important to recognise that "there is no unanimous definition of professional journalism" (Waisbord 2013, p. 7). That said, it remains a central concern for journalism studies because wrapped up in this debate are questions about what journalism is and what it is for. In the context of Colombia, this

is potentially a matter of war or peace, as we will see below and in subsequent chapters.

Waisbord conceptualises "occupational" and "normative" definitions of professionalism (2013, p. 6). The former focuses on "understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newswork" (Deuze 2005b, p. 444) or "what journalism does" (Waisbord 2013, p. 6), whilst the latter brings to the fore desirable models of journalism in democracy or "aspirational arguments" (Waisbord 2013, p. 6) about why journalism should pursue common standards.

Another approach combines both occupational and normative frameworks to conclude that there are no universal standards, but common aspirations surrounding autonomy, detachment and watchdog reporting (Splichal and Sparks 2004; Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011; Mellado and Lagos 2014). Others acknowledge country-specific circumstances and different cultural contexts (Donsbach and Klett 1993; Deuze 2006). Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese suggest it is possible to speak of dominant occupational ideology on which most newsworkers base their professional perceptions and praxis, but which is interpreted, used and applied differently among journalists across global media (1996, p. 11). David Weaver disagrees and concludes there is too much disagreement on professional norms and values to claim an emergence of "universal occupational standards" in journalism (1998, p. 488).

In the Latin American context, the "ambiguity" of Latin American journalism means there are "multiple meanings of some of professionalism's central ideas" (Waisbord 2000b, p. 146). The nature of this "ambiguity", which emphasises the diverse practice on the continent is further developed below, especially within the context of Colombia (see also Waisbord 1996, 2000a, 200b, 2013 and Salwen and Garrison 1992). Indeed in an attempt to dissect the amateur/professional dichotomy, subsequent sections will decipher professionalism as it has been applied to modern journalism more widely, including a consideration of the specific challenges, which manifest themselves during times of "war" or violence, before attention turns to the impact of so-called "citizen" journalism.

a). Contesting professionalism.

This dissertation shares Silvio Waisbord's judgment that professionalism is a multifaceted concept (2013, p. 129). Universalistic assumptions about one single understanding of "good journalism" are problematic for a world of diverse journalistic cultures and occupational ethics pulled in different directions by political, economic and social forces. Waisbord claims there are elements of both "homogenization" and

"heterogenization" (2013, p. 200), depending on which aspect of the "modern news paradigm" one considers (Hoyer and Pottker, 2005).

Deuze highlights what he describes as a "consensual occupational ideology", which includes five values: (1) public service (journalists provide a public service as watchdogs, active collectors and dissemination of information); (2) objectivity (journalists are neutral and thus credible); (3) autonomy (journalists must be autonomous, free and independent); (4) immediacy (journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed); and (5) ethics (a sense of values, validity and legitimacy) (2005b, p. 447). These values provide a useful architecture to begin an assessment of professionalism, but in the context of my study, it soon unravels, as we will see in Chapter 5.

Zelizer also draws up a framework for how journalists talk about their work and knowledge (2004, p. 31). She defines five categories of journalism as: (1) a sixth sense (or a 'nose for news'); (2) as a container (where journalism is seen to contain the day's news, holding information for what has happened and using it to fill the news space in a newspaper or broadcast bulletin); (3) as a mirror (where news is seen as all that happens or as a lens on the world without any filtering activity on the part of the reporter); (4) as a child (which identifies news as a phenomenon in need of nurturing); and (5) as a service (which positions journalism in the public interest and in conjunction with the needs of citizenship).

Deuze defines his typology as an ideology, as "a collection of values, strategies and formal codes characterising professional journalism and shared most widely by its members" (2005b, p. 446). Zelizer, on the other hand, refers to "habit and custom" rather than ideology, suggesting more informal behavior and wider interpretation (2004, p. 29). In other words, what is becoming globalised is the logic of journalism or "its unique epistemology and form of producing knowledge" (Waisbord 2013, p. 195), rather than any sense of professional ethics. For Waisbord, this "distinct epistemic community" is based on "a common interest in a rush of deadlines, the thrill of scoops, disaster news, 'now' news and a drive towards entertainment" (Waisbord 2013, p. 199). Chapter 5 will illustrate that only traces of this this "distinct epistemic community" can be found in the area of study in Colombia, where occupational norms are very closely connected with normative assumptions.

Both journalists and journalism scholars highlight a reporter's commitment to public service in their occupational definitions of journalism, but as Waisbord (2013) points out, there are fundamental questions about whether professionalism is an appropriate model to shape the purpose of journalism. This becomes clearer when

we consider Waisbord's multi-perspectival criticism of professionalism from Marxist, communitarian and Foucauldian approaches (2013, pp. 97-110). Let us briefly consider each of these perspectives as presented in his work.

The Marxist critique stems from the belief that professionalism is inseparable from capitalism. Waisbord characterises this a journalism that is "embedded in business structures, driven by profit rather than public good" (2013, p. 98). For Meryl Aldridge and Julia Evetts (2003), professional journalism serves to control labour and reproduce the ideological status quo. For Jacques LeBohec (2000), professional journalism is a myth that reflects the distance between the reality of journalistic work and the aspirations of journalists. Professionalism is a "straitjacket", which discourages journalists from inserting their perspectives on story selection and frames to bolster claims to independence and neutrality (Waisbord 2013, p. 100).

The communitarian critique charges professionalism with undermining the true missions of the press in democracy (Carey, 1978, 1989, 1997, 2000). Instead, it prioritises elites and experts instead of citizens, and in turn reinforces social inequalities and favours established powers with significant access to the news. Professionalism "cements clear divisions between those who have the power to talk and those who do not" (Waisbord, 2013, p. 101). From a communitarian perspective, the "regime of objectivity" therefore prioritises the interests of the media owners and the political and economic elite, while the professional norms bound up within this regime (which were defined above) incorporate a form of censorship, enforcing a rigid practice and prohibiting journalistic freedom. The section below on alternative journalism develops this argument further and suggests what communitarian alternatives might look like.

From a Foucauldian perspective, professionalism is in the service of power. It represents a "tool of governmentality" in the service of the regime of truth (Waisbord 2013, p. 103). By sidelining ideas that challenge dominant knowledge, professional journalism solidifies notions of acceptability and deviance. It forgoes the reporting of a multitude of diverse voices in favour of perspectives that fit conventional notions of acceptable views (Carpentier, 2005; Dent, 2008; Dodson, 2010). While such an interpretation is invaluable to the critique of professionalism, perhaps this approach encapsulates an over-simplification of Foucault's philosophy. In short, while this position offers a substantial critique of professionalism, it may also simultaneously identify alternatives:

> Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart (Foucault 1998, pp. 100-1).

Although an in-depth analysis of Foucault's philosophy is beyond the scope of this chapter, the recognition that resistance is integral to power, rather than antithetical to it, potentially highlights alternatives for a counter-hegemonic journalistic practice. The characteristics of such a practice are explored in the section on alternative journalism below and become important as this thesis presents the idea of journalism as resistance in subsequent chapters.

All three of these forms of critique outlined above apply in the Latin American context and more specifically to Colombia. These structures of elite political and economic power outlined by Waisbord take on added meaning in what Chapter 4 will describe as alternative social (*dis*)orders. These structures propagate war and propaganda models, which are in direct contrast to peace-oriented journalism (see Lynch and McGoldrick 2005), as we will see in below.

b). "Newsification"

Professionalism also results in what Silvio Waisbord calls "the newsification" of public life (2013, p. 144) (see also Bennett, 1996, 2010; Jones, 2009; Petersen, 2003; Strömback, 2008). That is to say that journalistic rules determine that public life is covered in particular ways, which particular parties, politicians and others observe. There is a need to increasingly conform to journalistic definitions of news to gain publicity (Strömback, 2008). Petersen (2003) highlights how journalists focus on short-term events and are therefore reluctant to pay significant attention to longterm, general and abstract issues. This short concentration span even applies to what Waisbord has called "watchdog journalism" in Latin America, which he argues has its "feet firmly placed in the market" (2000b, p. 247). Muckrakers in Latin America "concentrate on individual crimes rather than on the long-term concentration of power, and present superficial rather than in-depth reports about abuses" (Waisbord 2000b, p. 250). This is attributed directly to professionalism by Waisbord, which ignores social conditions in favour of "back-stabbing among political elites" (Waisbord 2000b, p. 250). For Waisbord, journalism prioritises the conventions of news and disregards the telling of news (2013, p. 147). There is therefore not only a "newsification of public life", as he puts its, but what this chapter argues is a *newsification of journalism.* That is to say that news is similarly defined across news organisations. This similarity of news reflects the importance of organised processes, routines and norms (Waisbord 2013, p. 138). Unfortunately, journalism in the Global North has become almost synonymous with these rigid formulas of news.

c). A universal theory of journalism cultures?

Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) outlines seven "constituents" and "principle dimensions" of journalism, which he suggests can be used to deconstruct the competing cultures of journalism, as characterised by Voltmer (2013). Hanitzsch's aim is to formulate a theory, which can dismantle the dominant Western understanding of news and include experiences from other parts of the world (2007, p. 372). Each aspect of this theoretical framework is presented briefly below and is explored in more detail in relation to the findings of this thesis in Chapter 5.

Interventionism

This dimension reflects the involvement of the reporter and the extent to which they "pursue a particular mission" and "promote certain values". There is a clear divide between "the interventionist, socially committed" journalist and the "detached, uninvolved" journalist "dedicated to objectivity and impartiality" (2007, p. 372).

Power distance

One end of this pole is the "adversary", counterpoised by the "loyal". The former relates to what we have come to expect in liberal democracies as the "fourth estate" or "watchdog", while the latter is more firmly attached to those in power and propaganda models of journalism (2007, pp. 372-73).

Market orientation

The third dimension is "reflective of the primary social focus that guides news production". Market orientation is high in journalism cultures dictated by consumer needs and the "logic of the market" and low where the priority is given to the "public interest" and citizenry (2007, p. 374).

Epistemologies

As we saw above, epistemological debates within journalism "raise the question of whether or not news can provide an objective and value-free account of the truth". Epistemologies of journalism can be classified between "objectivism" and "empiricism", as defined in a previous section of this chapter (2007, pp. 375-78. See also Hanitzsch 2011, pp. 40-41).

Ethical ideologies

This final constituent of journalism culture in Hanitzsch's framework is focused on moral values and what he characterises as a relativist-ideological divide. Moral values are "specific to the cultural context in which they are embedded" (relativist), but the question is the extent to which journalism ethics might be considered universal or idealistic (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 378). While Western values may emphasise freedom, independence and honesty, among others (see Herrscher

2002, pp. 280-281 and Plaisaince and Skewes 2003 p. 839 both cited in Hanitzsch 2007, p. 378) some non-Western cultures "give priority to social harmony and unity" (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 378). As we will see below, in the Colombian context, current ethical practice emphasises a support for a sustainable peace (see also Appendices IV and V).

Figure 3. The constituents and principal dimensions of journalism culture.
(Source: Hanitzsch 2007, 2011).

Institutional Roles			Epistemologies		Ethical Ideologies	
Interven-tionism Intervention (+) Passive (-)	Power Distance Adversarial (+) Loyal (-)	Market Orientation Consumers (+) Citizens (-)	Objectivism Correspon-dence(+) Subjectivity (-)	Empiricism Empirical (+) Analytical (-)	Relativism Contextual (+) Universal(-)	Idealism Means (+) Outcome (-)
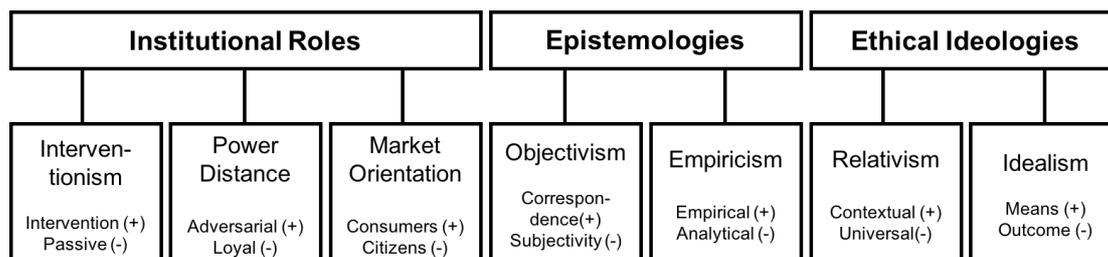
Each of the dimensions outlined above is presented as a simple binary for ease of explanation, as demonstrated in Figure 3. However, Hantizsch takes great care to cover a multitude of positionalities within the "poles" he specifies, which is currently beyond the scope of this thesis. This theoretical approach is, however, extremely useful because it combines "relatively diverse and sometimes isolated scholarly discourses" to construct a "seven-dimensional space of journalism cultures" (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 380). However, as Chapter 5 will argue, though such an approach constitutes a detailed theoretical framework to consider journalism as an institution or a set of practices, it risks falling short of being able to adequately account for the specific motivations of individual reporters, and what this might tell us about the contexts within which they work.

d). The Latin American and Colombian context: advocacy journalism

If understood as training, salaries, and career, then Latin America has made significant progress towards professionalism in recent decades (Waisbord, 2000a, 2000b). However, in Colombia, 44% of reporters say they have additional jobs because journalism does not pay enough for them to get by (Arroyave and Barrios, 2012, p. 407). Professionalism emerged in Colombia, during the period of the National Front between 1958 and 1974 when Colombia's two main political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, agreed to rotate power after one of the country's bloodiest periods (see Appendix I). It was also an agreement to end the military coup d'état, which had been in place since 1953. This period was characterised by a rather calmer partisanship than Colombia had been used to and as a result gave rise

to an increasing style of impartiality in the main newspapers. It also coincided with advances in printing technology and is the period in which newspapers began to operate like businesses. Therefore, Colombian journalists developed a higher professional consciousness in the 1960s (Waisbord, 2000b), yet this decade also saw the birth of Colombia's powerful and leftist alternative press. This is the reason many journalists engaged in independent practice today prefer the label "independent" to "alternative" because they seek to separate themselves from leftist ideology, which more recently has been closely associated with the country's internal armed conflict and the guerrilla movement.

The emergence of what we might therefore call the professional reporter was also closely linked to historical circumstances in Europe. The detached neutrality, which became the main feature of professional reporting and which many scholars perceive to be characteristic of journalism's democratic shortcomings today, was actually a response to widespread public skepticism after World War I and an attempt to "insulate" reporters from specific interest groups including politicians and advertisers (Gitlin 2003, p. 269; see also Schudson, 2002, 2008; Allan 2004; Maras, 2013).

In Colombia, however, the impartiality that emerged did not give rise to the neutrality, which dominates European schools of journalism. The development of objectivity has instead taken the form of balancing sources and accuracy. There is an acceptance that both personal and editorial preferences inevitably slant news (Waisbord 2000a, 2000b). As Arroyave et al. argue (2007), these are positive developments, which distinguish the country's journalistic tradition. This honesty combined with the contribution of authors and poets to journalism in Colombia gave birth to a literary form of reportage in the country. This is the *cronica*, which is indeed a popular genre across Latin America and a regular feature of J-school curricula on the continent. As journalists Gerardo Reyes told Silvio Waisbord (2000) in 1995:

> Latin American journalism accepts literary license and sacrifices facticity. It paraphrases rather than cites sources. It doesn't believe in quotes. It interprets without facts (Reyes 1995 in Waisbord 2000, p. 140).

This style has been able to more easily influence public opinion, because it is "more carefully read" (Arroyave and Barrios 2012, p. 400), yet it has also resulted in the development of "a special type of advocacy reporting":

> Colombia's continuing struggle with large-scale social, economic, and cultural contradiction has led many journalists to develop a special style of advocacy reporting that goes beyond normal news coverage. Instead, journalists tend

to take part in solving community problems, in some cases by pressuring public officials, and in other cases by asking the private sector for support (Arroyave and Barrios 2012, p. 400).

There is no fixed definition of advocacy journalism. The term appears in a breadth of scholarship and is applied in a wide range of contexts (Waisbord 2009). Generally, advocacy journalism has been considered to be a particular style of reporting, one which promotes a specific political or social cause (Fisher 2015; Charles 2013; Waisbord 2009b; Careless 2000). It is usually considered in opposition to objective journalism, which has become the dominant practice of legacy news organisations. That is to say that advocacy journalists are not neutral and detached reporters, who remain outside events and report only facts. They are conversely immersed in a story as participants and interpreters with the intent to call for and foster social change.

Silvio Waisbord (2009), however, has claimed that in societies where news media are dependent on government or business investment, all journalism is advocacy journalism. This anti-professionalist perspective draws attention to a practice that promotes and protects the interests of the elite at the expense of the rest of society. But in today's complex news ecologies, defined by a diverse range of sources of news and where the professional, the advocate and the amateur are all legitimate reporters, advocacy journalism has evolved beyond partisanship and simply taking sides. The oppositional portrayal of advocacy and objectivity is perhaps a false dichotomy. The issue is not whether advocacy is present in journalism, but the extent and shape of its presence. Caroline Fisher (2015) develops a framework of factors, which she argues will influence whether the advocacy of a story is "subtle" or "overt". She suggests that there is a complex web of multiple factors, based on organisation, production and personal circumstances.

Contemporary advocacy journalists say they speak up and speak back to the powers that be (Charles 2013). They become representatives of special interests and the marginalised, motivated by a desire to redress the power balance within society. In violent contexts, which may be characterised by an absence of effective institutions, a reporter can potentially become a surrogate of the state, as we will see in Chapter 5. He or she assumes the role of police officer, judge and prosecutor, investigating and exposing the criminal and corrupt, while simultaneously providing assistance for their victims. In short, journalists are able to take part in solving social issues, either by pressuring public officials or even asking the private sector for support.

Journalists working in different cultures and media systems will understand their work and its social function in various ways. These so-called role perceptions

influence the way a reporter conducts their work and can help understand what are sometimes significant differences between "news cultures" (Zelizer 2005). Journalists may derive substantial professional legitimacy from their claim to serve the public and democracy, but how best to achieve this is contested. Morten Skovsgard et al. (2013) denote four role perceptions: (1) the "passive mirror", which depicts a journalist, who functions merely as a disseminator of information; (2) the "watchdog", who relies on balance and hard facts as a defence mechanism against accusations of partisanship; (3) the "public forum", which encapsulates a reporter who passively encourages regular people to voice their opinion and engage in debate; and (4) the "public mobilizer", who takes a more active approach and is focused on leading the public towards distinct solutions to societal problems. Advocacy journalists, who consider themselves as agents for change, fit into this latter category. They reject a system of news, which they believe serves the interests of the political and economic elites at the expense of the voiceless. If objective reporters are the "gatekeepers", who craft and control what is being published to the masses, then contemporary advocacy journalists are the "gatebreakers", fighting to include a wider range of voices and interests.

Contemporary advocacy journalism is therefore based on reformist principles, which reject the established practices of legacy news. They rebuff the principles of objectivity and impartiality in favour of accuracy and sincerity. It is argued that such a shift towards a practice, which promotes and is guided by transparency (rather than objectivity) is more trustworthy and more credible. It allows the audience to undo some of the reporter's bias. It allows the audience to see beyond a journalist's writing to the sources and values, which underpin the reporter's position and their story. As Brian McNair writes, in his call for a re-imagining and re-enforcement of objectivity in this "post-truth" era: "…when procedural transparency and journalistic self-reflection are presented to audiences as being as much part of a news story as "the facts", they can decide whom to believe, based on their individual perspectives, experiences and judgements" (McNair 2017, pp. 1331-1332).

This section has outlined the contested and multifaceted nature of professionalism. It has also underlined the ambiguity of professionalism and has explored the nature of advocacy journalism within the Colombian context. Both normative and occupational assumptions of professionalism have been exposed as problematic and even contradictory. As we scan for common models of good journalistic practice in this globalised world of ours, then we must underscore the importance of the domestic; of the national; the regional; and the local. The primacy of the global risks the imposition of hegemonic practice rather than celebrating the

heterogeneous nature of journalism at it exists across a wide range of diverse contemporary news ecologies. Before we focus on the "citizen" half of our analytical framework, this chapter explores journalism as a profession during times of "war".

2.5 "Professional" journalism, war and violence

War reporting is a field of journalism and so it is perhaps no surprise that it should also be an area of specialism within journalism studies. For a reporter who covers "war", there is more at stake. For former BBC foreign correspondent turned academic, James Rodgers, it becomes a question of "life and death" (2012, p. 47). For Allan and Zelizer, war reporting "demands that notions of what constitutes good journalistic practice be realigned on the basis of different criteria than would normally be appropriate thrown into sharp relief - at time violently so by challenging circumstances" (2004, pp. 16-17).

As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, war journalism uses the terms "war", "conflict" and "violence" interchangeably. Whether it is the Taliban insurgency, Mexican cartels or the advance of ISIS in the Middle East, journalism studies fails to account for the nuances of war and violence, which will be detailed in the next chapter. By framing war solely through the international lens, we give prominence to pre-dominantly outsider or "parachute" journalists and the dominant media they represent, rather than indigenous journalists who not only *report* on "war", but also *live* with it. This is important because by ignoring these nuances means we risk ignoring the specific modes of journalism these alternative social (*dis*)orders may spawn (see Chapters 4 and 5).

War reporters are generally held in high regard by their peers and by their audience. As Allan and Zelizer note, there is a sense they "do journalism better" and that "their experiences are more authentic, engaged and noteworthy" (2004, p. 16). War reporters are often presented as heroes, adventurers or risk-takers (Knightley 2004; Marr 2004; Tumber and Webster, 2006; Moorcraft 2016), but this is yet another idiosyncrasy of the Colombian news ecology, where covering the internal armed conflict is not considered to be the pinnacle of a reporter's career. Instead, many new reporters are sent to cover military operations. This is because, as one journalist explained to me, "It involves little journalism. Really it was just a case of reporting press releases or military statements, and anyone can do that" (Duque, 2016).

Claudia Duque[20] recalled an incident from early in her career with the newspaper, *El Espectador*. The military had captured six FARC rebels and she was sent to cover a press conference in Bogotá, where the rebels were paraded. Duque vocalised what everyone in the room had noticed. The six men had signs of apparent torture, with severe bruises to the heads and other visible parts of the body. As she asked the military general why, she says there was a collective grasp from her press colleagues who quickly moved to the other side of the room. She was left "exposed" and consequently was removed from the hall. "After that, I was shunned by my colleagues. Even in my own office," she recalls (Duque, 2016a).

a). Bearing witness

Research on actual newsgathering during "war" is scarce. The studies that do exist look at "witnessing" or more specifically "eyewitnessing" as a key concept. Allan and Zelizer describe this as "being there" (2004). Allan and Zelizer (2004) cite veteran war correspondent Kate Adie who describes witnessing "as the only way you can stand by your own words afterwards". It becomes "a guarantee" or even "truth" (Adie 1998 in Allan and Zelizer 2004, p. 17). The truth to which Adie refers to, of course, is journalistic-truth, rather than truth in the philosophical absolute sense, yet it remains a highly contested issue, especially in "war" reporting. This is because critics argue that journalists do not do enough to acknowledge that the "truth" they may have witnessed constitutes a partial, one-dimensional truth, and that despite their presence on the ground, the "truth" they bear witness to is not only partial, but also open to manipulation and influence, some of which may even be beyond the eyes of the reporter. In other words, correspondents can only provide one version of "reality" that is just as "true" as numerous other versions (Hanitzsch 2004, p. 488). Cottle makes the same point when he points out that "truths" and "untruths" are not self-evident in the fog of war (2006, p. 103). For Chindu Sreedharan, the question becomes whether journalists should make a deliberate choice to contextualise their reporting, providing a more "holistic picture" or whether they should narrow their focus to "the violence at hand" (2013, pp. 469-70).

The concept of witnessing or seeking witness testimony is a fundamental aspect of newsgathering as a whole. Zelizer (2002, 2007) charts four stages in the development of eye-witnessing. It first appears as a means to express personal experience of public events. The second stage, which is underway by the mid 1800s, signals the expansion of this role to include a more diverse array of participants, not

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[20] Claudia Duque is one of Colombia's most known journalist who has survived kidnap and in a landmark ruling has been successful in bringing the perpetrators of her psychological torture to justice. For her story, see Appendix II on the UNP.

least journalists themselves, self-consciously acting as eyewitnesses. The expansion of technology in the early twentieth century makes possible alternative kinds of eye-witnessing, and by the end of World War II, "eye-witnessing had become a default setting" (2007, p. 421). The contemporary period, however, is discerned by the absence of the journalist. News organisations can bypass reporters and go live to "raw" footage or include material from private citizens (see for example Matheson and Allan 2004; Allan, 2013). The further development of technology and the specific expansion of virtual reality in news involves further implications for the notion of eye-witnessing as the audience is no longer only observing, but is actually immersed (Nash 2017).

Lilie Chouliaraki (2009) makes an important distinction between eye-witnessing and bearing witness in her research. Allan defines this as journalism's "duality of reporting", through which a reporter "records reality (as eyewitness)" and also "evaluates reality (or bears witness)" (2013, p. 104). Cottle (2013) also draws on notions of witnessing in his work on the reporting of disasters, which acknowledges the decision-making process involved in deciding what or how to witness. On an institutional or structural level, Cottle argues that news organisations exhibit an insitutionalised "calculus of death", which is ethnocentric and politicised. In other words, judgments on newsworthiness and audience appeal are influenced by geopolitics, culture, technological resources and narrative formats among other things:

> The calculus of death operative inside the world of journalistic practices today produces a peculiarity myopic and amoral – if not immoral – "witnessing" of disasters, death and dying. This is a witnessing that falls short of "bearing witness" in the morally infused sense' (Cottle 2013, p. 237).

However, Cottle acknowledges some level of individual agency and realises the potential that individual journalists embody to be able to contend with and even fight against "the calculus of death". This is journalism's emergent "injunction to care", which contrary to the conventions of dispassionate, detached reporting, is more socially and morally responsible. The "injunction to care":

> …furnishes images and accounts that can chime more closely with a cosmopolitan sensitivity. These are professionally enacted through journalism's acceptance of the primary ontology of witnessing as seeing and ''being there'', experienced through bodily immersion and beneficent embedding in the disaster zone and epistemologically enacted through crafted narratives designed to engage, humanize, ''sense-ize'' and ''bring home'' the plight of distant others - strangers still - but people not so unlike ourselves and deserving of our recognition and care (2013, p. 244).

Similarly, Allan (2013) describes the "civic compulsion to intervene", which can account for why a "citizen" decides to engage as a witness, as we will see below. In Chapters 5 and 6, despite Cottle's valuable contribution, we will see how this "injunction to care" falls short of accounting for the actions of indigenous reporters, who both work and live in violent contexts.

b). Us and them

To be deployed to a war zone is conversely regarded as the apex in the career of so-called "parachute journalists" (Reynolds, 2010; Palmer and Fontan, 2007; Erickson and Hamilton, 2006; Hamilton and Jenner, 2004), whose job becomes to "diffuse war" and convey "distant suffering" (Cottle 2013, p. 233). At stake in this debate is the need to deconstruct the "us" and "them" dichotomy that is so often applied to concepts of war reporting, where the "interests of 'people like us' are counterpoised against the suffering of strangers" (Allan 2004, p. 157). Indeed much of the literature on war reporting deals with issues arising from this notion of "parachute journalism" instead of concentrating on the indigenous journalists who live and work on a daily basis in these "war zones". Yet this "us" and "them" dichotomy also applies within the Colombian context, where dominant national media from the capital represent the "us" and the rural, poorer conflict-ridden communities of Colombia represent the "them". The focus of this study, however, is precisely those journalists who both live and work in violent societies at the margins of Colombian life; in what Chapter 4 will conceptualise as alternative social (*dis*)orders. These journalists suffer the same violence as their audience and so dichotomies of "us" and "them" become obsolete or at least take on new shape, as we will see in Chapter 5.

c). Journalism of attachment

The so-called journalism of attachment presents a stark alternative to the "us" and "them" dichotomy, although some scholars and practitioners would argue it is equally as dangerous (Ward 1998; McLaughlin 2002; Tumber and Prentoulis 2003). The journalism of attachment, which might be best described as a practice than a theory, emanates from the writing of former BBC correspondent Martin Bell (1995, 1997, 1998). He describes this model, based on his experiences of reporting the war in Bosnia, as a journalism that "cares as well as knows" and that does not "stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor" (1997, p. 14). This is presented in direct contrast to objective journalism, which Bell describes as "a sort of bystanders journalism" (1998, p. 102).

Critics point to the "self-righteous" and "moralising" nature of this model of reporting (Ward 1998; McLaughlin 2002; Tumber and Prentoulis 2003), but other

scholars highlight how attachment triggers more positive values, not always associated with de-sensitised war coverage (Maras 2013, p. 152; Allan 2004, p. 15). A journalism of attachment invokes emotions, involvement or even "feminised" ideals. Stuart Allan (2004, p. 15) notes how supposedly masculine attitudes towards reality (held to be "objective, rational, abstract, coherent, unitary and active") are "discursively privileged" over feminine attitudes (posited as "subjective, irrational, emotional, partial, fragmented and passive"). In other words, attachment "disturbs the inherited structures of objectivity in a very fundamental way" (Maras 2013, p. 153).

Bell stresses the importance of individual judgment and makes it clear that his vision of attachment is part of a "principled journalism… There is a time to be passionate and a time to be dispassionate… I would not report the slaying of innocent people in the same tone and manner that I would use for a State visit or a flower show or an exchange of parliamentary insults"(1998, p. 106). Bell's assessment is perhaps a little over-simplified, but more contemporary studies in journalism and trauma conclude that emotionally engaged journalism produces not only more responsible coverage, but also a coverage, which can promote dialogue and understanding in violent contexts, as we will see below.

d). Participation

In their influential study on the embedding of journalists with the armed forces during the Falklands conflict, David Morrison and Howard Tumber (1988) also show how standard occupational norms can seem wrong or misplaced. There is much research on the controversial practice of embedding reporters during times of war (see for example Katovsky and Carlson 2003; Paul and Kim 2004; Feinstein and Nicolson, 2005; Fuhmy and Johnson 2005), but it is perhaps best summarised by the journalist and news executive, Jeff Gralnick (2003), who says, "once you get into a unit, you are going to be co-opted," he writes, "A little like the Stockholm Syndrome" (cited in Allan and Zelizer 2004, p. 195). For Morrison and Tumber, "the professional need to cover a story in a detached way" is, they go on, "slowly swamped by the very real, human need to belong and to be safe" (1988, p. 99). Observation gives way to participation:

> The journalists not only merely observed their subjects, but lived their lives and shared their experiences, and those experiences were of such emotional intensity that the form of prose which journalists use to take the reader into that experience, provided not only a window for the reader, but also for partiality' (Morrison and Tumber 1988, pp. 95-6).

The values that "normally ensure a protective distance give way to affinity values born of proximity" (Tumber 2004, p. 214):

> The journalist as observer works within a system of news values placing and judging events providing for a degree of predictability in news selection. The journalists as witness, therefore, is more secure and is protected by the accredited acceptance of understandings of the profession and news organisations than the participant, who, while not operating entirely outside such values – must still "make" the news – intercedes with their own individual personal judgment of events related to emotions unconnected with journalism itself (Tumber 2004, p. 215).

The journalist as witness becomes "the participatory journalist" (Morrisson and Tumber 1988, p. 130) and even advocate:

> The participant, governed by emotions of a different kind from those of the observer, is potentially the much more uncontrollable of the two types. Having already overturned accepted news judgment to pursue feelings of their own, the participant is free to move their affections where they will. Thus… from such feelings, the crusader is made' (Morrison and Tumber 1988, p. 130).

Though this notion of "participatory journalist" was intended as a framework for the "parachute" reporter, it can go some way to explaining the actions of the indigenous journalists, who are the focus of this study.

e). Journalism and trauma

It is now widely believed that knowledge of resilience, vulnerability and the way people react to traumatic events, produces a more meaningful and sensitive journalism (Frey 2016; Newman and Nelson 2012). Indeed dealing with trauma is now a regular feature of journalism ethics codes worldwide. Newman and Nelson's (2012) framework of three tensions, or the so-called "three dances", outlines contrasting strategies for journalists, who encounter trauma. These include "the dance of avoidance" (defined as fight or flight); "the dance of fragmentation and integration" (in short, the ability to connect to one's emotions); and "the dance of resilience and vulnerability" (our capacity to overcome). These "dances" are important because not only do they outline simple coping strategies, they also include suggestions for responsible newsgathering practice and outline how news coverage can further exacerbate trauma and even incubate PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder. In short, the "dances" present a journalist's responsibilities when confronted with trauma, and explain the impact and potential consequences of being faced with such a situation.

Although a comprehensive analysis of the complex relationship between journalism, trauma and the "three dances" is beyond the scope of this thesis, the arguments of Elsebeth Frey (2016) and Ross Howard (2009) are essential to one of this dissertation's key assumptions: that journalism can and should promote peace-

building opportunities in so-called "post-conflict" contexts, such as Colombia[21].
Howard (2009, p. 16) argues that a heightened sensitivity around trauma helps
journalists identify conflict structures and "patterns of conflict resolutions". He
highlights the media's potential "benefits for peace building and democratisation"
(2009, p. 11), and stresses the potential to promote participation, encourage dialogue
and foster an increased understanding. According to Frey (2016, p. 179), this
"conflict sensitive journalism" sharpens journalism's traditional tools and "provides
new insight". For Frey (2016), this means reporting responsibly without contributing
to further violence or overlooking peace-building opportunities.

It is important to remember once again that the journalists at the centre of this
dissertation are indigenous reporters, who live and work in the violent or conflict
affected communities they cover. These journalists therefore share the status of
potential victim with their audience, as Chapter 4 will explore in more detail. Indeed
their *involvement* or what we might call *immersion* produces an emotionally sensitive
coverage, which (according to the arguments of Frey and Howard above) becomes
more insightful and meaningful.

Such insightful and emotionally engaged coverage may be the result of so-
called "post-traumatic growth" (PTG) (McMahon 2005; Tedeschi and Calhoun 1995)
or "stress-related growth and thriving" (Park, Cohen and Murch 1996). Although the
vast majority of scholarship on journalism and trauma focuses on post-traumatic
stress disorder or PTSD (see for example, Freinkel, Koopman and Spiegel 1994;
Simpson and Boggs 1999; McMahon 2001; Pyevich, Newman and Daleiden 2003;
Feinstein, Owen and Blair 2002; Newman, Simpson and Handschuh 2003; Feinstein
and Nicolson 2005), there is a small but increasing school of thought, which
considers more "positive" outcomes of consistent trauma exposure (McMahon 2005).
For Cait McMahon (2005) this is defined as "a higher functioning in the perception of
the self, others and attitudes to life". Such an approach could therefore enhance our
understanding of how indigenous journalists are uniquely placed to analyse and
report on their own violent situations.

f). The Colombian context

In contrast to the above, Yenny Serrano's (2014, 2015) analysis of
"mainstream" or legacy news coverage of the Colombian conflict, found that the
voices of victims were distinctly absent, and that only a small percentage of airtime
was given to experts or academics. The overwhelming majority of coverage involved

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[21] Timothy Coombs (2015, p. 1) defines three stages of crisis communication: pre-crisis, crisis event and
post crisis, but as chapter 1 illustrated, these boundaries of a conflict are not always rigid. As Bashir
Ahmed Tahir (2009, p. 2) notes, conflicts are "rooted in multidimensional causes and factors", which
interact and overlap.

official sources from the Ministry of Defence and other state institutions. Indeed the Colombian state prohibits journalists from interviewing members of illegal armed groups, unless these groups are engaged in dialogue with the government (CNTV 1997; Giraldo et al. 2003; López 2005; Serrano 2014;). Omar Rincón and Marta Ruíz (2002) found that journalists covering the internal conflict prefer to quote the position of the Church because it is supposed to be neutral.

In 2003 a group of Colombian journalists produced *The code for the coverage of the Colombian armed conflict*[22] (Márquez González, 2003). This was the second attempt by journalists and academics alike to instigate "responsible" coverage of the conflict[23]. As Serrano points out, the code of ethics was more of a "political act of communication" than an attempt to install ethics among their peers (2014, p. 166). It was an attempt to defend the professional principles of accuracy and impartiality. The aim was to try and assert and communicate to audiences, armed groups and media owners what the responsibilities of journalism are. However, as Serrano concludes, these professional principles are "not compatible with the strategic military aims of the armed groups" (2014, p. 166), including the national military, who are intent on propagating their own view of the conflict (Rincón and Ruíz 2002; Legatis, 2010; Arroyave et al. 2007). Interestingly, however, a more recent study shows how since the peace negotiations began in 2012, official government discourse on the internal armed conflict has been peace oriented and focused on nation building (Sánchez Ramírez 2017). A number of government broadcast campaigns aimed to win support for the peace deal with the FARC in the run up to the 2016 referendum. The state narrative of war changed dramatically, fixing victimhood "between the duty to forgive and the permission to forget" (Sánchez Ramírez 2017: ii) in desperate and calculated attempts to promote reconciliation.

It is interesting that most interviews with FARC during the Colombian peace process between 2012 and 2016 were conducted largely by international media. Jonathan Bock from FLIP (the Colombian Foundation for Press Freedom) explains, the peace process was completely off bounds for both the guerrilla and many journalists:

> There was a self-censorship when it came to analysing the peace process. FARC rebels on the ground were wither unwilling or under orders not to talk about the process and reporters engaged in a process of self-censorship our

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[22] See Appendix IV.
[23] More than 30 editors from the country's biggest news organisations signed an "Agreement for Discretion" at the *Universidad de la Sabana* in 1999. The aim was to provide a set of guiding principles for news organisations to establish their own code of ethics. See Appendix V.

of fear that anything they said could throw off the whole process being negotiated in Havana. (Bock, 2014).

This is clearly astonishing. In what is probably one of the most pivotal moments in Colombian history, the country's people have been excluded from being able to analyse the negotiations. The deal on the table will determine the future for generations to come. This is a future that will be defined either by war or by peace. In this sense, it is possible to argue that Colombian journalists have failed their audience. They are not solely responsible, however. The government has stubbornly promoted its utopian rhetoric about a lasting peace, and FARC has largely bypassed Colombian media altogether, preferring its own media channels to communicate its position. This, of course, means there has been little scrutiny. Therefore, critical and informed debate about the peace process has been largely absent from the Colombian media since the negotiations began in 2012. One reason for this is journalistic self-censorship. These reporters do not fear physical violence, but instead they fear a collapse of the peace deal. Before we explore the significance of the alternative journalism framework, which serves as a critique of professionalism and dominant media, let us consider the rise of so-called "citizen" journalism, which has also served as a basis from which to critique the perceived failings and limitations of professionalism.

2.6 "Citizen" journalism

The involvement of the "non-professional" or the "citizen" has displaced journalism from its dominant position to such an extent "we're all journalists now" (Gant 2007). Some have even made bold claims about "the end of journalism" (Deuze 2007; Charles and Stewart 2011) or predict a future model of "journalism without journalists" (Lehmann 2006). Born out of a crisis of credibility in the dominant news media system, "citizen journalism" arose "in response to a perceived crisis in the role of the press in constituting a public sphere in which citizens could understand and engage productively with the issues of the day" (Nichols et al. 2006, p. 77). Therefore, some scholars buy into these claims and believe journalism provides a route for re-engagement and for the empowerment of marginalised voices (Singer, 2003; Gillmor, 2005; Allan and Thorsen 2009). Critics, on the contrary, contend that "citizen" journalism fails to live up to journalistic standards and provides, at best, questionable information (Thompson 2006; Deuze et al. 2007; Hazinski 2007; Filloux 2010; Kalia 2011). For these critics (interestingly most of them reporters

working for dominant media), the role of a "citizen" reporter does not extend beyond the provision and supply of user-generated content or crowdsourcing.

The democratisation of "citizen journalism" as opposed to the elitism of professionalism lies in its disregard for norms, regulations and hierarchy. That is to say it presents an unrestrained and unconstrained form of reporting that counters the dominant "regime of objectivity" we saw defined above. It is unrestrained in that the "citizen" is free to report what and how they choose, ignoring or rejecting the expectation of impartiality and detachment, for example, and it is unconstrained in that it is not tied to the separation of fact from opinion or even accuracy in the sense a story needs to be fact-checked before it is published. These "postmodernist qualities" of citizen journalism "offer a much-needed antidote to the modern conception of professional journalism. It offers a chaotic world of information equality and pluralism against the authoritarian attachment to the world of elite expertise" (Waisbord 2013, pp. 206-7)[24].

Historically, professional journalists have viewed "citizen" participation as a destabilising force and have "invoked professional norms to legitimise conventional roles and mainstream prevalent practices" (Waisbord 2013, p. 115. See also Waldman 2005 and Wiik 2009). Indeed the culture of professional journalism "has served to manage the rise of 'citizen' news" (Waisbord 2013, p. 211). It has attempted to impose its values and the "regime of objectivity" in order to constrain "citizen journalism" and force it to conform to prevalent norms (Robinson, 2007; Usher, 2011). This has happened with a simultaneous opening up of "professional" or dominant coverage to include more "citizen" reports (Allan and Thorsen, 2009; Singer, 2006; Thurman and Hermida, 2010). For Waisbord (2013, p. 214), this recognises the "staying power" of dominant news because the "regime of objectivity" has prevailed. It might even be argued that dominant news has been able to adapt to include this "citizen" coverage, but in so doing, has forced what might have otherwise been a counter-hegemonic reportage to conform to "professional" norms and standards. For Kperogi (2011), this illustrates that "citizen journalism" is not the counter-hegemonic force that many scholars hoped or predicted it would become. From this perspective, citizen journalism has simply been absorbed by the "regime of objectivity".

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[24] It is worth pointing out here that such binaries always risk over-simplification. For example, in authoritarian states, popular movements seeking to counter propaganda and establish factual accounts of news adhere to objective and neutral reporting (See Hackett and Gurleyen 2017, p. 62 for examples from Turkey, Fiji and Serbia).

On the other hand, this citizen journalism "insurgency" (Waisbord 2013, p. 204), which Allan (2013, p. 9) asserts is "decisively realigning traditional news reporting's communicative priorities and protocols", is not only reshaping the modern news ecology, but is also producing content that is not premised on professional norms (Allan and Thorsen, 2009). This new era of "post-professional" (Waisbord 2013, p. 202) or "post-industrial" (Bell et al. 2014) journalism is characterised by these "fluid boundaries" between amateur and professional, where the "gates come down" and the "citizen" and "journalist" battle for the control of news and information within the public sphere (Barlow 2010, p. 48).

This information reported by the "produser" (Bruns, 2005) adds "diversity" in "multilayered" news ecologies (Waisbord, 2013: 204). In violent societies, where journalistic self-censorship leads to "information blackholes" (Correa-Cabrera and Nava, 2011), some individuals are filling the void and assuming the role of journalist to both share information about what is happening, but also to hold the perpetrators of violence to account (Lara Klahr, 2010; Lara 2011; Carter and Kodrich 2013; Monroy-Hernández et al. 2013; Sierra 2013; González de Bustamante and Relly 2014). This would support the claim of Hayes et al. (2007) that although difficulties persist in attempting to define "journalist", the values, which underpin journalism endure.

These diverse and multilayered news ecologies are far more complex than they ever have been and are characterised by a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership between the amateur and the professional (Allan, 2013; Waisbord, 2013). This mutual dependence in terms of both newsgathering and news production is particularly evident during major crises such as conflict, terror attacks, natural disasters and major protests (see, for example, Russell, 2007; Anden-Papadopoulos, 2009; Bahador and Tng, 2010; Robinson and Deshano, 2011).

However, despite the journalistic contributions these "citizens" may have made, there has not been enough scholarly analysis of what citizenship actually means within the journalism studies framework. Indeed for Taubert (2012) the term "citizen journalism", "belongs on the trash heap of inflammatory archaic jargon". Allan, too, says it is a term on the verge of "conceptual collapse" (2013, p. 201). Citizen journalism is therefore an inadequate conception of what has been a valid contribution to contemporary news ecologies.

Concepts of citizen and citizenship are explored below in the context of Rodríguez (2011) and Allan (2013), and they also become the focus of this study in Chapter 6. In efforts to encourage us to reconsider familiar assumptions about "citizen journalism" and the traditional assumptions, which underpin the

amateur/professional dichotomy, Stuart Allan (2013) rethinks and reconceptualises the notion of the citizen journalist by examining the *journalist as citizen* as well as *the citizen as journalist*. The notion of a journalist as a citizen is arguably an under-researched concept (Allan, 2013), but as Chapter 6 will demonstrate, the application of various theories of citizenship will not only confirm the position of journalist as a citizen, but will also develop Allan's framework that suggests journalism (or witnessing) can itself be an expression or "commitment to the ideals of citizenship" (2013: 109; see also Deuze, 2009; Gil de Zúñiga, 2009; Robinson, 2009; Yaros, 2009).

a). Citizen witnessing

In his book, *Citizen Witnessing*, Stuart Allan asserts that prevalent conceptualisations of citizen journalism risk "reifying into place certain assumptions about the news media that look increasingly anachronistic in today's turbulent times" and argues "the term is in danger of conceptual collapse" (2013, p. 201). Allan's concept of citizen witnessing is therefore intended as a "counterpoint", which aims to provide a basis distinctive from more conventional approaches to citizen journalism (2013, p. 201). He acknowledges its social and historic contingencies, but his aim is to "complicate some of the more pejorative dismissals of the individuals involved in newsgathering processes" (2013, p. 205) and "to elaborate upon epistemic commitments that resist rigid categorization on either side of the professional versus amateur divide" (2013, p. 201). Allan therefore proposes an imagined continuum, which is developed from Edward Green's (2010) examination of democracy and citizenship in "an age of spectatorship" (2013, pp. 30-34) and Dahlgren's idea of "civic cultures", which reveals civic identities as "not static, but protean and multivalent" (Dahlgren 2009, p. 119 cited in Allan 2013, p. 150). The continuum demarcates three positions. It is worth quoting at length:

> At one end is the otherwise, indifferent viewer, listener or reader. Confronted with breaking news reporting of distant suffering, he or she may enact a sense of civic commitment by being moved to care, possibly even to respond to the plight represented before them. At the opposite end of this continuum is another individual, similarly engaged in everyday activities, who suddenly finds themselves caught up in unexpected, quite possibly dangerous events. Much to their own surprise perhaps, she or he may feel compelled to document some fleeting aspect of what's unfolding around them, perhaps in order to share their perspective with others, or maybe to help render it affectively meaningful. To the extent either person self-identifies as a citizen witness, or some variation thereof highlighting their capacity to bear witness (either vicariously from afar or at first hand on the scene), the occupied role is likely to be understood to be as humanely subjective as it is ephemeral. Complicating matters still further is a third subject position, situated in a

shifting, even contested (at times) relationship to the other two, namely the citizen self-reflexively engaged in purposeful witnessing – such as the activist determined to challenge injustice, the NGO worker revealing a humanitarian crisis, the combatant recording the grisly realities of conflict or the whistleblower exposing corruption (Allan 2013, pp. 174-5).

Allan is keen to stress the fluidity and even flexibility of his framework, which is not intended, nor is it presented, as theoretical convenience. Instead he writes how these "diverse positionalities mutually implicate one another in complex, even contradictory ways" (2013, p. 175). By focusing on the notion of witnessing in journalism, Allan breaks down the amateur/professional divide. By shining a light on the "reportorial imperative" of witnessing (2013, p. 205), he is able to expose the amateur/professional binary as an over-simplification, which escapes the nuances of contemporary news ecologies, where "journalistic and citizen witnessing mutually imbricate in a relationship, which at its best, is one of respectful reciprocity" (2013, p. 201). Witnessing is presented by Allan as the embodiment of a possibility "to reinvigorate civic engagement within democratic cultures" (Allan 2013, pp. 205-6). Allan shows how citizens engaged in newsgathering or witnessing can escape conceptualisations as "naïve" and "untrustworthy" to be recategorised as individuals committed to their civic duty. Not only does this give more nuanced and fresh meaning to the idea of a citizen as a journalist, but is also begins to shed light on the journalist as a citizen.

Allan uses Cottle's "injunction to care" (which has been explored in a previous section of this chapter) to highlight an individual's commitment to witnessing. Allan also suggests this notion could go some way to explaining why individuals are willing to take risk and place themselves in harm's way. Whilst Allan acknowledges the "intimate imbrication of subjectivities", which may motivate anyone to care and drive them to "witness" or towards "accidental journalism", he also draws attention to the individual's commitment to ideals of citizenship as a potential motivation (2013, pp. 108-9). This is what he calls a "civic compulsion to care" (2013, p. 108). The importance of this "compulsion" is that it is experienced by the citizen, where that citizen may be a man sitting at home on his sofa, a woman tragically caught up in a terrorist attack, or a reporter at their desk in the newsroom. Indeed this notion that a journalist is a citizen and journalism can be citizenship becomes the spotlight of Chapter 6. The journalism it creates, however, is drawn in contradistinction to the normative and occupational norms of professionalism, which were emphasised in earlier sections of this chapter. As Waisbord writes:

Citizen journalism is reporting without rules. It completely disregards the conventions of journalistic propriety. It is not hamstrung by organisational regulations that make newswork routine, predictable and manageable. Professionalism, instead, is about rules, boundaries, procedures and control (2013, p. 209).

This counter-hegemonic practice is characterised by most within journalism studies as "alternative" (see Atton 2002, 2003; Atton and Hamilton, 2008; Forde 2011; Harcup 2013). The "alternative" label is problematic, however. Within the Colombian context, "alternative" is very closely associated with the ideology of the extreme left and as a result, insurgency. This is why the journalists involved in this study do not position themselves as "alternative". Instead they prefer to be called "independent". Furthermore, the question remains why should they be considered "alternative" when they are simply filling the "information blackhole" (Correa-Cabrera and Nava, 2011) left behind by a retreating dominant media? All things considered, the alternative framework, as it is intended within journalism studies, remains an appropriate one for analysis. While leftist publications may make up part of what is a plethora of alternative publications in the Global North, and though alternative journalism's mission is to counter the commercialised market structures of capitalism, it also constitutes a set of values and ethics, which are closely associated with Carey's (1978, 1989, 1997, 2000) social purpose of journalism. In other words, alternative journalism is a journalism that not only questions and counters dominant structures, it also advocates and calls for social change. It becomes important for this study because the reporters involved in this ethnographic study see themselves as bearers of peace. Before we consider definitions of alternative journalism in some detail, let us first analyse Rodríguez's (2011) theory of citizens' media.

b). The Colombian context: citizens' media

Rodríguez's notion of citizens' media highlights what she calls "the Latin American approach to citizen journalism" (2011, p. 202). She differentiates this from the Global North's approach, which she characterises as the uploading of user generated content to online news portals (2011, p. 200). In Latin America, "citizen" journalism is "a practice of resistance" (2011, p. 201). As both Rodríguez (2011) and Guedes Bailey (2009) note, it may be an act of rebellion, but its form resembles much about what we associate with quality professional journalism such as the importance of verifying facts, identifying sources and maintaining autonomy. So-called citizen journalism in this context is understood as a "practice driven by social responsibility and public interest" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 201) and as a result exposes the flaws in the political and economic structures of dominant news. Another main

difference that is revealed by an exploration of the Latin American context is that "citizen journalism" exists in traditional media divorced from online platforms (Guedes Bailey, 2009; Rodríguez, 2011).

Rodríguez (2011) describes how Colombia has a rich tradition of community media, which was also presented in Chapter 1 of this thesis. As Rodríguez notes, Colombia's citizen journalism goes far beyond "letters to the editor, man-on-the-street interviews and call-in radio and television shows" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 203. See also Allan 2009, p. 30). She attributes three main characteristics to Colombian "citizen journalism", which I argue in this context is better understood as community media: (1) these are collective endeavours – these projects are rarely driven by individuals; (2) the citizen reporters operate within an institutional home – generally a community medium – that has a mission, rules and stated policies; and (3) the acknowledgment of journalism as a craft (2011, pp. 204-5). Perhaps most importantly, Rodríguez claims that "citizen journalism" in Colombia is "driven by the information needs of their communities" (2011, p. 205):

> If online citizen journalists report because they find themselves in the right place at the right time, Colombian citizen journalists report beacsue they are deeply aware of their communities' information needs. While online citizen journalists live their live and use technology to report from wherever life takes them, Colombian citizen journalists leave their everyday lives behind in search of the news and information the community needs. They are continuously trying to detect where the information that matters cab be found; they leave their daily routines to access those places, find the sources, collect information, and spend hours and hours editing finished radio programmes, reports, interviews, and so forth (Rodríguez, 2011, p. 205).

As Chapters 5 and 6 will explore, this journalism is not simply a response to the information needs of the community, but also to the political and social necessity. It is often a call for peace amid the "violently plural" world of the alternative social (*dis*)order, which will be introduced in Chapter 4. Another interesting point to make here (that will be further developed in Chapters 5 and 6), is that this is not "accidental" journalism (Allan, 2013), exercised in the spontaneity of a crisis, but planned, deliberate and sustained action. The type of journalism that can be spawned in these circumstances is therefore often investigative in nature. This is because it is not concerned with the daily news of what happened in the "here and now", rather it attempts to understand and explore why the "here and now" is the way that it is. In the context of my study, this is the result of an individual agent acting in the interests of the collective, rather than an expression of communitarian will. Rodríguez (2011) also acknowledges the contribution of certain individuals and the

need for a framework, which can allow for the potential of individual agency. Rodríguez refers to these individuals as a "citizens' media d'auteur" (2011, p. 82). Though this concept is perhaps underdeveloped in her work, Rodríguez explains how individuals can assume the "performative function" of citizens' media:

> Here, the goal is not to communicate, express, or inform, but instead *to perform* all those local identities, values, ways of life, cultural practices, and forms of interaction that have not been permeated by militaristic, war-driven logics (Rodríguez 2011, p. 82 italics in original).

The work of Rodríguez (2001, 2008, 2011) therefore highlights cases where Colombian "citizen journalism" veers away from traditional modes of reporting to design "creative strategies" to manage "exceptional situations in which specific information needs" have emerged in the community (2011, p. 205). These "exceptional situations" relate of course to armed conflict, and the "creative strategies" not to journalism, but instead to what Rodríguez calls "citizens' media".

The nature of the armed conflict in Colombia is examined in Chapter 4 (and in Appendix I), but this is a country where the familiarity of war and violence creates "a 'weird' encounter between 'ordinary' and 'common' factors, which allows people to live in a chronic state of fear with a façade of normalcy, while terror, at the same time, permeates and shreds the social fabric" (Lewin 2002, pp. 52-3 cited in Rodríguez 2011, p. 59). If these communities experience violence and normality as parallel "realities", and the dominant media privilege representations of war or ignore it completely, then citizens' media can step in and "produce the images and sounds that make the other reality more visible in public spaces" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 242). This is a "reality", which deals with the violence, but also prioritises peace and normality, "reconstituting webs of meaning, which allow communities to make sense of their experiences of war" (Rodríguez 2011, p.3). Just as citizens' media is therefore an attempt to deal with the violent surroundings in which these citizens live, so too is the journalism practiced by those reporters involved in this study. The journalism, or in the case of the research of Rodríguez, the media, is in itself a "performative" act of citizenship and even perhaps of witnessing.

Rodríguez's theory of citizens' media is based upon Chantal Mouffe's concept of citizenship. According to Mouffe (1992), we need to reinstate the centrality of affection in politics. Mouffe states that "democratic politics need to have a real influence on people's desires and fantasies" so that, despite tremendous differences, people can see the other not as an enemy or antagonist to be eliminated, but as an "agonist", whose demands, although not shared, have a legitimate place in the public

sphere (Mouffe, 2006 cited in Rodríguez 2011, p. 207). For Mouffe, citizenship is defined by daily action and engagement. It is removed from the liberal democratic framework, where a citizen is the "passive recipient of specific rights and who enjoys the protection of the law" (Rodríguez 2001, p. 18-19) into a more active model. This performative nature of citizenship will be further explored in Chapter 6.

Citizens' media therefore emerge as "open communication spaces where cultural processes, art production and storytelling repair torn social fabrics, reconstruct social bonds, reappropriate public spaces and strengthen strategies of non-violent conflict resolution" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 22). Citizens' media regard "communication as performance, rather than as information dissemination or persuasion" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 35). In other words, citizens' media do not assume a watchdog role whose purpose becomes to seek out and hold to account the perpetrators of violence. Instead citizens' media go beyond journalistic coverage to focus on the communication needs and daily realities of the people in their communities. News and information are not the only "communication need" within a community, and citizens' media provides an alternative response, which can account for the myriad of complex ways armed conflict erodes communal life (Rodríguez 2011, p. 234). It is also less combative and less dangerous, meaning those who engage in citizens' media are much less likely to be targeted because of their work by the many armed actors within Colombia's conflict. The next section of this Chapter examines the latter half of the second major conceptual framework of this chapter: the dichotomy between "professional" or "dominant" and "alternative" journalism.

2.7 "Alternative" journalism

Alternative journalism is as a "critique in action" (Atton 2009, p. 284) of more dominant forms of storytelling associated with dominant media. The aim is not just to criticise established models of reporting, but to question journalism's role in society, and analyse ways in which dominant news might be radically reformed to establish better ties with the audience; with the citizen. As Atton and Hamilton note, this "critique" proceeds from:

> … dissatisfaction not only with the mainstream coverage of certain issues and topics, but also with the epistemology of news. Its critique emphasizes alternatives to, inter alia, conventions of news sources and representation; the inverted pyramid news texts; the hierarchical and capitalized economy of commercial journalism; the professional, elite basis of journalism as a practice; the professional norm of objectivity; and the subordinate role of audience as receiver (2008, p. 1).

The suggestion is that there is an urgent need to reassess the role of journalism in society. It is vital to explore alternatives to the current "dominant practices of professional journalism" (Atton 2009, p. 267) that have become "routinized" (Atton and Hamilton 2008, p. 79) and "homogenised" (Boczowski 2010, p. 4). If we are to accept that dominant news organisations are in crisis and producing thinner and weaker journalism, if we are to believe that current dominant practices of "professionalised" journalism serve only a limited political and economic elite, then it begs the question what can be done to return "sociality" to journalism (Sosale, 2003)?

Definitions of alternative journalism are broad and vague (Atton and Hamilton, 2008; Forde, 2011). There are those who see it as a response or backlash to more dominant models (Atton 2003, 2009; Atton and Hamilton, 2008), and those who see alternative journalism not as a "mere product of its current context" (Ford 2011, p. 2), but as a process with its own distinctive practices (Rodríguez 2001; Forde 2011). Indeed it is Susan Forde (2001) who points out that what we might now refer to as alternative journalism, existed long before what we have come to recognise as today's "mainstream" dominant model (Forde 2001, p. 2). Indeed if alternative is taken to mean interpretive and advocacy styles of reporting, then such genres continue to exist in Colombia, where they also constitute dominant news reporting. This exposes a further conceptual weakness of alternative journalism in this specific context. However, Linda Jean Kenix (2011) argues that traditionally conceptualised "mainstream" and alternative media now draw so heavily from practices historically thought to be the purview of the other that it is increasingly difficult to ascertain any clear demarcations of difference. The terms "alternative" and "mainstream" have become problematised as useful descriptors of the modern media landscape and this is quite apart from subcategories, "each with its own cornucopia of descriptors" (Downing 2011, p. xxv).

Sweeping generalisations and an over-simplified binary opposition of "David versus Goliath" (Rodríguez, 2001) might seem neat, but they fail to recognise the complexity of the spectrum of media that exists on either side and across the divide (Downing et al., 2001). Furthermore, such interpretations do nothing to enhance our understanding of the values of journalism, which should be "common to all varieties of reporting" (Atton cited in Harcup 2013, p. xiv). However, it is precisely in an attempt to define and champion these "common" values of journalism that these competing definitions emerge.

The so-called mainstream is generally characterised as dominant, corporate, elitist and professionalised (Herman and Chomsky 1988; McChesney 1999, 2011;).

Conversely, alternative media are associated with radical, citizen and even marginalised voices (Atton, 2002, 2003, 2009; Dowmunt et al. 2007; Forde 2011; Harcup, 2013). This is the commercial versus non-commercial; the profit-making versus the not-for-profit making. Again, such generalisations lose sight of what is at stake in this debate and that is which model, if any, lives up to the democratic and social duties that both liberal and more participatory or radical models of democracy might require of journalism.

Olga Bailey et al. (2008) acknowledge there is no one-size fits all definition, but they characterise alternative journalism as a "wide spectrum of media generally working to democratise information and communication" (2008, p. xi). Marisol Sandoval and Christian Fuchs (2010) follow a similar theme and pose a critical theory of alternative media, which discerns a strict dichotomy between a capitalist mass media system and that of an ideal alternative media. John Downing also speaks of alternative media that "express an alternative to hegemonic politics, priorities and perspectives" (2011, p. v). Downing goes as far as referring to such newsgathering practice as "radical" (2011, p. v). However, if we are to believe Karl Marx's assertion that the press are "the public watchdog, the tireless denouncer of those in power, the omnipresent eye, the omnipresent mouthpiece of the people's spirit that jealousy guards its freedom" (Marx, 1849 p. 231), then it begs the question why should something in opposition to a dominant form of practice need to be "alternative" or "radical" if it is simply seeking to be "critical" (Sandoval and Fuchs, 2010) or "oppositional" (Harcup, 2013)?

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2003) highlight the importance of journalism as an independent monitor of power, which they define as "watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny" (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2003, p. 115). Nick Couldry and James Curran (2003), however, outline how media power itself also needs to be monitored and held accountable. In this sense, alternative media become a watchdog over their more mainstream cousins. This is consistent with Downing et al.'s notion of alternative or "radical" media challenging and targeting existing "power structures" (2001, p. 391). Chris Atton (2004), too, refers to the "democratised media practices" of alternative media (2004, p. 7).

a). Rebels within: journalists as agents

Perhaps with the exception of Forde (2011) and Harcup (2013), the scholarship of alternative journalism is generally based on a sense of collective authorship rather than on individual agency (see for example Atton 2002; Downing et al. 2001; Rodríguez 2001). Forde highlights that how journalists see themselves is

inherently connected to how they consider their role in society (2011, p. 59-60). So while many dominant journalists see their role along fairly established lines: to impart information; inform the public; get information to the public as quickly as possible, alternative journalists are more likely to see their role in the broader context of social change: influencing the public; championing particular values and ideas. According to Forde, alternative journalism is not for "breaking news, but for analysis and interpretation" (2011, p. 62). This is in direct contrast to the "increasingly conglomerated nature of commercialised news production, where centralisation and bureacratisation result in a standardised and limited repertoire of news" (Atton and Hamilton 2008, p. 79). This "professionalised" nature of journalism, "where newsgathering and newsworthiness are routinised to such an extent that news production relies on repeated formulas" (Atton and Hamilton 2008, p. 79) is one of the main criticisms of dominant media. Such criticisms can often lead to blame, however. To avoid the futile pointing of a finger, it is important to remind ourselves of the three levels of structural constraints on journalism and journalists, first identified by John MacManus in 1994. At the macro level, these limitations include the dynamics of corporate actions, including ownership, profit-making and relations between corporate interests. At this level, news outlets are nothing more than commodities to be bought and sold in the interests of profit. At the meso level, journalists must deal with the internal relations of their news organisations. This encompasses issues such as resourcing and management. Finally, at the micro level, it is the necessity of individual journalists to respond to the market demand for stories. So whilst it may not be the fault of "mainstream" journalists that they are not doing more in-depth journalism, which according to Forde, alternative journalists strongly identify as one of their key roles in society (2011, p. 63), it is certainly the case that the content alternative journalists are producing is becoming more important as dominant newsrooms scale down even further and journalists become "disseminators" rather than "gatherers" of original news (Barker, 2009).

b). Rebels without: a call for social change

Proponents of alternative journalism also highlight how alternative models of reporting have the potential to change the relationship with the audience. From a sourcing perspective this includes interviewing a wider range of more diverse and non-elite voices (Harcup, 2013). In terms of representation, this should be a journalism that "underscores the variety of ways to frame an issue" (Heikkila and Kunelius, 2002 cited in Atton and Hamilton 2008, p.81) rather than "presenting an issue already framed in a particular way" (Atton and Hamilton 2008, p. 81) and it allows for more participatory models, where the audience become "recorders of their

own reality, empowered as participators in the very construction of their own media" (Atton 2002, p. 115). This participatory role is characterised by Forde as encouraging the audience to take part in democracy (2011, pp. 64-65) and activism (2011, p. 66). It is important to stress that this goes beyond partiality. In other words, the journalism becomes "information for action" (Atton 2002, p. 85) or a call for social change (Forde 2011).

c). The Colombian context: from development to public journalism

Before we consider peace journalism, which openly advocates for a reporting model that prioritises a peace-building approach, let us briefly consider the notion of development journalism. This becomes important in the Colombian context because it highlights how reporting can potentially foster calls for social change within a "mainstream" institutional framework. It also casts further light on the "special type of advocacy journalism" that was identified in a previous section above and helps shift our focus from the dominant "regime of objectivity" to appreciate other existing journalism cultures, including an emerging digital public journalism in Latin America.

Development journalism emerged in the 1960s, but evolved through the 1980s and 1990s (Chalkley 1968, 1980; Stevenson 1994; Xiaoge 2009). Historically, it emerged out of the need to move away from cultural imperialism and de-Westernise journalism practice in contexts where social, economic and political development needed to be fostered (Richstad 2000, p. 279). In Latin America, the priority became nation-building (see Waisbord 2007).

There have been varied approaches to development journalism around the globe. Xu Xiaoge (2009, pp. 362-363) categorises these differing schools of thought as (1) pro-process, where journalism supports and contributes to the process of development; (2) pro-participation, which encourages a deeper citizen involvement and; (3) pro-government, which commands that journalism support the government in its policy efforts to educate people.

Empirically, such approaches can come at a cost, however, and mean neglecting critical or oppositional voices. Development journalism is indeed in conflict with other types of so-called professional practice such as watchdog or investigative reporting because nation-building becomes the priority (Skjerdal 2011). Furthermore, in contemporary Latin America, the development concerns of legacy news organisations have been usurped by commercial and political interests through a concentration of ownership that does not favour the citizen, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis and also in Appendix I.

It is indeed against this backdrop, that in Latin America (and as Chapter 1 noted, in Colombia in particular) that we are witnessing the emergence of a new

breed of "alternative" public service journalism. In short, this is a journalism that is better integrated into the democratic system, whereby news not only informs the public, but it also works towards engaging citizens and creating public debate (Lugo Ocando and Requeo Aleman 2014; Castillo 2018).

A 2017 study by SembraMedia showed that this new digitally native non-profit journalism is "deeply transforming the way that journalism is conducted" in Latin America. It is not weighed down by concepts such as objectivity, impartiality, or neutrality. Instead, these have been replaced with "alternative values" of accuracy, fairness and veracity (Castillo 2018).

Virtually all the journalists interviewed for the SembraMedia study said they created media companies to provide a "public service". Interestingly, the majority of these journalism projects came after the devastating economic crisis of 2008. Indeed all of these journalistic projects have, within their distinctive differences, common threads, including innovation and public service. They are concerned about power and the powerful and they are, as Silvia Gómez suggests, "sowing the seeds of a political and intellectual culture" (2017, p. 105). They incite and facilitate citizen's participation in seeking remedies to wrongdoings.

The aim of these new news organisations is to actively to re-engage with problems neglected by the legacy commercial media. They are, as Costera Meijer suggests, "informing citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens" (2001: 13).

A previous section of this chapter illustrated how war reporting can be the difference between life and death, but within an alternative framework, and in Colombia, journalism can also be the difference between war and peace.

2.8 "Peace" journalism

Peace journalism has emerged as an alternative to conventional war reporting. In recent years a small but growing number of journalism scholars and practitioners have argued a case for it (see Tehranian 2002; Hanitzsch 2004, 2007; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005; Hackett 2006; Shinar, 2007; Ross and Tehranian 2009; Keeble, Tulloch and Zollman 2010; Sreedharan 2013). Based on the peace research of Norweigan scholar Johan Galtung, peace journalism is offered as "an antidote to the ailments of conventional war reporting" (Sreedharan 2013, p. 463). For Hanitzsch, peace journalism "offers a programme or frame of journalistic news coverage, which contributes to the process of making and keeping peace" (2004, p. 484). Majid Tehranian describes it as "empowering the voiceless, and seeking

common grounds that unify rather than divide human societies" (2002, p.80). Galtung explains further:

> Peace journalism stands for truth as opposed to propaganda and lies, "truthful journalism" being, as mentioned, one aspect in peace journalism. It is not "investigative journalism" in the sense of uncovering lies on "our" side. The truth aspect in peace journalism holds for all sides, just like exploration of the conflict formation and giving voice (glasnost) to all (2002, p. 5).

Therefore, the practice of peace journalism is to not sensationalise conflict (often done through covering violence), but rather to provide the public with a deeper sense and understanding of what is occurring through historical context. It also puts into question the motives and responsibility of the journalist to the subjects of their stories and the need for journalists to not just report, but also advocate for peace transformations (Tehranian, 2002). In other words, it promotes social change and cultivates, supports and gives voice to "change agents" that can intervene in cycles of violence (Maras 2013, p. 159).

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick (2005) draw on Galtung's model to depict war journalism with four main elements. First, it is war/violence oriented, focused on a "2 parties, 1 goal (win)" scenario. War journalism constructs conflict within an enclosed arena, it propagates as us/them journalism, which casts the "them" in a negative light. Second, it prefers secrecy over transparency and is propaganda-related. Third, war journalism is elite oriented, focused on the key figures, particular evil-doers. Fourth, it is victory oriented, focused on a formula of "peace = victory + ceasefire". By contrast, peace journalism builds on peace and conflict analysis to shift the focus on conflict towards win-win situations, giving voice to all parties. It resists propaganda through the exposure of truth on all sides. Rather than being elite and victory oriented, it is "people" and solution oriented, focusing on a "formula" of "peace = non-violence + creativity" (Lynch and MCGoldrick 2005, p. 6).

Peace journalism serves as a reminder of how peace can be excluded from the news agenda, where conflict is framed in such a way as to narrow down the options for peace. It is a provocative approach to the issues of balance, highlighting how violent, reactive responses to conflict are over-valued in comparison to non-violent responses (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p. 197).

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) expand Galtung's classification of war and peace journalism into 17 good practices, which include: focusing on presenting solutions; reporting on long-term effects; orienting the news on people and the grassroots; searching for common ground; reporting on and naming wrong-doers on

all sides; disaggregating the 'us' and 'them' into smaller groups; avoiding victimising language; avoiding imprecise use of emotive words such as "tragedy", "massacre", etc; avoiding demonising adjectives and labels such as "brutal", "barbaric", etc. and avoiding opinions or claims as established fact.

Robert Manoff (1998) also identifies 12 roles for the media in reporting violence. These are: (1) channeling communication between parties; (2) educating; (3) building; (4) counteracting misperceptions; (5) analysing conflict; (6) de-objectifying the protagonists for each other; (7) identifying the interests underlying the issues; (8) providing an emotional outlet; (9) encouraging a balance of power; (10) framing and defining conflict; (11) face-saving and consensus building; and (12) solution building.

However, peace journalism remains a controversial approach. First, there are several critiques around issues at the heart of objectivity to do with detachment versus attachment, participation and advocacy (Kempf, 2007; Loyn, 2007; MacLaughlin, 2002; Weaver, T. 1998). Second, the role of journalist as peacemaker has been questioned (Cottle, 2006; Hanitzsch, 2004) and third, the realist assumption of a powerful, causal and linear media effect within peace journalism has also attracted severe criticism (Hanitzsh 2004).

Despite a tendency in the literature to cast peace journalism and objectivity as mutually exclusive and theoretical rivals, there is a sense that this distinction is perhaps somewhat oversimplified. Richard Keeble (2010) and his colleagues observe that peace journalism remains dependent on the values of professional journalism, but this is arguably a failure to acknowledge the complexity of objectivity itself. Lynch and Galtung clarify what they mean by objectivity as "intersubjectively communicable and reproducible, that other journalists would have reported the same. No private fantasy" (Lynch and Galtung 2010, p.53). They also assert that objectivity is not the issue: "selection is the issue, the criteria applied and the codes and contexts in which the event is placed and interpreted" (Lynch and Galtung 2010, p. 53), but Galtung's suggestion that conventional war reporting represents reality in a distorted way "misses the point… In a world full of contingent descriptions of reality, war correspondents can only provide one version of reality that is just as 'true' as numerous other versions" (Hanitzsch 2004, p. 488).

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) argue that journalism needs to address "its own role in shaping discussions and creating realities. Without this, it is failed to collude and conceal" (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p. xvi). Such a rallying cry is familiar within the alternative journalism framework. It is this existential dilemma, which is precisely absent from war journalism advocates.

However, for all the benefits that peace journalism may bring, there is an apparent failure to realise that such a model struggles to exist within the existing political economy of corporate mass media or dominant news. Indeed several other forms of journalism have emerged under the peace journalism umbrella, which perhaps are more precise in their belonging to the alternative journalism framework, including "justice journalism" (Messman, 2001) and "human rights journalism" (Shaw, 2012). In Colombia, where journalists are slowly recognising their responsibility for promoting lasting peace, peace journalism represents an alternative to the status quo (Bello, 2014).

2.9 Journalism in "post-conflict" Colombia

Tahir (2009, p. 1) writes that in post-conflict situations, "the media keeps an eye on the enforcement of peace agreements that have been put in place". Indeed the processes of democratisation and building peace are core issues in post-conflict journalism, as are "rebuilding the society infrastructure, resolving the conflict behind the war and building confidence among warring parties" (de Koster 2009, p. 13). In Colombia, where traditions of advocacy reporting are still very much alive, however. the picture is not as clear-cut. It is worth noting that one of the country's biggest TV channels, *RCN*, took an openly anti-peace stance in its coverage of the peace process (Rincón, 2016). Many journalists believe the public debate about the country's peace deal with FARC has been hijacked by the powerful political anti-peace agenda of former President, Alvaro Uribe. The media have not been able to set their own agenda and instead react to polarised political debate (Ruíz, 2016; Valencia, 2016; Vargas, 2016).

Renowned *Semana* journalist, Marta Ruíz, believes journalism has failed to communicate to the country that the current peace process is the most important event in Colombian history for the past 150 years. She says: "Narratives of hope have lost out to narratives of catastrophe." She highlights the major differences between the two Colombias, explained in Chapter 1. She refers to "the rural world" and "the urban". It is journalism's responsibility "to promote empathy with the marginalised", she says (Ruíz, 2016).

Juan Roberto Vargas, director of *Caracol Noticias*, Colombia's most watched TV news bulletins, believes the biggest challenge for journalism in this "post-conflict" period is "polarisation". He believes dominant media have been "lazy" and "over-reliant" on the state. He admits there is a greater need for "fieldwork" in the regions affected directly by conflict (Vargas, 2016).

Independent and "alternative" journalist, Antonio Morales, director of *Café Picante,* says most of the peace negotiations happened "under the table". He says it is vital for independent reporters to gain access to the communities at risk and be able to speak to the demobilised guerrilla forces. He rejects the term "post-conflict" for the reasons explored in Chapter 1. Instead, he uses the term "post-agreement" to acknowledge that this is one deal with one guerrilla group. "The ELN and the BACRIM are still very present in many regions of Colombia," he says. He also rejects the label "alternative" in favour of "small media", which, he believes, need the support of the state in terms of security, but additionally in financial terms. He stresses the importance of a "journalism beyond opinion" (Morales, 2016).

Semana columnist and ex-guerrilla fighter, Léon Valencia, believes the media need to take a position. "We need to set the agenda and not respond to it. The peace deal is complex, but it has been over-simplified and distorted because we have allowed the anti-peace agenda to hijack our coverage" (Valencia, 2016).

Ignacio Gómez, deputy director of *Noticias Uno*, believes there is no peace in Colombia. "Until we rid our country of drug trafficking and the illegal markets of gold and cocaine, the violence will not end. These are the structures which uphold conflict in this country" (Gómez, 2016).

Indeed as the country enters its complex era of so-called "post-conflict", there have been reminders from all corners about journalism's responsibility to nurture peace (Gehring 2014, p. 6). One manual produced for regional journalists working at the margins of conflict in Colombia suggests they do not rely on official communication from the government, but instead rely on what it calls "good news", in the sense that it promotes the key idea of "reconciliation" (Morelo Martínez, 2014). The manual highlights the way forward for a journalistic practice that promotes peace and also reveals some interesting statistics with regards to how regional journalists see the so-called "post-conflict" period.

80% of the regional journalists surveyed believed they should be promoting reconciliation, but only 61% said they were actually doing so. 67% said it is too dangerous and 100% wanted to know more about their legal rights. 90% felt that peace demands more than "news" in terms of how the issue is covered.

The manual uses the work of Roberto Herrscher (2012) who defines 5 essential elements of "narrative journalism": (1) voice; (2) the vision of others; (3) the way in which the character's voice takes form; (4) revelatory detail; and (5) story selection (Morello Martínez 2014, p. 52). It also draws on Ryszard Kapuscinski's (2005) work, "The 5 Senses of the Journalist", which he defines as: (1) to be; (2) see;

(3) listen; (4) share; and (5) think. To this, Colombian investigative journalist Gina Morello adds a sixth sense: "feel" (2014, p. 50).

The manual also stresses the importance of investigative journalism and the *crónica*, which we saw defined above. There is a sense that this form of longform journalism has more of a potential to connect to the audience than straightforward news reporting. There is of course a great tradition of storytelling within Colombian journalism and a move now to encourage the inclusion of more data (Morello 2014, p. 90). The manual mentions how data is often the gateway to truth (Morello 2014, p. 91). There is no acknowledgement that numbers can also lie. In the context of Colombia, where data is extremely unreliable and even contradictory when various sources are compared, this reliance on data is perhaps a little optimistic.

This section has attempted to highlight the particular challenges currently facing journalists on a national and regional level in Colombia. The aim is to try and contextualise the dominant theories of journalism studies explored in this chapter. This also prepares the reader for the presentation of the particular findings of this thesis, which are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, and concluded in Chapter 6.

2.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the groundwork for analysis into the reporting of conflict and violence in Colombia, which is the focus of this dissertation, has been laid. The literature presented serves as a foundation for how journalism and journalists are both expected to, and despite various constraints, are also able to serve peace and democracy. The literature review has determined the complexity and multi-faceted nature of modern news ecologies. It has also highlighted the need for an understanding of contingency and context. John Merril (1996, p. 36) believes that given the weight of professional norms, individual practitioners have less autonomy to decide or produce news that diverges from common assumptions. In times of conflict, when journalists become direct targets of violence, such constraints on their behavior are more prominent and arguably have a more detrimental affect on democracy and the peaceful life of its citizens. However, as Chapter 5 will argue, there are individual journalists, who are willing to take great risk in the search for autonomy and press freedom.

This study is not preoccupied with the journalists who bring home "distant suffering" (Cottle 2013) or who "commute" to the frontline (Jonathan Steele cited in Tumber and Webster 2006, p. 92). The focus is on those who share up close with their audience the ordeal of distress and even pain and torture. For these journalists and their audiences, the frontline is not simply defined by geography, but it

constitutes the society in which they attempt to live and forge bonds or connect with their fellow citizens. Before the specific findings of this thesis are presented, the next chapter sets up the study methodologically.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This dissertation has set out to investigate the impact of violence being perpetrated against journalists in "post-conflict" Colombia. The research examines the response of journalists living in this area and reflects on the broader implications for both the theory and practice of journalism and the wider democratic process. However, before delving into the analysis of this research, which follows in subsequent chapters, it is first important to understand how this research was conducted.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Firstly, it is important to clarify my position as both a journalist and a researcher through an exploration of standpoint epistemology. The second section of this chapter provides a justification for the chosen methods before the third section provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the particular methods used. This is followed by an introduction to the case study at hand and explains how the particular methods were employed. Finally, there is an evaluation of the challenges faced during this research, which also presents a reflection on safety considerations when carrying out research in dangerous environments. The chapter ends with a summary of the arguments presented and a reminder of the particular research questions guiding this thesis[25].

3.2 Journalist or researcher?

At the heart of this dissertation is a tension between my dual role as researcher and journalist. To some extent, as a former BBC correspondent turned academic, this tension was always going to bring up a particular set of issues. The divide between theory and practice in journalism studies has at times been controversial, but in recent years both sides of this divide have made substantial efforts to bridge this gap (see Machin and Niblock 2006). There is now an increasing acknowledgement and perhaps even acceptance among journalism theorists and practitioners of their shared interests and common objectives. However, as a both a filmmaker and a PhD student, simultaneously "on a shoot" and conducting fieldwork

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[25] This research project adheres to the ethics guidelines of Bournemouth University, where this PhD was first registered. Risk assessment procedures were followed according to university regulations and all informants in this study completed informed consent forms, which was a recommendation of the panel at the transfer viva. The research also conforms to Cardiff University's ethical guidelines.

in the *LLano Verde*[26], the tension between being a journalist and an "ethnographer" became deeply antagonistic from both a practical and theoretical perspective. Although presented here as a thesis, the fieldwork, which provides the sample for this research also provides the content of a documentary and has been used to create a written journalistic investigation. The motivations for this and the specific practical challenges encountered as a result are explored below in a later section of this chapter. The priority here, if I am to explain myself in position to my research, is epistemology. It is therefore important to stress that the duality of my role is of course not by accident. Instead it is a direct consequence of one of my chosen methods: participant observation, where the aim is to experience the field as much as is possible in the same way as those who are researched experience it. By using journalism as part of the participant observation, I was able to get much closer to my informants[27] than other methods would afford. This duality is therefore directly linked to the claims to knowledge I am able to make as a result of my research, which are deeply grounded in feminist standpoint epistemology (Haraway 1991; Harding 1991, 1993, 1995, 2004a, 2004b; Hill Collins 1990; Jagger 1991, 2004; Longino 1999). In short, I have not attempted to separate myself from my research, but on the contrary, have made myself part of it (see Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007).

For Tibor Machan (2004), the intrusion of subjectivity represents a "distortion", "contamination" or "infection". Conversely, standpoint epistemology "embraces the social situatedness of knowledge" (Maras 2013, p. 114).

> This involves a reformulation of the term "objectivity", taking it away from any notion of eradicating bias and value neutrality toward a method of acknowledging and incorporating bias into the structure of the scientific method (Durham 1998, p. 127).

It is an "interactive approach", which aims to "co-construct" meaning between the researcher and informant to accurately reflect experience, thought and feelings (Anderson and Jack 1991). For Alison Jagger, standpoint epistemology provides an "emotional acumen" to "stimulate new insights" (1991 p. 192) and challenge the way

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[26] This is the fictional name given to the region where this study was conducted. See Chapters 1 and 4 for an explanation.
[27] There are several words used to depict "the researched" in social science. The usual practice would arguably be to refer to "participants". This is in preference to "subjects" because of the power imbalance this assumes and its direct relation to more positivist research. However, as the researcher in this case is also a "participant", the preferred term (despite its potential criminal overtones) is "informant", as in much of the literature on ethnographic practice.

facts have been constructed. It empowers individuals to see and understand certain features of reality through a privileged position from which others are obscured. Similarly, for Patricia Hill Collins (1990), concrete experiences manifest the ultimate benchmark of credibility. This "epistemological privilege" (Jagger 1997; Narayan 2004) generates "strong objectivity" (Harding 1991, 1993, 2004a, 2004b), which for Narayan (2004) may also inspire new and critical research questions; questions, which may be obscured to those without this "privilege". "Strong objectivity"[28] allows for the creation of knowledge from "a distinct social position", which makes possible "a view of the world that is more reliable and less distorted" (Jagger 1983, p, 370). Epistemological privilege therefore enables the researcher to access the position of "the native" in ways, which would be excluded to those without this benefit because the researcher can also identify as native, at least in part.

Elliott Liebow (1993) claims that "if only John Jones can know John Jones" then "social life would be impossible" (1993, pp. xiv-xv). I would argue that whilst it is possible for anyone to know John Jones (if they take the time and effort to do so), only John Jones will ever know John Jones as John Jones knows himself. Those that do know him, however, will know him from various or "multiple standpoints" (Harding 1991, 1993, 2004a, 2004b; Haraway 1991; Longino 1999; Hekman 2004). Therefore, as a journalist, I have an "epistemological privilege" (Jagger 1997; Narayan 2004), which allows me to understand certain aspects or shared standpoints of both the individual and his or her context in ways that would be obscured to non-journalists. This is the "strong objectivity", which we saw defined above. This position does not question the validity of knowledge produced by journalism scholars who may not be or never have been journalists. It does not label those without this "epistemological privilege" as "less distorted" or "less reliable", it simply recognises "the distinct social position" from which my knowledge is generated and the deeper or perhaps subjective understanding this potentially generates (Jagger 1983, p. 370; 1997).

Other feminist scholars highlight how different or multiple standpoints may lead to different realities (Haraway 1991; Longino 1999; Hekman 2004;). Harding (1991, 1993, 2004a, 2004b) argues that some of these standpoints may generate more truthful claims than others, which she refers to as "maximally objective". Her point is that through the differences in experience we can learn most about society at large. Critics of standpoint epistemology reduce these claims to relativism, where if

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[28] Note that "strong reflexivity" is an important aspect of Sandra Harding's "strong objectivity". This requires researchers to actively acknowledge, and reflect on, how their social locations, biographical histories, and worldviews interact with, influence, and are influenced by the research process. The importance of reflexivity in relation to this research more generally is explored in subsequent sections of this Chapter.

each group or person produces "specialised thought" and each is "equally valid" with non having "a better interpretation of "the truth" than another" (Collins 1993, p. 625), the risk becomes one of "apolitical relativism" (Brooks 2007, p. 74). Donna Haraway, characterises this criticism a state of "being nowhere, while claiming to be everywhere" (1991, p. 191). However, this misses the point. The aim is not to "produce a single, unified and complete description of the world"(Longino 1999, p. 339), which stands alone and apart from others. On the contrary, it is precisely within the distinctive characteristics of a particular standpoint, or through the uniqueness of a particular experience, that we can hope to find new knowledge (Hill Collins 1990; Hooks 1990; McCarl Nielsen, 1990; Longino, 1999; Brooks 2007). Only by exposing the intraworkings of society as a whole do we learn about which elements require modification and reconstruction so that a more just, humane and equitable society can be constructed.

At stake is how we choose to orient in the world, where positivist models of science dictate that we "stand aside" and "seek detachment", whist reflexive models conversely require us "to intervene" and "enter into dialogue" (Burawoy 1998, p.. 30). Indeed Michael Burawoy (1998) has defined four principles of reflexive science, which forms the bedrock of this dissertation: (1) intervene in the lives of those we study; (2) analyse social interaction; (3) identify those local processes that are in mutual determination with external forces; and (4) reconstruct theories based on what we have learned in dialogue with those involved in our research projects. As subsequent sections of this chapter will argue, the concept of reflexivity in social science is a multifaceted one. The success and outcomes may be partial, yet these efforts can contribute "to identifying processes and power relations at work, hearing stories respondents feel empowered to tell and forging connections to one another across different life circumstances" (Sherman-Heyl 2001: 379).

For John Spradley, the more you know about a situation as an ordinary participant, the more difficult it is to study it as an ethnographer (1980, p. 61). He argues that the *less* familiar you are with a social situation, the *more* you are able to see the tacit cultural rules at work (1980, p. 62). However, such an approach to ethnography was before the so-called "turn" in social sciences towards more interpretive and reflexive models. Since "the turn", the social situatedness of knowledge has been acknowledged (though not accepted by all) with its various knowledge claims as the basis for "maximising objectivity" (Harding, 1995). In short, the role of the researcher cannot be separated from the research process and indeed becomes intrinsic to it.

3.3 Choosing the methods

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have refined methods with which to conduct research, but my choice of approach is very much a reflection of my dual role of journalist and researcher, as discussed above. Therefore quantitative and qualitative methods are tightly bound to mutually exclusive epistemological positions. Whereas a quantitative approach looks for numerical patterns and trends, and seeks to confirm a hypothesis about a phenomena, the qualitative approach seeks to *explore* a phenomena and describe individual experiences. A qualitative approach is concerned with the "complicated character, organisation and logic of culture" (McCracken 1988, p.17).

The primary focus of this research is a small group of journalists who live and report violence in northern Colombia. This thesis therefore follows the humanistic model of social research (Hughes and Sharrock 1990, p. 102) and is deeply entrenched in qualitative ethnographic traditions – those of "social exploration" and "protracted investigation" (Atkinson et al, 2001: 5). However, ethnography is a diverse methodology, includes wide-ranging methods and has many applications. In short, ethnography enables the researcher to learn about his/her informant's experiences of their own "realities", rather than relying solely on his/her interpretation of "reality".

For James Spradley (1980), ethnography is the work of describing culture. He argues that "rather than *studying people*, ethnography means *learning from people*"(3). He cites Bronisław Malinowski (1922, p. 25), who sees the aim of ethnography "to grasp the native"s point of view, his relation to *his* life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world" (in Spradley 1980, p. 3). This is echoed by Clifford Geertz, who believes the objective is to understand culture "from the native"s point of view" (1983, 1988). John Brewer (2000) separates "big" from "little" ethnography, where the former is almost a synonym for qualitative research as a whole, and the latter is defined as fieldwork, or more specifically as one way of doing qualitative research. Indeed Brewer expands the distinction and explains how "big" is perhaps better thought of as methodology, while "small" is thought of as a particular method. Ethnography as fieldwork can take several forms, but usually involves some form of participant observation, interviewing or both. For Atkinson et al. (2001), ethnography is "grounded in a commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation" (2001, p. 3).

In other words, ethnography constitutes a multifaceted approach. For purposes of clarification, my research is an ethnographic study, comprised of

participant observation and life history interviews.

Bronisław Malinowski (1922) and Kathleen and Billie Dewalt (2002) define participant observation as one method that fits into the general category of qualitative research. However, they also acknowledge that it is usually part of a wider ethnographic study and is rarely the only method used in a qualitative research project (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 2). The specific methods, which form the basis of this thesis, are analysed separately below, but we should first turn our attention to the specific role of the participant observer.

As contemporary ethnographic studies have switched focus to the familiar at the cost of the exotic, the specific role of the participant observer and the part they play in the overall research process has also drawn more attention. Feminist and postmodern approaches originated largely in response to the so-called "dual crisis" of ethnography; that of representation and legitimation, which is examined throughout this chapter. Indeed ethnography is presented in this thesis as the counterpoint to more positivist methods and methodologies.

The ethnographic approach appropriate to this research might loosely be considered autoethnography (Chang, 2008; Hughes, Pennington and Makris 2012; Holman Jones et al., 2015; Hughes and Pennington 2016) or narrative ethnography (Tedlock 1991; Ferraro 2007; Reed-Danahay 1997, 2001; Ghodsee, 2016) in that it involves both the lives of the researcher and the researched. For Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997), autoethnography refers to a self-inscription on part of the ethnographer, the native or both, but it is primarily a recognition that individuals do not *have* experience, but are conversely constituted *through* experience (Taylor, 1989; Scott, 1992). Likewise, for Barbara Tedlock, a major part of note taking should be the "observation of participation", which is an approach she terms "narrative ethnography" (1991, p. 69). This is the combination of approach to those being studied (the Other) with a reflection of one's own involvement (the Self).

Contemporary approaches to the humanistic model of social science need to highlight these increasingly complex relationships between the ethnographers' selves, the selves of others and the texts they both engage in (Coffey, 1999). It is perhaps Beverley Skeggs, who best defines ethnography, which:

> … usually combines certain features in specific ways: fieldwork that will be conducted over a *prolonged period of time*; utilizing different research techniques; conducted *within the settings* of the participants, with an understanding of how the context informs the action; *involving the researcher in participation* and observation; involving an account of the development of relationships between the researcher and the researched and focusing on

how experience and practice are part of wider experiences" (2001, p. 426, emphasis in original).

In other words, ethnography does not divorce knowledge from the context of social action nor does it separate knowledge from the social context in which it is produced (Atkinson at al., 2001: 5). Let us now consider each of the methods employed in this dissertation. As a journalist and academic, participant observation allowed me to experience the "reality" of the world as my informants experienced it, while also affording me the space to periodically detach and interpret according to my own "standpoint(s)".

3.4 Participant Observation

Participant observation is inherently a qualitative and interactive experience, which is relatively unstructured (Adler and Adler, 1987; Brewer, 2000; Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002; Emerson et al., 2001; Jorgensen, 1989; Spradley, 1980). It compromises one core activity of ethnography, which involves "establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting" (Emerson et al., 2001: 352). A participant observer is therefore a researcher, who both explicitly records and analyses human behaviour and interactions (Spradley, 1980: 53-4). This approach encourages the formulation of new research questions and hypotheses grounded in on-the-scene observation (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002: 8). The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of human experience and generate "thick description" (Geertz 1973).

Greg Guest et al. outline three distinct categories of human behaviour, which can be captured by participant observation: (1) rules and norms that are taken for granted by experienced participants or cultural insiders; (2) routine actions and social calculation that happen below the level of conscious thought; (3) actions and thoughts, which are not generally recognised as part of the story such as personal rituals and routines, and sometimes missed or hard to uncover in conventional interviews because people may not think to mention them or may consider it silly to bring them up (2013, p. 78). In my study, I am interested in what the journalists do just as much as who they are. Therefore participant observation was the method that would offer me the best insight.

As Kathleen and Billie Dewalt note, "participation and observation are two different processes that in some sense are contradictory" (2002, p. 33). Indeed

various scholars highlight the paradoxical nature of participant observation (Behar, 1996). Benjamin Paul asserts that:

> …participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathise with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity (Paul, 1953: 69 cited in Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002: 23).

For Ruth Behar (1996) the ethnographer must be a "vulnerable observer", ready to include and expose his or her wounds. Indeed recent trends in participant observation make explicit the role and degree of participation, sometimes even with discussion of the researcher's emotional involvement (Geertz, 1995).

A participant observer must experience a social situation both as an *insider* and as an *outsider*. Spradley argues that the participant observer must engage subjectively, but also from a distance and preferably simultaneously. He acknowledges that to do both is difficult and predicts that researchers will alternate between behaving as a "full participant" and as an "outsider" (1980, pp. 56-57). John Brewer refers to this as "oscillation" (2000, p. 60). In my case, I was a researcher, a journalist and a foreigner. This trinity of roles overlapped and impacted on my research in different ways. The researcher required distance and detachment; the journalist participation and attachment; and the foreigner was often simply excluded or ignored.

Spradley also notes how being a participant observer requires a great deal of *introspection.* Being able to look within oneself greatly enhances one's experiences of the world and from a research perspective can lead to informed insight (Spradley, pp. 57-58). Indeed this is an acknowledgement of one's own involvement in the research process; one's "epistemological privilege" (Jagger, 1997; Narayan, 2004), which we saw outlined in the previous section. A growing production of ethnography by social scientists in their own cultural milieu has increasingly led to discussions of "selfhood, voice and authority" (Reed-Danahay 2001, p. 418).

This chapter has already established that autobiographical and reflexive methods of ethnography have long been viewed by many within the social science paradigm of positivism as "unscientific" and at odds with objective, standardised forms of research. The personal is often "denigrated" (Okely 1996, p. 30), but for Brewer (2000), the researcher's own attitude changes, fears and anxieties, and social meanings when engaging in and living with the people in the field form part of the data:

> Data are thus not external stimuli unaffected by the intervention of participant observers, for their autobiographical experiences in the field are a central part of understanding it (Brewer 2000, p. 59).

For Dewalt and Dewalt, a researcher's self-reflexivity is important, but of secondary concern. They see it as "the beginning" rather than "an end" (2002, p. 31):

> We need to be aware of who we are, understand our biases as much as we can, and understand and interpret our interactions with the people we study. Once we have done that, we can strive to determine whether there are regularities in human behavior (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002, p. 31).

I argue that this is neither the beginning nor the end, but is instead fundamental to the validity of one's research, if we are to believe that individuals do not *have* experience, but are conversely constituted *through* experience (Scott, 1992). As previous sections of this chapter have demonstrated, the acceptance and involvement of one's own position in research leads to deeper and privileged understanding.

John Spradley outlines a continuum in the "degree of participation" of researchers (1980, p. 58-62). The more a researcher participates, the deeper the emotional involvement. *Non-participation* (Spradley, 1980: 59) occurs "when cultural knowledge is acquired by observing phenomena from outside the research setting" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 19). This relates to the study of newspapers or watching television, for example. As important as this may be to social and cultural research, it does not employ the method of participant observation. *Passive participation* (Spradley 1980, pp. 59-60) relates to when the researcher is on the scene, but simply observes and remains "a bystander" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 19). There is no participation or interaction. In fact, their position as a researcher is known only to themselves and not to the subject or subjects under observation. *Moderate participation* (Spradley, p. 1980: 60) describes the presence of the ethnographer on the scene, who becomes identifiable as a researcher. Participation or interaction is structured, limited and minimal. *Active participation* (Spradley 1980, pp. 60-61) characterises how ethnographers seek to do what people are doing in order to gain acceptance but also to learn the cultural rules for behavior. This differs from *complete participation*, where the researcher is or becomes a member of the group that is being studied.

Adler and Adler (1987) similarly draw distinctions between the peripheral, the active and the full participant. The peripheral becomes part of the scene, but does not get drawn completely into it. The level of interaction is such that peripheral

participants are still recognised by members as insiders. The active members, on the other hand, illustrate the potential for ethnographers to take on some or all the roles of core membership, whereas full participants have been immersed fully into the community they are studying. In both of these latter categories, the researcher takes on some or all of the duties and responsibilities required by core membership to the extent they resemble the role of the typical participant observer.

In my study, I fluctuated between active and complete participation. I performed the same tasks as my informants and became as full a member of their community as I could be, without being Colombian. Sometimes the cultural and language barriers would constrain the level of my participation and prevent me from attaining the status of full participant. The balance between observation and participation can not only fall anywhere along the spectrums of Spradley (1980) or Adler and Adler (1987), but the balance is also likely to shift during the researcher's time in the field. The balance is not a fixed point, as I found.

For John Brewer (2000), so different are the requirements and problems of using participant observation when the setting may be known or unknown to the researcher, that it becomes important to distinguish between "participant observation", which involves the acquisition of a new role, and "observant participation", which involves the utilisation of an existing role to observe aspects of either a familiar or unfamiliar setting. Participant observation requires great effort to win acceptance in the new world and involves an extensive period of resocialisation into the practices and values of the group. This, in turn, reduces "the capacity of the researcher to get 'insider' status" (2000, p. 62). Observant participation, on the other hand, reduces the capacity of the researcher "to achieve distance from the ties to the group" (2000, p. 62). As a journalist, it might therefore be argued that my involvement was an observant participation. I was welcomed as a *colega* or colleague, and even as a friend. As I explore below, while distance was an important part of the process for me, it could often be interpreted as offensive or cold by my informants.

"Observant", "active" or "full" (Adler and Adler, 1987; Brewer, 1980) participation are described by critics of the ethnographic method as "going native" (Jorgensen, 1989). For Dewalt and Dewalt (2002), "going native" refers to when a researcher sheds his or her identity and adopts the role of a full participant, losing all analytic interest. It is of course important to note that even with the widest and deepest forms of participation, a researcher is able to maintain some distance, even if that distance comes only when he or she has withdrawn from the field. In a way, my nationality ensured I would never go native.

Dewalt and Dewalt conclude that the degree of participation, the membership role of the researcher and the amount of emotional involvement that ethnographers bring to the field will have "an important impact on the data collected and the sort of analysis that is possible" (2002, p. 24). They also argue that participating "allows ethnographers to "know" in a unique way because the observer becomes a participant in what is observed" (2002, p. 24).

This section has defined participant observation and emphasised the method's various characteristics, which make it a powerful technique for research. However, participant observation is not without its challenges and limitations.

a). The limitations of participant observation

Conducting a participant observation can be a long and complicated process. The limitations of this method require consideration from both a practical and theoretical perspective. Firstly, it is important to highlight the potentially and unpredictably time consuming nature of a participant observation (Guest et al. 2013). Ensuring an adequate period of time in the field to enable the collection of viable data is a challenge, especially if an ethnographer may be working with deviant subcultures. It may, however, be that participant observation is the only viable approach to this type of research (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 10). Researchers who have worked with such groups as drug dealers (Adler 1985; Bourgois 1995), bank robbers and gangsters (Katz 1988), gangs (Sánchez Jankowski 1990) and poachers (Brymer 1991) have often argued that log-term participation in the setting was the only possible way to gain the trust of the participants to carry out the research. Therefore, whilst this could be seen as a limitation, it is also a strength of the method that allows a researcher to gain the trust of his or her informant in ways, which other methods do not allow for. I was only able to gain access to members of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM because of the length of time I had spent in the field.

Guest et al. define participant observation as "highly practitioner sensitive" (2013, p. 84). The data collected is open to criticisms of idiosyncracy and bias, but the argument presented in this thesis is that these idiosyncracies conversely enhance the research and its findings (as highlighted above) because bias becomes part of the scientific model (Hill Collins 1990; Haraway 1991; Harding 1991, 1993, 1995, 2004a, 2004b; Longino 1999).

Perhaps the biggest criticism of the method originates from its apparent difficulty to draw generalisations (Guest et al. 2013, p. 82; Emerson et al., 2001). Such arguments risk missing the key point, however. The aim is to develop an holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as accurate as possible given the limitations of the method. Michael Agar (1986) draws on the well-used

analogy of the six blind men and the elephant. His point is not that any particular view is ever complete or true, but that the integration of information from different observers or different methods provides a better understanding (cited in Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 98).

All research methods have their strengths and weaknesses, but participant observation allows for a greater rapport with the informant and better access to the research setting, which therefore generate an enhanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Informants can be studied not just in terms of the words, but also their actions. This takes on additional meaning, when words and actions contradict, as later sections of this chapter will illustrate.

b). Ethical issues involved in participant observation

Michael Punch (1994) argues, quoting Ditton (1977), that participant observation is inevitably unethical "by virtue of being interactionally deceitful" (Ditton 1977, p. 10). This deception relates to the relationship between the researcher and their informant. Those who are the objects of our observation can "act up" and influence the data just as they can equally forget they are part of a research project at all. For Dewalt and Dewalt (2002), however, participant observation is ethically challenging rather than inherently unethical. In my study, one of the informants was so concerned to make me feel welcome and perhaps even impress me, he would regularly "put on a show". Over time, this became less frequent, and as we became more comfortable with each other, the informant began to be more himself. It is probably also important to stress that I only noticed he was "acting up" in retrospect once I had spent enough time in the field to actually know that such behavior was out of character.

All researchers must understand the notion of informed consent, which basically refers to the right to freely choose whether to participate in a research project or not. For Fluehr-Lobban (2013), consent can be achieved without the formalist approach of obtaining signed forms. A more dynamic, non-formal approach can be adopted, but as Dewalt and Dewalt (2002, p. 200) note, this places a heavier burden on the researcher. The disclosure of clear research goals and a regular reminder of the research nature of the relationship between ethnographer and informant can go a long way to guaranteeing informed consent. I shall return to this theme when I outline the specific challenges faced in my study below.

Participant observation is dependent on a close relationship between the ethnographer and the informant. Such relationships can develop into friendships. Dewalt and Dewalt highlight the transient nature of these types of rapport, but make an important point. They point out that whilst the fieldworker is almost always

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transient, "we must recognise that this transcience may not be the expectation of those individuals who become our informants" (2002, p. 207). Dewalt and Dewalt point to four potential areas for risk when carrying out participant observation: (1) stress related to discussion of difficult or sensitive topics; (2) failure to protect confidentiality with respect to sensitive information; (3) disclosure of illegal activity or sensitive information; and (4) unanticipated results of publication (2002, p. 201). Again, this is something I shall re-consider when I examine the particular challenges posed by my specific study below and in the reflections section of Chapter 6.

The employment of participant observation also requires the researcher to engage in informal interviewing. This is important for verification purposes. For Agar (1986), one of the key uses of observation is to allow for the juxtaposition of what people say they do, and what they are observed to, as we saw above. However, interviewing during a participant observation is not always practical. For example, if I want to interview an informant about an interview he is conducting, it is not always an appropriate moment to intervene. Furthermore, it is important that whatever happens in the field is reflected upon separately. For this study I therefore adopted life-history interviews as a second method to allow my informants the time to reflect and consider their actions and opinions.

3.5 Interviewing for ethnography: up close and semi-structured

Kathy Charmaz explains the purpose of the interview as a way to explore "an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight" (2001, p. 676). As Spradley notes in *The Ethnographic Interview*, "the essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meanings of actions and events to the people we seek to understand" (1979, p. 5). The researcher's task therefore is to communicate genuinely, in both subtle and direct ways that "I want to know what you know in the way that you know it… Will you become my teacher and help me understand?" (1979, p. 34). In ethnography, the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is "up close and personal" (Sherman-Heyl 2001, p. 370), where interviewees are "empowered to shape, according to their world views, the questions being asked and possibly even the focus of the research itself" (Sherman-Heyl 2001, p. 370).

Since Spradley's influential works on ethnographic interviewing, postmodern and feminist critiques have revealed a rather more complex form of social interaction, which essentially conclude that the interview process is a co-construction or co-production of data (Briggs 1986; Mishler 1986; Atkinson and Hammersley 1994; Rubin and Rubin 1995; Kvale 1996;). Furthermore, there is a recognition that what

interviewees choose to share with researchers reflects conditions in their relationship and the interview situation (Sherman-Heyl 2001, p. 370). The knowledge that is produced during the interview is a product of this interaction. In this semi-structured format, the researcher "abandons concerns with standardisation and control, and seeks to promote an active, open-ended dialogue" (Wimmer and Dominick 2003, p. 65).

Steinar Kvale sets out seven stages of an interview investigation: (1) thematising; (2); designing; (3); interviewing; (4) transcribing; (5) analyzing; (6) verifying; and (7) reporting (1996, pp. 94-8). Kvale's work is important because it recognises interviewing as a process. More specifically, it includes the reporting of the data by the researcher and the researcher's previous knowledge and experience as part of this process. This demonstrates how knowledge, which has been co-constructed during the actual conversation is not only a result of various processes that occur before and during the interview itself, but also afterwards, when the researcher is charged with interpreting the data. This interpretation fits with the so-called "turn" in social sciences, as discussed above. It is also worth noting that even those scholars who voice serious concerns about the ethical and epistemological issues in contemporary interviewing do not reject the method altogether (Denzin 1997, pp. 265-87; Ellis 1995, p. 94; Scheurich 1995, p. 249).

Barbara Sherman-Heyl (2001) defines ethnographic interviewing as taking place over time and "within relationships characterised by high levels of rapport" and with "particular focus on the meanings the interviewees place on their life experiences and circumstances, expressed in their own language" (Sherman Heyl 2001, p. 369; see also Spradley 1979, p. 24). It is these features, which separate ethnographic interviewing from other perhaps more structured forms.

However, Grant McCracken (1988,) argues that interviews should be a presented manipulation, striking a balance between formality and informality, but ultimately manipulating the informant to believe that they hold the power in the interviewer-interviewee relationship (1988, p. 26). The fundamental problem with the structured long interview, which McCracken (1988) defends so vehemently, is that it does not take into consideration the natural bias of socially constructed, socially situated and ideologically based beliefs that both the interviewer and the interviewee bring to the interview setting. In other words, it defines objectivity as neutral, detached and singular, which this chapter has argued against. On the contrary, the argument supported here is that standpoint epistemology uses the situated nature of various knowledge claims as the basis for "maximising objectivity" which is a complex, multifaceted and multidimensional concept (Harding, 1995).

Eliot Mishler (1986) argues that structured interviewing actually serves to separate interviewees from their responses and the context of their daily lives. For Mishler, this de-contextualisation prohibits the interviewees' ability to develop a detailed, coherent response and to construct an overall narrative. To obtain such responses, the interviewer needs to share power over the interview process with the interviewee (1986, pp. 122-32). Mishler (1986) identifies three types of relationship between interviewer and interviewee. They form a continuum of empowerment within the interview relationship, which we will now briefly consider:

Informants and reporters

This relationship shifts power to the informant because they are able to name the world in their own terms, rather than rely on the terminology or themes introduced by the interviewer or the reporter (Sherman-Heyl 2001, p. 375). This relationship also draws importance to the notion of listening, which takes place both during the interview and afterwards, when the researcher reviews the recordings and the transcripts (Sherman-Heyl, 2001; DeVault, 1990; Holstein and Gubrium; 1995). Poland and Pederson (1998) also urge researches to pay attention to the silences in interviewing, from which meaning can also be deduced (1998, p. 307).

Research collaborators

In a collaborative relationship, participants of research are told up front how data will be used. Indeed most ethics panels today will expect a researcher to be honest with their respondents about the nature of the research, whether it be ethnography or a survey. Further dimensions of this relationship include the researcher and the researched working together to re-shape research questions or even interpret data and review the overall findings (Lather, 1986; Briggs, 1986; Shokheid, 1997).

Learners/actors and advocates

This final relationship includes the promotion of the research to inspire some kind of change, which would directly impact on the respondents. Such change can come from within, from those being researched directly; or from without, from policy-makers or other key stakeholders, for example (Carspecken, 1996). There are distinct ethical challenges, however, in leading one's informants to believe participation in research will guarantee change.

a). Interviews as part of a participant observation

Interviewing as part of participant observation is "informal" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 120; Bernard 1995, p. 209). There is a total lack of structure or control. Bernard (1995) notes that the basic rule in carrying out interviewing or conversing during participant observation is that the researcher is intent on following

the lead of the informant, exerting only minimal impact on the topic and flow of interaction. The goal is to get out of the way of the participants or informants and let them talk freely (Brewer, 2000, Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002; Jorgensen, 1989; Spradley, 1980). The input of the ethnographer is restricted to asking questions for clarity and only when absolutely necessary (Spradley, 1980).

A participant observation will, however, generate many questions, if the researcher is observing events and activities carefully. These questions can be addressed through more structured interviewing. In a practical sense, the participant observer must make a note of these questions and rely on a more formal and structured method of interviewing at a later date.

b). Life history interviews

Bruce Shaw defines four approaches to what is regarded within ethnography as the life history approach: "(1) they emphasise the importance of the teller's sociocultural milieu; (2) they focus on the perspectives of one, unique individual; (3) they have a time depth, so that personal history also reveals matters relevant to a region or group's local history; and (4) they relate the local history from the point of view of indigenous narrators" (1980, p. 229). Life history interviews are the focus of much debate within ethnography (Reed-Danahay 2001; Angrosino 1989; Atkinson 1992; Denzin 1989; Linde 1993; Peacock and Holland 1993; Watson and Watson-Franke 1985). Distinctions are drawn between (1) life history - this is when the interviewee's story is elicited by another person; (2) autobiography, when the interviewee self-initiates their story (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985, p. 2 in Reed-Danahay 2001, p. 408); and (3) the "immediate perspective" of "diary" (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985, p. 3 in Reed-Danahay 2001, p. 408). The life history biographical approach adopted in this study incorporates the reporting of material that has been rearranged by the interviewer. At issue is not only the shape of the ethnography, but the manner in which the interview itself is conducted and reported. For Norman Denzin (1989, p.17), the biographical approach constitutes "conventionalised, narrative expressions of life experience". For the researcher, meaning is to be found in interpretation, which resides on "subjective and inter-subjectively gained knowledge and understandings of the life experiences of individuals, including one's own life" (1989, p. 28). Ethnographic interviewing therefore places further demands on the researcher, who is expected to not only reflect on the words and silences of the informant, but also on her own place within the interview structure.

c). Reflexivity

In line with the so-called "turn" in social sciences and ethnography more

specifically, which we saw defined in a previous section of this chapter, Karp and Kendall (1982) also argue that interviews as part of an ethnographic study must also be reflexive. They explain that the interpretation of data necessitates a reflection, whereby the researcher reflects on herself and their involvement in the research process. This reflexivity requires the ethnographer to "turn the anthropological lens back upon the self" (Karp and Kendall, 1982, p. 250). Let us now consider the details of my specific research.

3.6 The Research

This study is a result of four visits to the Colombian region concerned. The first was between May and June 2013. The second was between May and July 2014; the third between May and July 2015 and the fourth was in July 2016. The fieldwork therefore took place over the course of three years. The aim was not only to observe journalists at work, but also to report on events in the region myself, as previous sections of this chapter have explained.

As well as working with the five journalists mentioned above, I also interviewed the local police, local politicians and other citizens of the region. Interviews with other Colombian journalists from across the country were also conducted as part of this study. This included those reporters who have worked at some point in the area concerned, as well as those who have not. These journalists represent a number of media and genres of journalism. The aim was to provide more context surrounding the specific pressures and challenges faced when covering the violence in Colombia, as well as to gain further insight into the structures of the Colombian media system. Furthermore, this research also includes interviews with those who have perpetrated violence against journalists.

The predominant method used in this research is participant observation. This is a method used to understand what is happening *now*. It is synchronic and is therefore focused on the present and not the past. It is also an experiential approach, which allows for the creation of descriptive and interpretive research concentrated on "humanistic" or "naturalistic" elements (Hughes and Sharrock 1990; Coffey 1999). This approach also acknowledges the position of the researcher who, rather than trying to remain detached, is tasked with involvement and reflection. The focus of participant observation becomes "patterns of thought and behavior" (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 100).

Throughout my time in the field, I used the framework developed by Dewalt and Dewalt which demands the participant observer do the following: (1) Observe the activity and study the "story line"; (2) Identify the component segments of action; (3)

Try to sort out the regular, non-varying components from the more variable items; (4) Look for variations in the story line that reflect differences in socio-economic status, education, ethnicity, etc; and (5) Look for exceptions (2002, p. 77). They also stress that if the observed behaviour is important for theoretical purposes, then the researcher should develop a plan for systematic observation, including an estimate of how many observations will be "enough". Indeed this will be a central question for all researchers to which there is no easy answer. It is difficult to know when to withdraw from the field, to ascertain when enough data has been gathered. In reality of course, the time in the field is probably constrained by financial and other practical or personal considerations. For Brewer, the role must be permanent enough to allow intensive observation over a period of time and be sufficiently broad and encompassing to permit access to a cross-section of events, activities and people (2000, p. 62). In my case, I made several trips. The duration varied from three weeks to three months, but theses trips were intentionally spaced out over the course of three years. Time and access are key in participant observation. Time allows for more insight, which will lead to "thicker description" and access can also depend on trust, which is built over time. This was certainly true in my case. Informants shared more detailed and intimate information as they got to know me and came to trust me. I was also able to identify change – in both the informants and their surroundings.

a). Ethnographic description

One of the main benefits of an ethnographic study is the rich detailed data that is obtained (Denzin 1997; Holt & Sparkes 2001; Wolcott 2008). This study presents a portrayal of the everyday lives of a group of individual journalists working in one particular area, which has been described as a "priority" in so-called post-conflict Colombia. It also includes a detailed description of life in this area for both the victims and perpetrators of neo-paramilitary BACRIM violence.

The description in this study is presented as a set of stories. The purpose is to draw the reader into the social world of the study's informants. This in turn offers insight and perspective into the everyday reality of those central to the research.

Ethnographic description prepares the reader for the more theoretical analysis that follows. With a detailed and descriptive understanding of the empirical study as a basis, further theoretical discussion is grounded in the experiences of those involved in this research. While it is acknowledged that ethnographic social worlds contain particularities, which make each unique, these worlds are socially situated and constructed. This makes possible the application and consideration of broader theory. The data analysis does not seek generalisations through sample

representativeness, but the study will have broader implications for communities affected by sustained violence and for the journalists living and working in them.

b). Establishing the "field"

Traditionally the field in ethnographic studies referred to a geographical location that was home to the foreign or the exotic. However, this chapter has illustrated how more recently ethnography has been applied to more familiar settings. In terms of journalism studies, Chapter 1 illustrated how the ethnography of news production has been reliant on the observation of newsrooms in elite media organisations. This focus on prestige and dominant media does nothing to question or challenge the power relations reinforced by newsroom-centricity (Cottle 2007; Wahl Jorgensen 2014,). Indeed Simon Cottle (2007) and Karin Wahl Jorgensen (2014) have both suggested that this concentration on dominant media might be redressed by comparative multisited ethnographies in different types of media and in different geographical and cultural contexts. Journalism that takes place outside of the newsroom is difficult to trace. This is especially true of unconventional or what we might call alternative models of journalism, such as we see in regions similar to where this study takes place, and which are often produced in informal spaces.

A number of ethnographers emphasise the field not as "a pre-given natural entity", but "something we construct, both through the practical transactions and activities of data collection and through the literary activities of writing fieldnotes, analytic memoranda and the like" (Atkinson 1992, p. 5). Specifically:

> The field is produced (not discovered) through the social transactions engaged in by the ethnographer. The boundaries of the field are not "given". They are the outcome of what the ethnographer may encompass in his or her gaze; what he or she may negotiate with hosts and informants; and what the ethnographer omits and overlooks as much as what the ethnographer writes (Atkinson 1992, p. 9).

Similarly, for Skeggs the field occurs across both time and space (2001, p. 426). James Clifford (1997) also conceives of fieldwork as "an embodied spatial practice" calling for both "displacement" (that is, "physically going out" from "home" to some other "different" place or setting) and also "focused, disciplined attention" (1997, p. 53). Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein contrast the different conceptions of the field implicitly assumed in different approaches to qualitative methods: a classic ethnographic naturalism views the field as a geographical place, whereas ethnomethodology's "field" lies "wherever reality-constituting interaction takes place" (1997, p. 52).

c). Participation and power

Previous sections of this chapter have outlined the varying degrees and typologies that are used in the literature to describe the extent to which and "an outsider" can become "an insider", but this section analyses the particular relationship between the researcher and informant, which is at the core of participant observation. In particular, this section provides an evaluation of how participant observation was employed as part of the research in hand.

The overall aim of a participant observation is to experience and share the same everyday life as those under study, to see "the other" inside oneself (Brewer, 2000, Jorgensen, 1989; Spradley, 1980). The relationship is based on mutual respect and trust, which can obviously take time to develop. It is also based on personality. I had a much better rapport with some of my informants than others, for example. Over time, the journalists in this study came to call me *colega*, or "colleague". This is undoubtedly a sign of acceptance. Sometimes, however, I would always be *el ingles*, or "the Englishman", which illustrates a lasting awareness of my "otherness".

As a journalist-researcher, I became more accepted than if I had been a researcher alone. With a common identity around journalism, my involvement might therefore be categorised as an "observant participation" (Brewer 2000, p. 60). Whilst it may also have been "active" or "full" participation (Adler and Adler, 1987), my nationality and language were a barrier to full insertion in the community. This simultaneous "involvement and attachment" is at the heart of the participation observation (Powdermaker 1966, p. 9 cited in Brewer 2000, p. 66).

For Brewer, a proper balance in the participant observer's dual role as part insider and part outsider gives them the opportunity to be inside and outside the setting, to be simultaneously member and non-member, and to participate while also reflecting critically on what is observed and gathered while doing so (2000, p. 60). Thus the researcher oscillates between his or her own world and that of the other, all the while reflecting on both. This reflection is applied back to one's own world and is used to shape one's own world. Participant observation is therefore not just learning about the other, but also about oneself, the wider world and one's own place in it, as Chapter 5 will show.

My experience as a journalist was contentious at times, as Chapters 4 and 5 will illustrate. Indeed the relationship between the researcher and researched in participant observation and ethnography more widely has been described as "asymmetrical" (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p. 344). Attempts at downplaying inequalities and developing reciprocal relationships with informants may be

disingenuous, not least because researchers have the privilege of eventually leaving the field. This is, of course, if one defines the field as a pure geographical setting. Places can be left behind, but human relationships can continue, as we will see below. Therefore, if we constitute the field as something more than place, as we saw in the previous section of this chapter, leaving the field might be more difficult than first envisaged.

There is a concern in some of the methodology literature on ethnography that different "positionalities" (Wolf, 1996b) of the researcher and researched in terms of race, class, nationality and gender among others, may render the informants vulnerable to exploitation (Patai, 1991). Diane Wolfe (1996a) describes her unease at lying to her Indonesian informants about her religious affiliation and marital status whilst at the same time expecting frankness from them on the same issues. Evelyn Blackwood (1995) concealed her sexuality from the members of her fieldwork village, maintaining a fiction about a fiancé at home. She described her discomfort, which "at worst established my superiority over the people in the village because it implied they should not, or did not need to know such things about "their" anthropologist" (1995, p. 57). Sexuality became an issue for me too, as the following extract from my field diary explains[29]:

> *Jorge was telling me one of his darkest secrets and he was telling me because he suspected I was gay too. I simply listened with a sympathetic ear, but I didn"t confirm my sexuality, or offer any advice, which I think he wanted. For me, this was crossing the line. There had to be some distance, I thought. I was not there to share my private life, but upon reflection, I expected them to share with me so how was this fair? I wanted to know everything about them. Why should they open up and divulge private information to me if I were not willing to do the same?*

The concern with self-disclosure is related to issues of power between the researcher and the researched (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p. 343). My worry, as demonstrated in my fieldnotes above, was that being gay could compromise my research, mainly in terms of access, but also in terms of developing close ties. "Jorge's" "coming out" was perhaps the ultimate expression of trust. I had become his friend. We had become close. A successful participant observation relies on this strong bond, but I had realised that what was for me a purely professional relationship, was for him now a close friendship. Ethnography has been described as "playing with another person's life" (Plummer 2001a, p. 403; Plummer 2001b, p. 224). This was when I realised that my research would leave a lasting impact on the

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[29] The issue of sexuality and the relationship between the researcher and researched is also explored in Chapter 5.

people I had been working with and that I had met people who would want to continue our relationship long after this project was over.

It is also worth pointing out that informants also maintain the capacity to exert power over ethnographers (Hammersley 1992; Wong 1998). Several times, Jorge would exert his authority by asking my to stay outside, for example. He too actually wanted privacy at times and sought to maintain boundaries between us and control access to what I could observe.

The exploitation of informants occurs when ethnographers use their superior power to achieve their objectives at the cost to those they are studying. Feminist ethnographies attempt to redress these power imbalances with the suggestion that the relationship between the researcher and researched can become more equal and intimate (Skeggs, 2001). As we have seen above, however, this can also be problematic for the researcher. Beverley Skeggs (2001) outlines three areas of ethical proscription in feminist ethnography. The first is "reciprocity", where both the researcher and the researched attempt to form an equal partnership. For the researcher, this involves accepting oneself as part of the research process. The second is a "responsibility" not to show informants as "powerless". Finally, and perhaps most controversially, is the relinquishing of control of the research, as advocated by Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1983), among others. The ethnographic approach has been criticised for its arrogance, which is apparently embodied in a presumption that a researcher can bring others to voice better than they can themselves (Coles, 1997; Malcolm, 1990). The alternative is to allow the informant a say in the final outcomes of the ethnography. This is also referred to as "the Bell debate", which was generated in 1989 after Australian ethnographer, Diane Bell, published a paper with a her informant as co-author (Bell and Nelson, 1989). Many scholars saw this as "white imperialism" or "middle-class privilege" (Bell and Klein, 1996), which was most certainly the opposite of what was intended.

I have not shared my findings with those involved in the research process. Instead, the aim was to reflect on any conclusions and use these as a basis for discussion with my informants. This was my method for challenging my own assumptions. I have also been at pains in this dissertation to show that its findings are the basis of my interpretation. I have emphasised my own position and influence in the undertaking of this ethnography and attempted to show where these may conflict. For James Spradley, "ethnography starts with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance" (1980, p. 4). Skeggs, however, asserts that "when we enter ethnography we enter it with all our economic and cultural baggage, our discursive access and the traces of positioning and history that we embody" (2001, p. 434). She

argues that by accepting the multifaceted nature of identity, a researcher will be open to issues of bias and power in what is a very complex relationship with the informant. The ethnographer's interpretations may represent a powerful, uninvited intrusion into the informants' lives, which robs them of some element of their freedom to make sense of their own experience (Josselson, 1996), but Skeggs argues that by acknowledging these power issues in the first place, it may become more possible to take responsibility for the reproduction of power, rather than attempt to equalise it (2001, p. 434). I have therefore been open and honest about both the process of research and its outcomes.

The capacity for arrogance is particularly great where authors are rendered invisible in the text so that the authority of their interpretations is assumed and ascribed rather than attained (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p. 345). It is therefore vital that that researchers make themselves visible in the texts they write (Chase, 1996). This involves a presentation of the evidence on which their interpretations are based (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). By separating out the data from the researcher's interpretation, authors open the possibility that their interpretations may be challenged (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p. 345). Firstly, this places a great importance on the inclusion and also on the construction of fieldnotes, which is the subject for the next section in this chapter. Secondly, it brings into question how one might place onself in the research process.

Ruth Behar points out that "the exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we could not otherwise go. It has to be essential to the argument, not decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake" (1996, p. 14). Behar expresses concern about certain confessional styles because "the danger is putting the personal self so deeply back into the text that it completely dominates so that the work becomes narcissistic and egotistical" (1996, p. 6). She adds: "In anthropology, which historically exists to give voice to others, there is no greater taboo than self-revelation" (1996, p. 26). However, this dissertation assumes that to understand the other, one must first start with oneself. As will hopefully become apparent in subsequent chapters, I have reflected not just on my own personality and position in the world, but have done this to reach a deeper understanding of my informants and the environment they work in. I do not separate myself from the field in this sense. Instead, I become part of it. The reflection becomes part of the process and the conclusion-making. For Tedlock and her work on narrative ethnography, the focus is not the ethnographer, but "the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue or encounter" (1991, p. 78).

Judith Okely writes "there is a need to for more explicit recognition of fieldwork as personal experience instead of sacrificing it to false notion of scientific objectivity" (1996, p. 27). She also suggests that "since almost nothing about the people studied is dismissed as private, taboo or improper for investigation, the same should apply to the researcher (1996, p. 29). Indeed there are many calls in the literature for a more explicit exploration of the links between researchers' own autobiographies and their ethnographic practices (Ellis and Bochner, 1996; Okely and Callaway, 1992; Reed-Danahay, 2001). Skeggs concludes there are several "irreconcilable conflicts" in ethnography (2001, p. 435), but asserts this does not render the method pointless. An ethnographer"s highly critical reflexivity and ethical sensitivity can still produce valid research, but these are all based on the assumption, which is shared by this dissertation, that "knowledge is situated, partial, contingent and interpretive" (2001, p. 435).

d). The field notes

Since the reflexive turn in the social sciences, and ethnography more specifically, there is a plethora of literature on field notes (see for example: Geertz 1973; Clifford 1990; Sanjek, 1990; Marcus 1994; Emerson et al. 1995). Indeed field notes have become a key area of focus – even contention - in ethnographic research because differences with regard to the writing and value of field notes reflect current tensions, dilemmas and choices endemic to all ethnography (Emerson et al. 2001, p. 355). Fieldnotes and the variation of approach that exists in both the recording and analysis of notes exposes the dynamic tension between participation and observation that exists. Emerson et al. show how on the one hand, ethnography requires both observation and immersion, "which can be recorded and preserved" through note taking, whilst on the other hand, long hours of participating in other ways of life "can generate deep, intuitive insight and perception" without having to take pen to paper (2001, p. 355).

Field notes provide a "look behind the scenes" (Lofland and Lofland, 1995, p. 96), which is intended to be descriptive. The description moves beyond pure facts to embody the active process of reflection and interpretation or sense-making (Emerson et al. 2001, p. 353). Fieldnotes provide data and analysis simultaneously (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, p. 143).

I employed a three-stage method when it came to writing fieldnotes, which is loosely based on the rhetoric strategies outlined in Emerson et al. (2001, pp. 359-60). The first stage involves describing the action in the field as detailed and as quickly as possible. This involves decisions about whose voices and actions to depict, what sort of diction to use and point of view to take. The aim is to present "the

chaos of life on a linear page" (Emerson et al. 2001, p. 358). I would concentrate on the individuals who are focus of my study. They became my protagonists. Secondary characters were only noted in detail if there was interaction with the main informant. Herein lies a challenge, however. Even though one is firmly fixated on the protagonist, one must also maintain a wondering eye that searches for people or events, who may potentially have impact on the main scene. These notes would take a more jotted form and offer a "running description of events, people, things heard and overheard, conversations among people, conversations with people (Lofland and Lofland 1995, p. 93). Often these notes would take the form of video. In my dual role as journalist-researcher, I was also filming a documentary. The challenges this duality posed is examined above, but it did provide footage, which served as an excellent aide-memoire for the second stage in my process. Indeed Michael Taussig 2011) reflects on the use of imagery in field diaries. He uses drawings whereas I relied on the camera.

The second stage involves making sense of the notes one has taken in the field to create "episodes" (Emerson et al., 2001). Sometimes this involved looking back at the video footage that been filmed. I would aim to do this daily, ensuring that I understood what had been captured and highlight any areas where further clarification might be necessary. Some may omit this stage and jump straight to the next, but for me the aim here was twofold: to immerse myself in what I had observed, and to ensure I could understand what I had written so as to be sure my field notes would constitute a reliable source. As the first stage often involved video, this second stage also becomes vital. If the first stage involved jotted notes, then the second involved a more diary form, where the jots from each day would be transformed into prose, taking into account descriptions, but also impressions, thoughts and concerns. It is important to note that even seemingly straight-forward descriptive writing is fundamentally a process of representation and construction. Field notes, like all descriptions "are selective, purposed, angled, voiced, because they are authored" (Emerson at al 1995, p. 106). This would also involve transcription of the informal interviews that may have been carried out on camera or the other conversations and interactions that were caught on film.

The third stage would come at the end of each visit to the field and involve the construction of a "fieldnote tale" (Van Maanen 1988). These notes have essentially formed the final version of the field notes and this is the version that is cited in this dissertation. The large amounts of detailed description are converted into stories and combined with elements of self-reflection. The final version of the fieldnotes combines the styles of John Van Mannen (1988) who identifies three major

methods to organise and depict fieldwork accounts. The first involves the depiction of "the native's point of view" in a report that is devoid of self-reflection. These *realist tales* are characterised by what he calls "interpretive omnipotence". On the contrary, *confessional tales* place the personality and experiences of the researcher centre stage, where there is a clear separation of the research experience from the actual social world being studied. Finally, *impressionist tales* are organised around "striking stories" intended "not to tell readers what to think of an experience but to show them the experience from beginning to end and thus draw them immediately into the story to work out its problems and puzzles as they unfold" (1988, p. 103).

This three-stage approach enables the creation of a coherent story with all the various strands from the field collated into a single narrative (the concept of narrative is developed below). This is the "narrative ethnography" (Tedlock 1991; Ferraro 2007; Ghodsee 2016), which was discussed in a previous section of this chapter. In this final stage, "the vividness and complexity of the original field notes" (Emerson et al. 1995, p. 192) is transformed into clear, readable prose. This will of course involve editing and rewriting, but the overall objective is to create "a journey in which they [the reader] develop an "experiential sense" of the events… and come away with a sense of "what it must have felt like" to live through what happened" (Ellis and Bochner 1982, p. 80).

Whilst some scholars warn against "author saturated" texts (Geertz, 1988, p. 97) I have included a certain level of introspection or auto-ethnography in my field notes. The objective is not to usurp the role of the informant, but actually to enhance it. Firstly, this style acknowledges my place or standpoint in the research process, but secondly, it also allows access to the subjective aspects of lived experience and intimate human relations.

The inclusion of emotional aspects can also provide analytic leads (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Firstly, the fieldworker' s emotional responses may mirror those that naturally occur in the setting, allowing the researcher to experience events as their informants do. Secondly, recording one's reactions over time enables the investigator to read through their notes to identify possible bias, but also the changing attitudes towards people and events (Lofland and Lofland 1995, pp. 94-95).

Finally, before we move on to an examination of the role played by interviews in this research, it is important to highlight that my field notes are written in the first person. Whilst I may be a character in my own research, I am also more importantly the narrator. Meyer Howard Abrams compares first and third person points of view, where the former "limits the point of view to what the narrator knows, experiences, infers, or can be found out by talking to other characters" (1988, p. 146) and the latter

conjures a tone of detachment and dangerously potentially assumes "privileged access to the characters" thoughts and feelings and motives, as well as to their overt speech and action (1988, p. 145). First-person narration therefore seems more honest rather than limiting. The aim is not to steal centre stage from the informants, but conversely to provide an insider's view of events as they were witnessed by the narrator, by the investigator, by me.

e). The interviews

The role and nature of interviewing has been discussed in detail earlier in this chapter. The objective here is to outline particular challenges I faced in the field during my research. This dissertation is based on what I call primary interviews, which are made up of the informal, life-history and semi-structured exchanges that were part of the main fieldwork in the region concerned (including interviews with perpetrators of violence against journalists), and secondary interviews, which are made up of semi-structured interviews with journalists who represent media from both the alternative and dominant sector. By including large sections of these interview transcripts, it is hoped that the words of the informants in this study are heard with clarity and with honesty, and with the emotion with which they were spoken. It is also important to note that given the narrative-ethnographic features of this study, theoretical analysis has been left to the end so as not to interrupt the story.

Life history biographical interviews are of course based on interpretation (Denzin 1989, 1997). The researcher is, however, compelled to remain as close as possible to the primary source to ensure that any interpretation is "cut from the same kind of cloth that they tell about" (Denzin 1989, p. 26). Therefore the stories told to me by my informants in the form of interview remain closely associated with the re-telling of that story in the pages of this study. This carries a heavy burden for the researcher (Macfarlane 2009). My aim is to be sincere and honest, acknowledging that "what is vital is that such endeavors are authentic representations of what the researcher has found out, or at least believes to be true" (Macfarlane 2009, p. 91). I have therefore tried to capture the "deep" level or inner life of my informants (Denzin 1989, p. 29) and re-tell their stories as they were presented to me. It is also imperative to acknowledge the complexity of studying lived experiences and acknowledge that the informants' stories as presented in this thesis are only partial stories, based on the experiences the individual concerned feels are important to his role as a journalist.

Additionally, there are really two main points to make in this section. The first is the language matter, which has also been mentioned above. Though I speak

Spanish, it is not my native language. As a result, I may miss certain nuances and colloquial language can also pass me by. My informants are journalists, but it is important to stress that not all of them have the level of education that one who is not familiar with Colombia may assume. This means the command of language was generally weak. Many spoke the local dialect and though I became more accustomed over time, initially it was a challenge. The biggest difficulty was during the participant observation, which is explored above. In the more formal interview setting, the need for speed and initial accuracy is not as urgent. There is time and space to ask for repetition or clarification. During the transcription stage, problems of comprehension can also be easily corrected and translated.

I conducted several interviews with my informants at various stages of the research process – both inside and outside the participant observation. That is to say that ethnographic interviews took place during the period of fieldwork that constituted the participant observation, such as at the end of the day or before the working day had started, but also outside of this period, where I would conduct the interviews a day or two before and after the participant observation had begun or ended. This chapter has already explained that interviews can be used as a method to "cross-check" the insights gained during a participant observation, and this leads us to our second point. This "cross-checking" is reciprocal. A researcher can use both methods to question findings from the first. Perhaps more accurately, however, the objective becomes not to "cross-check", but to delve deeper.

f). Sense-making through narrative: the epiphany

Previous sections of this chapter have outlined the importance of narrative to this ethnographic study, and they have also explored the idea of interviews as discourse – a process, during which meaning is co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee. Indeed if telling stories is conceived as a way of making sense of our lives, then it is also logical to anaylse accounts arising from the interview process as stories. However, while the field note tales, which are described above and presented in subsequent chapters, are story-based, it is important to elaborate on the concept of narrative. For a news journalist, a story is based in facts and consists of the so-called 5 Ws (what, where, when, why and how). For a researcher, a story is more about exploration, and while these two perceptions of narrative are not diametrically opposed, a social science narrative is not simply about the construction of a beginning, middle and end, with a dramatic twist somewhere in between, but is instead an active and subjective process in search of meaning and life experience (Mishler 1986; Holstein and Gubrium 1995). It is, in short, knowledge-in-the-making. Just as standpoint epistemology uses the situated nature of various

knowledge claims as the basis for maximising objectivity (see above), the "active interview" depends on the "situated identity" of the respondent or informant (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, p. 31):

> Treating the interview as active allows the interviewer to encourage the respondent to shift positions in the interview so as to explore alternate perspectives and stocks of knowledge (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, p. 37).

The interview is therefore about more than the answer given. Experiential detail is elicited over time and constructed as the interview unfolds. In my case, it was about encouraging the informants to consider themselves not just as journalists, but also as fathers, sons or citizens, for example.

While I presented myself always as a researcher with a background as a journalist, I believe my role as a documentary filmmaker appealed more to my informants, simply because they could identify with it more. It was a job they understood, but it may have encouraged a certain discourse at times. As Linda Alcoff (1991, p. 2) recognises, all stories have a context and a location and "where one speaks from affects the meaning and truth of what one says", but this placed more onus on me to ask the informant to explore alternate perspectives and to challenge their assumptions. As Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham (1977, p. 1) note: "The personal oral account can be a source not for knowing that something was so, but for wondering about questions that are not often considered". The exploration of problematic moments or epiphanies becomes vital in this context.

An epiphany can foster key turning points in life or provoke moments of intense reflection. Denzin (1989, p. 71) divides the concept of epiphany into four main types, all of which are evident in this study: (1) the "major epiphany", which "touches every fabric of a person's life", evident in the murder attempt against "Jorge"; (2) the "cumulative epiphany", "which signifies emotions or reactions to experiences" over time, apparent in "Rodolfo's" response to consistent and sustained self-censorship; (3) the illuminative and "minor" epiphany, which represents a "problematic moment", found in the reaction of "Esteban" to police aggression against him; and (4) the "re-lived epiphany", where meaning is attained through "the reliving of the experience" as with "Juan Carlos", who has found ways of dealing with what has become his daily routine of reporting anything but violence.

There is undoubtedly always more that can be told, but the participant observation allowed me to analyse, contextualise and even test the "self-stories" (Denzin, 1989) of my informants in ways, which are excluded from the interview process alone, as was noted above. Social science narratives are inherently open-

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ended and subjective, but there is necessarily a process of selection, which starts with the shape and form of the interview.

g). Anonymity

As Chapter 1 introduced briefly, the places and people involved in this research shall remain anonymous. This has not been an easy decision, but one that has been reached with a great deal of consideration and reflection. There was also lengthy discussion with the informants themselves, who have all granted informed consent to participate in this study. Although, they could see no reason why I would hide their identities and thought it odd I would even ask, anonymity affords me more freedom as a researcher. By using fake names, it has allowed me to explore themes of sexuality and alcoholism, which otherwise would have been absent from the research. As we saw above, sexuality became important in issues related to power, and as Chapter 5 will describe, alcoholism is explored as a link between the life of a particular reporter and the importance he places on his work. To conceal these facts would be to hide important reflections with regard to the methodology of this research as well as to obscure pertinent observations.

A range of authors in a variety of methodological texts address anonymity and the norm is to emphasise the importance of maintaining it, despite the challenges this raises (BSA 2004; Burgess 1985; Punch 1994; Heath and Luff 1995, p. 308; Newell 1995, p. 110; Ellis, 1995; Procter 1995, p. 258; Tunnell, 1998; Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p. 341; Grinyer 2002; Wiles et al. 2008). Indeed most researchers go to considerable lengths to protect the identities of their informants. In early models of ethnography, as well as in other areas of social science, the tendency has been to use pseudonyms (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p. 341), which is the approach adopted in this study. However, this can also be problematic. Methods textbooks note the difficulties in balancing "disguise and distortion" (Lee 1993, p. 187; Becker and Bryman 2004, p. 345). The British Sociological Association guidelines also seem to point to the undesirability of changing characteristics of individuals when presenting data with the aim of protecting identities because of the impact this may have on the integrity of the data (BSA 2004, p. 4; Wiles at al. 2008). However, The Social Research Association (SRA) guidelines appear to view changing identities to protect anonymity as necessary, but add that researchers need to carefully weigh up the potential damage to the data resulting from changing details versus the potential damage to the participant of identification:

> Social researchers need to remove the opportunities for others to infer identities from their data. They may decide to group data in such a way as to disguise identities... or to employ a variety of available measures that seek to

impede the detection of identities without inflicting very serious damage to the aggregate dataset... Some damage to analysis is unavoidable in these circumstances, but it needs to be weighed against the potential damage to the sources of data in the absence of such action (SRA 2003, p. 39).

Researchers surveyed in a 2008 study viewed protecting people's identity as problematic, especially in some types of research. These included studies of organisations, community-based projects and areas of applied research. The issues of anonymity are less problematic in the case of research focusing on general social phenomena, in which the identification of the specific context from which participants are drawn is unnecessary (Wiles et al. 2008). Indeed if ethnography comes from a humanistic standpoint, where the priority becomes individuals and emotions, then to separate these experiences from their beings and their context and instead attribute them to a fictitious person in a fictitious land would damage their complex nature and question their validity; a validity that is tied to specific individuals, space and time. It becomes easy to see where an informant's right to anonymity may clash with an ethnographic approach, especially if that approach is embedded in feminist or post-modern traditions. My argument, however, is this: names of people and places are only part of their identity. What makes us human is our experiences, and it is experience, which is at the heart of this thesis. Although ethnography is preoccupied with the present, this focus on experience does not distort the data, but makes it easier to transport and trace within other experiences and spaces of the human existence.

There are also issues of safety to consider. Even though I grant anonymity to my informants, I am in no position to guarantee it, which is something I was consistently honest about in the field. I took great lengths to ensure informed consent at every stage of the research process, which does not undermine the very real threat that the informants of my study face. All of them have been threatened and most of them have survived attempts on their lives. Three were murdered when I was in the field. Any risk of "polluting" the data or damaging its integrity therefore does not outweigh the real threat to my informants' safety. Indeed Colombia can be a dangerous place, and conducting research in spaces like this carries its own set of risks and challenges. Before we consider this, however, there is a brief introduction to the journalists participating in this study.

h). The informants

As outlined above, the journalists participating in this study are anonymous. Their experiences will be described and analysed in detail in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. This section is intended as a brief overview of the

personalities involved to offer a glimpse of how they consider their journalistic practice.

Chapter 4 presents Luis Cervantes, the only informant in this study without a pseudonym. Luis was shot dead in 2014. He was a journalist, who by his own admission, succumbed to self-censorship. This was not through a fear of losing his own life, however, but because his family had been threatened.

In Chapter 5, we meet the four other journalists at the centre of this study. "Jorge" is a brave newspaper reporter, who has survived several attempts on his life. His belief in holding officials to account embodies a personal crusade. He loves people, but hates writing. His stories can be rudimentary, and his spelling and syntax leave a lot to be desired, but his readership forgives him nonetheless. He is an individual who lives and breathes journalism, whose investigations are even sometimes the envy of the police.

The story of "Rodolfo", who freelances for national media, is nothing short of tragic. His experiences provide a stark contrast to those of Jorge, who has personal armed guards. Rodolfo should also have security, and without it, he has been forced to give up his career. As a result, he has become an alcoholic.

"Esteban" follows a deep sense of what he describes as professionalism, but admits to promoting peace in his work. He advocates a solutions-oriented journalism. Esteban sets himself apart from what he calls "empirical" journalists because his education has brought with it both the knowledge of the law as it is applied to journalists and their rights, and also a better understanding of the role and importance of journalism in society, which he sees as inspiring change.

"Juan Carlos" is the final informant of this study. He is another reporter who believes in journalism's responsibility to provoke change. He is also admittedly engaging in self-censorship to stay alive, but has found a substitute model for practicing journalism, which remains valuable to his community. This "public journalism" focuses on social and environmental issues and takes the shape of campaigning or advocacy. It is also investigative in that it may search out original data or documentation, but it does not include anything where corruption may be an element to the story.

3.7 Conducting research in dangerous places

Our understanding of war, conflict and other violent places or criminal behavior is often shaped by the reporting of those journalists brave enough to venture there on our behalf. Indeed as a reporter and filmmaker, I have covered the gang turf war of Central America, far-right militias in Serbia and witnessed firsthand the bloody uprising in Libya, not to mention the conflict in Colombia. Social science has also ventured into the underworld to explain the deviant (see for example: Adler 1985; Katz 1988; Sánchez Jankowski 1990; Brymer 1991; Bourgois 1995), but as Rebecca Wong notes, the dominant representation of fieldwork in dangerous places is that it is "highly challenging" (2015, p. 695). Many researchers therefore perhaps avoid this form of research design because they believe that the risks are too great. Indeed literature on researching dangerous subjects or dangerous places is scarce (see for example: Sluka, 1990; Lee 1995, Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Ferrell and Hamm 1998; Jacobs 2006; Belousov et al. 2007; Jacques and Wright 2008; Goldstein 2014;), but as those scholars who have conducted this type of investigation will admit that while it is not without its risk, it is not as unequivocally dangerous as suggested by many authors (Wong 2015, p. 695). It is also important to recognise that potential danger can occur not only when one is in the field, but when one has returned and the research is published. It is therefore vital to assess the risk before one leaves. I argue there are three stages of assessing and considering risk that researchers need to be aware of, and which we shall consider in this section.

Dangerousness in the field can be categorised under two general classifications: danger posed by the criminals or the deviants (Ferrell and Hamm 1998; Jacobs 2006) and by the socio-political landscape of the fieldwork location, usually a city (Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Sluka 1990), though in my case it was mostly rural. Before a researcher enters a dangerous field, however, it is important to familiarise oneself with the precise nature of the risk involved. It should be noted that I was lucky enough to have the support of a supervisory team and faculty dean, who recognised the importance of my research and supported it. It is not hard to imagine a scenario where proposals to conduct research in dangerous places are simply rejected without full and proper consideration, and so I am extremely grateful for this.

The risk assessment stage involves familiarisation with the setting that will become the research site or field. I gained much advice and support from both Reporters Without Borders and FLIP (The Colombian Foundation for Press Freedom) ahead of my trip to Colombia. It is important to speak to people who know the region. Are there places to be avoided? Particular behaviours or activities that

may draw unwanted attention or pose a specific threat? Which are the safest hotels? Is there a hospital? The travel advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office should be checked. If there are any travel advisories in place, specialist insurance will be required. The British embassy should be notified of a researcher's presence and consider informing the local authorities too, although in countries with difficult regimes, this may not be advisable. In the region I visited, I was in regular contact with the police. They would check in regularly to see where I planned to go, what I had been doing. It was only when they started to ask whom I had met and with whom I had been working that I became suspicious. I would also check-in regularly with contacts in the U.K. Friends and family were given contact lists of people they could contact should I go missing and they were given instructions on how to raise the alarm.

Once in the field, the danger emerges from two categories: personal danger posed by the interviewees (Jacobs, 2006) and dangers posed by unpoliced research settings (Belousov et al., 2007). Most of my interviewees posed no direct threat, but being with them did. Most of them had received death threats or survived assassination attempts. There was always a chance I might get caught up in an another attack. I will deal with unpoliced research settings shortly. First, let us consider how we might work with potentially dangerous interview subjects.

As noted in a previous section, some of the interviews I conducted were with neo-paramilitaries and with *sicarios* or hitmen. The aim was to discover firsthand why journalists become targets from those who try to kill or in one case, have actually killed them. The prevailing representation in the majority of the existing literature is that the process of finding and gaining access to any active criminal network is hindered by major challenges (Jacques & Wright, 2008; Kwok & Tam, 2006; Speckhard, 2009; Wright et al., 1992). Indeed criminal samples are a hidden population that is difficult to gain access to (Ferrell and Hamm, 2016; Wong, 2015). For me, gaining access to this underworld was testimony to the time I spent in the field. I gained the trust of local people who introduced me to the people with connections to the criminal community. From there, it was simply a case of the "snowball sample" effect (Wright et al. 1992), whereby one gang member introduced me to the next, and the next and so on. This was not pure luck, however. There is limited research that shows female investigators can be more successful in the field because people are more willing to open up to them (Rubin 1976; and Easterday, Papademas, Schorr, and Valentine 1977; Wong 2015;). In my case, it was because I was a foreigner. This is yet another way in which the personal identity of the researcher affects the process of data collection. There was a certain intrigue with

my pale skin and blue eyes, and perhaps at times, not a full understanding of who I was and what I was doing, though I would obviously clarify this at every opportunity. My ability to speak Spanish gave me an advantage too, as has been noted in previous sections on participant observation, as did my ability not to judge them.

There are also practical considerations when interviewing criminals or deviants. The researcher must ensure that somebody knows where they are going to conduct the interview and who with. The researcher should also have a plan to let somebody know they have returned safely. I would do this each time and also try to make sure we met in a public place, though this was not always possible.

This brings us to the second type of threat, that emerging from a hostile environment. Researchers must constantly be aware of their surroundings. If a researcher is carrying expensive equipment such as a laptop or dictaphone or even camera, then he or she needs to be aware of the attention this may draw. There is the small possibility it may also result in theft. At times, in sensitive situations, there may also be a need to "stand back" from the fieldwork – to put away the pen and paper and make only mental notes. In the *LLano Verde*, I could often be mistaken for a member of the United States" Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). My presence with a notepad or camera could scare people and deter them. I would always seek to avoid impacting the scene during fieldwork, but sometimes this was inevitable, and is why reflecting on this influence elsewhere in my fieldnotes is part of the research process during participant observation or ethnography more generally.

High levels of fieldwork dangerousness may therefore be a distraction for the researcher because the lurking danger reminds them to focus "on what the act ought to be, given the anthropologist's construction of expected hazards that should correlate to the presence of these instruments" (Kovats-Bernat, 2002,p. 212). Thus, anticipation of danger of the fieldwork sites, whilst important, can exhaust the researcher's energy. With more time in the field, the more comfortable one becomes, but this is arguably when a researcher is at most risk. Complacency can be dangerous.

The dangers do not end once a researcher has left the field, however. Publication can also pose a risk to the researcher. Many ethnographers have written about how their once good relationship with the informant turns sour after publication as those who were the subjects of research take issue with the findings (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). In a criminal context, this could have severe implications for a researcher. If a journalist who writes a story exposing wrongdoing can be murdered, then a researcher who publishes a thesis or an article examining the role of the underworld could also be threatened. The previous section of this chapter examined

how interviewees have the right to anonymity, but perhaps also the researcher deserves to not put his or her name to their work.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has clarified my position as both a journalist and a researcher through an exploration of standpoint epistemology. It has presented the case for ethnography as a methodology and provided a justification for the chosen methods, namely participant observation and ethnographic life history interviews. The case study at hand was presented and the argument was made that rich ethnographic description can be grounded in theoretical discussion. There was an explanation of how this research was conducted with an analysis of the specific challenges faced and the chapter ended with a brief reflection on fieldwork in dangerous environments. In preparation for subsequent chapters, which will present the findings of this research, it is pertinent to remind ourselves of the specific research questions, which are guiding this thesis, and which relate to one particular region of Colombia referred to as the Llano Verde (see Chapter 4):

RQ1: What is the nature of violence and how/why is it perpetrated against journalists?

RQ2: What is the nature of journalism and how does the violence targeted at journalists impact both on them as individuals and also on their work?

RQ3: What are the broader implications of this (anti-press) violence (and the response to it) for wider journalistic practice and so-called "post-conflict" Colombia? The next chapter deals specifically with the first research question and presents what this thesis argues is the alternative social *(dis)*order of Colombia's "after war".

Chapter 4 The Alternative Social (*Dis*)Order of "After War"

4.1 Introduction

What is the nature of violence in the Llano Verde?[30] How and why is it perpetrated against journalists? By understanding the nature of the region's "warscape" (Nordstrom, 1997), it becomes possible to highlight the violent structures and actors still in place despite a formal demobilisation of the paramilitary AUC and the ongoing peace process with both the FARC and ELN[31] guerrilla forces. The Llano Verde has been identified as one of Colombia's priority regions (Vanegas et al., 2017), in what is now widely referred to as the "post-conflict" era, as was explored in Chapter 1. This is largely because of the continued presence of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM and dissident guerrilla groups. Furthermore, in the specific context of this research, if we are to accept that journalism has a role to play in disrupting violence and demobilising violent structures, then we must first understand the precise characteristics of the violence in which journalists operate in the *Llano Verde*, and understand why they become targets of violence themselves (see RQ1)[32].

The methods employed as part of this research were explored in detail in the previous chapter, but it is important to remind the reader about the presentation of my findings. What follows below are "ethnographic vignettes" (Civico 2016, p. 182) in the form of "fieldnote tales" (Emerson et al., 2001). The importance of narrative in ethnographic research is also highlighted in Chapter 3. My position draws heavily on the work of anthropologists Michael Taussig and Aldo Civico. The "fieldnote tales" "scuttle" between "action and reflection", which characterise the diary form (Taussig 2003, p. 4). The field notes are the result of a three-stage process outlined in Chapter 3: (1) jotting; (2) episode making; and (3) the construction of the "tale". In addition, lengthy citations from the life history interviews, give a distinct and hopefully loud voice to those at the heart of my research, as was also discussed in the previous chapter. These vignettes constitute a rich description of experience, which then become the basis for the theoretical discussion at the end of this chapter and also in Chapter 6.

This chapter begins with an examination of anti-press violence more generally, before recounting the murder of one of my informants[33], Luis Carlos

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[30] *Llano Verde* is the fictional name given for the location of the fieldwork, as Chapter 1 explained. It is further explored below.
[31] For a brief timeline of the Colombian conflict, see Appendix II.
[32] The research questions are presented in Chapter 1, at the end of Chapter 3 and again at the start of Chapter 6.
[33] The use of this terminology is discussed in Chapter 3.

Cervantes. It then shifts to an account of my time in the field with the "perpetrators" of violence, the members of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM.

4.2 Anti-press violence in Colombia

In 2016, the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) registered 216 cases of anti-press violence with a total of 262 victims (FLIP 2017a, p. 12). Anti-press violence includes cases of murder, kidnap, detention and assault, but also more indirect actions such as attacks against journalistic infrastructure (e.g. offices and the personal belongings or tools needed to exercise journalism) and general obstructions, which restrict a journalist's movement.

Table 1. Anti-press violence in Colombia 2015-2016.
(Sources: FLIP 2016, p. 11; FLIP 2017a, p.12)[34].

Type of attack	2015	2016
Murder	2	0
Threats	59	90
Assault	17	36
Forced displacement	1	2
Illegal detention	2	2
Obstructions	36	38
Kidnap	1	4
Sexual assault	1	0

In 70% of the cases above, the perpetrator is unknown. Interestingly, in 41% of the cases, the assailant is labelled simply as a "civilian". Agents of the state account for 62% and the neo-paramilitary, 14% (see Table 2 below).

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[34] The table includes the number of incidences and not the number of victims. Some incidences include multiple victims. Furthermore, this table does not include other categories of anti-press violence labeled by FLIP as "inhumane treatment" and "stigmatization", as no definition of these categories is provided.

Table 2. The perpetrators of anti-press violence in 2016.
(Source: FLIP 2017a, p.13).

Perpetrator	Number of cases
Unknown	70
Civilian	41
Public/state employee	37
Armed forces, including the police	25
Neo-paramilitary BACRIM	14
Guerrilla	13
Politician	5
Criminal	2

Between 1977 and 2016, 153 journalists were murdered in Colombia (FLIP, 2017). The country is second only to Mexico in the list of deadliest places for reporters in Latin America (RSF, 2016). Indeed in 2014, Antioquia, which is the Colombian department at the heart of this research, was labelled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) as the 5th most dangerous place in the world to practice journalism, behind Islamic State controlled areas of Iraq and Syria, eastern Libya, Baluchistan in Pakistan and Donetsk in Ukraine (El Colombiano 2014; RSF 2014). According to FLIP, the impunity rate for those who murder journalists is 99.3% (FLIP 2017a). Since 1977 this amounts to 4 convictions of intellectual authors and 27 convictions of material authors.

Jeannine Relly and Celeste González de Bustamante (2017, p. 244) point out that despite an increase in international monitoring and enforcement tools, the culture of impunity poses "one of the most daunting challenges related to journalists' security" for "often the suspects are drawn from the very institutions and authorities responsible for upholding the law" (Heyns and Srinivasan 2013, p. 311). Previously, anti-press violence had been related to state failure and state disintegration (Waisbord 2002), but more recent scholarship has argued that historical context, the rule of law and political and social structures are also linked to violence against journalists (Hughes 2003, 2006; Relly and González de Bustamante 2014; Kim and Hama Saeed 2008; Kim 2010; Tumber 2006, 2011; Waisbord 2007). Indeed this thesis will argue that anti-press violence is both a form of and consequence of structural violence (defined in Chapter 1). For Waisbord (2007, p. 115), this represents a "statelessness" in which a weak rule of law endangers journalist security and inhibits the protection of reporters and media workers, but it also

describes a social climate in which crimes against journalists originate (see also Waisbord 2002).

High levels of impunity for assaulting and murdering journalists have also been identified as one of the key factors, which fuel anti-press violence. The more crimes against journalists go unpunished, the more they happen. Christof Heyns and Sharath Srinivasan (2013, p. 326) conclude that although a lack of evidence may at times be the reason that perpetrators of crimes against journalists are not pursued, "all indications are that impunity is intentional". This intentionality is wrapped up in crooked law enforcement and a corrupt judiciary managed by powerful organised criminal actors, who are able to interfere and tamper with witnesses and evidence.

In 2016 there were actually no journalists murdered in Colombia for the first time since 2008, but the number of threats made against reporters and other media workers is the second highest in the same period at 90. In 46% of these cases the assailant was unknown. In 13% the journalist identified their attacker as a member of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM (FLIP 2017a, p. 13).

Table 3. The number of journalists killed and threatened in Colombia between 2008 and 2016.
(Source: FLIP 2017a, p.15).

Year	Number of Threats	Number of Murders
2008	71	0
2009	65	1
2010	47	2
2011	91	1
2012	79	1
2013	52	2
2014	61	1
2015	59	2
2016	90	0

While the number of murders may have reduced in Colombia, journalism organisations within the country stress that the reduction in murders should not be taken as an overall improvement in the security situation. They say fewer reporters are being killed because smaller numbers are engaging in the type of coverage that puts them in harm's way (Bock 2014; Gómez, 2012). This is because Colombian journalists are now engaged in a "deep process of self-censorship" (Bock, 2014). This is what Ignacio Gómez calls, the "*amansamiento de la prensa*" or "the taming of the press" (2012, p. 12). For Colombia's Foundation of Press Freedom (FLIP), self-censorship is described as "the daily calculation of how far you can go with a topic, knowing if one crosses the line, it could risk one's life" (Gómez 2012, p. 89).

La Defensoria del Pueblo, which is a national body created to promote human rights in Colombia, says it recorded twice as many reports of attacks on journalists in 2014 than it did the previous year (RSF 2014). This trend continued in 2016, according to FLIP, with a total of 36 physical assaults. Eight of these were directly linked to the peace process (FLIP 2017). Arroyave and Barrios (2012) say 86% of journalists they surveyed know about a violent attack on a colleague. In 2016, 147 journalists had some form of protection from the UNP or the National Protection Unit (see Appendix II), including 103 who have permanent armed security and 82 who travel in armoured vehicles (FLIP 2017a, p. 17). The Tarazá radio reporter, Luis Carlos Cervantes, was one of these journalists until his security detail was removed and he was murdered.

4.3 The murder of Luis Carlos Cervantes[35]

In August, 2014, a year into my field work, one the journalists involved in this study was murdered. I present the story of Luis Cervantes through a series of extracts from my field diary below[36]. The impact of his death for me personally is discussed in Chapter 6, but suffice to say that although I had only known Luis a short time, I considered him more than an informant[37] in my investigation. He became a friend, and it is to Luis that my thesis is dedicated.

Luis's story is presented in the introduction by way of setting the scene for the rest of the study. It reveals the violent circumstances in which many journalists work in Colombia. Luis represents the small army of reporters at the margins of Colombian society, whose courageous reporting continues to fill the vacuum left by a distinct absence of the country's dominant media.

Meeting Luis Cervantes, August 2013

Tarazá is a sleepy hot town about six hours north Medellín. It sits either side of the *ruta nacional 23* motorway, which leads from Colombia's second city to the Atlantic coast. The town rides up the hills from the road all the way to the beginning of the cloud forests of the *Nudo de Paramillo* national park. This is one of the major access points to the drug trafficking routes, which lead to the region of Uraba and the Pacific coast.

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[35] The findings of this thesis are presented in the "ethnographic present", where this is defined as writing in the present tense. The aim is to present the people and places of my research as I encountered them, while simultaneously recognising the importance of historicity, as the section on interviews in Chapter 3 explains.
[36] The style and presentation of my findings are discussed at length in Chapter 3.
[37] This terminology is discussed in Chapter 3.

I arrive in a taxi. The main square where I plan to meet radio journalist Luis Cervantes is on top of a large hill. I take a seat on a bench outside the police station. Sandbags conceal the entrance. A steal door provides an added layer of security. There are two police officers on duty at any one time, I am told. They arrive at sunrise and leave at sundown under heavy armed guard.

Across on the other side of the square I notice a 4x4 and a group of men ushering another into the vehicle. It is only when the jeep stops in front of me and Luis gets out, that I notice it is him. The vehicle has tinted windows. It is standard issue for those considered by the UNP[38] to be most at risk.

"I know, I know. It's embarrassing," he says, "It would take five minutes on foot, but they won't let me."

"No problem. Nice to finally meet you."

"Likewise."

We have spoken on the 'phone several times, but this is the first time we meet in person. Luis has four armed security guards, who survey the street around us. I cannot but help think this is just a show, an attempt to impress the foreigner. As I later learn however, this is standard practice. These armed guards are the last line of defence between a man simply doing what he believes in and those who wish to silence him.

Luis is a large character in every sense of the word. Of the reporters I work with as part of this study, it is arguably Luis that lives and works in the most difficult of circumstances. Tarazá is not a safe place. But it seems not to bother him. At least to begin with. Journalists are masters at hiding their true selves. It is after all part of the quest to be impartial. Most journalists who cover conflict not only protect themselves with a flack jacket, but they also often ensconce themselves behind emotional armour too.

Luis's life revolves around the main square. He affectionately refers to it as his "prison", but it is evident that Luis feels claustrophobic. Not only are his movements restricted geographically to an area that is close to his home and business, but he is unable to escape the constant protecting glare of his four bodyguards.

Luis runs his own radio station in Tarazá. It is the only one in the town. He has also worked for the national *Blu Radio* as a regional correspondent, but he does not consider himself a "professional" journalist. Professionalism is a dirty word. It represents all that is bad about journalism. Instead, he describes himself as "real".

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[38] *Unidad Nacional de Protección*. This is the body, which is charged with providing security for journalists and human rights defenders. It is discussed in Chapter 5. Also see Appendix III.

I have only been doing the job for six years, but I can handle a story better than any person who has been to university. I taught myself how to be a journalist. I watched and listened to others. I found something I loved with my job. Journalism became my life. My existence. I suddenly had a purpose.

There is a lot of violence in Tarazá because there are armed groups fighting for it: the FARC, the ELN and the BACRIM. These groups choose who is mayor. They decide who will be the hospital manager, the school head teacher. If you don't agree or don't want to work with them, then you have to leave. If you don't, they'll kill you. Simple.

They even come to me and give me stories. Tell me what to broadcast. I refuse, of course. But that puts me at great risk. It's just part of the job.

I take risk because I have to. It is part of my responsibilities as a journalist. This is what I signed up to, so I can't shirk off the tough bits. I wouldn't be a journalist if I didn't take risk. Journalism is not hard, but doing good journalism is hard. It requires physical and moral courage. Maybe that's why we don't see much of that around here.

When Luis started his daily breakfast show, it basically involved reading headlines and stories from national and regional newspapers. But he realised that nobody was covering what was going on in his hometown, and set out to correct it. He would visit families of victims, extortion and even began to investigate the corruption of local officials. The determination to pursue stories that many reporters in these circumstances would not dare to touch has made Luis a popular character in his community. But it also makes him many enemies.

This was what got me into trouble. This is when the countless death threats against me started - threats, which eventually became attempts on my life.

I have survived 4 attempts on my life. In a town of 47,000, there are 46,000 who love me and 1,000 who hate me, I reckon. That means there are 996 attempts to go.

Luis and friendship, July 2013

Spending time with Luis and watching him work really leaves an impression. He finds it so easy to relate to people. Getting people to open up in these circumstances is beyond difficult, but for him, it is so natural. People like him. His charm. His infectious smile. Colombians are hospitable, but the invitation into Luis's home to eat and meet his family is an unexpected honour. I am used to a competitive streak among journalism colleagues. We treat each other with caution; with a slight disdain, even. Not Luis. Nobody can live up to what he does in this town. He likes to share his experiences. He is not bragging, but rarely has the opportunity to talk about his work. It is off limits with his family. He does not wish to frighten them. Talking me through what he does is as much for his benefit as mine.

Luis thinks about the future a lot. It is a dream of a better life. His wife, too, smiles at the mention of escape. But escape is not what Luis wants.

Luis retracts from news, July 2014

A year later, during my second trip to Tarazá, Luis could not be more different. Text messages threaten to kill and kidnap his family. Strangers approach his children in the schoolyard and intimidate them. This is the final straw for Luis and so he "stops doing news", as he puts it. This decision gives him an overwhelming sense of guilt. He believes he is not only failing his profession, but also society.

> If I want to stay alive, or more importantly, if I want my family to be safe, this is just something I have to live with. But it's hard. Extremely hard. They've won. They've beaten me. I am a loser. I am failing in my duty to the town.

It is tragic to see a man, who has previously been so determined appear so broken. He no longer walks tall, but slouches. His smile erased by sadness. His eyes reflect the burden of anguish.

Luis is depressed. He brushes off questions about his predicament and seems unable or unwilling to discuss it. He is hesitant to talk about himself, to examine his emotions. He is not quiet, but he wants to keep a distance between us. I do not push him.

Luis calls, August 2014

As a result of Luis's retraction from news, the body in charge of assessing threats and security for the UNP decides Luis's work no longer poses a danger to his safety. They remove his security detail, but the threats against him continue. He calls me to protest.

> I can't believe they're doing this. They say it's because I no longer face a threat. But the last message I got threatening to kill me was just last week. I have stopped doing journalism, I just play music. But that doesn't mean they still want to get me for what I've done before. Why don't they get that?
>
> I need to leave. If they are really gonna do this, if they are really gonna take away my security, I have to leave. They will kill me. I don't know what else to do.

I feel powerless. I try to reassure him. I cannot imagine his fear. I hope he is overreacting, but I know he is not.

Luis murdered, August 2014

       A week after Luis calls, I am in Peru at a film festival screening my latest documentary. I am having dinner with a Mexican friend. My phone, on silent, vibrates in my pocket. Out of politeness to my friend, I ignore it. But it continues to buzz. I excuse myself and take the call. It is a journalist colleague from Antioquia. His voice is quiet and broken.

"They killed him. The sons of bitches shot Luis."

Why? August 2014

       The cowards who kill Luis take the life of a brilliant man, husband and father. I wish I could say that such a thoughtless and callous act of violence will not help those who killed him achieve their goals. But the fact of the matter is that it already has. Luis's assailants had managed to silence him without pulling the trigger. It makes his murder all the more painful. Tarazá, like so many other towns and villages in Colombia, is now a town without journalism, without reporters, without news. Corruption, crime and conflict are left unquestioned and unexposed. In these towns and villages, ignored by the national dominant media, there is only silence. And the silence is deafening[39].

4.4 Introducing the *Llano Verde*

       Tarazá is just one of the small towns I visited as part of this investigation and is the only place I will specifically name. In order to protect the identities of those who participated in my study and who are still alive, the names of the places where they work must also be concealed. This is discussed at length in Chapter 3. All of the towns I visited are in the department of Antioquia (see Map 1 below). However, place names become irrelevant when the focus extends from the geographical to the sociological or anthropological. Meaning is not found in names and places, but within the experiences, structures and cultures, which constitute them. The setting for this study is not a specific geographical location, but is instead the fabric (and silence), which shapes the human experience of life at the margins of Colombian society.

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[39] See Chapter 1 for a description of Colombia's "zones of silence".

Map 1. Colombia and the department of Antioquia.

The violence in Colombia tends to be concentrated in areas with valuable resources, but a considerable distance from the urban centres of political or financial power, where the majority of the population resides. There is, as a result, a tale of two Colombia's: the economic and cultural powerhouse of the city on the edge of conflict, and the marginal communities at the centre, where the absence or weakness of the state and the presence of non-state armed groups have become the norm. It is the margins of Colombia, which Michael Taussig (1987) refers to as the "space of death" (see also Rodríguez, 2011).

Map 2. The sub-regions of the department of Antioquia.
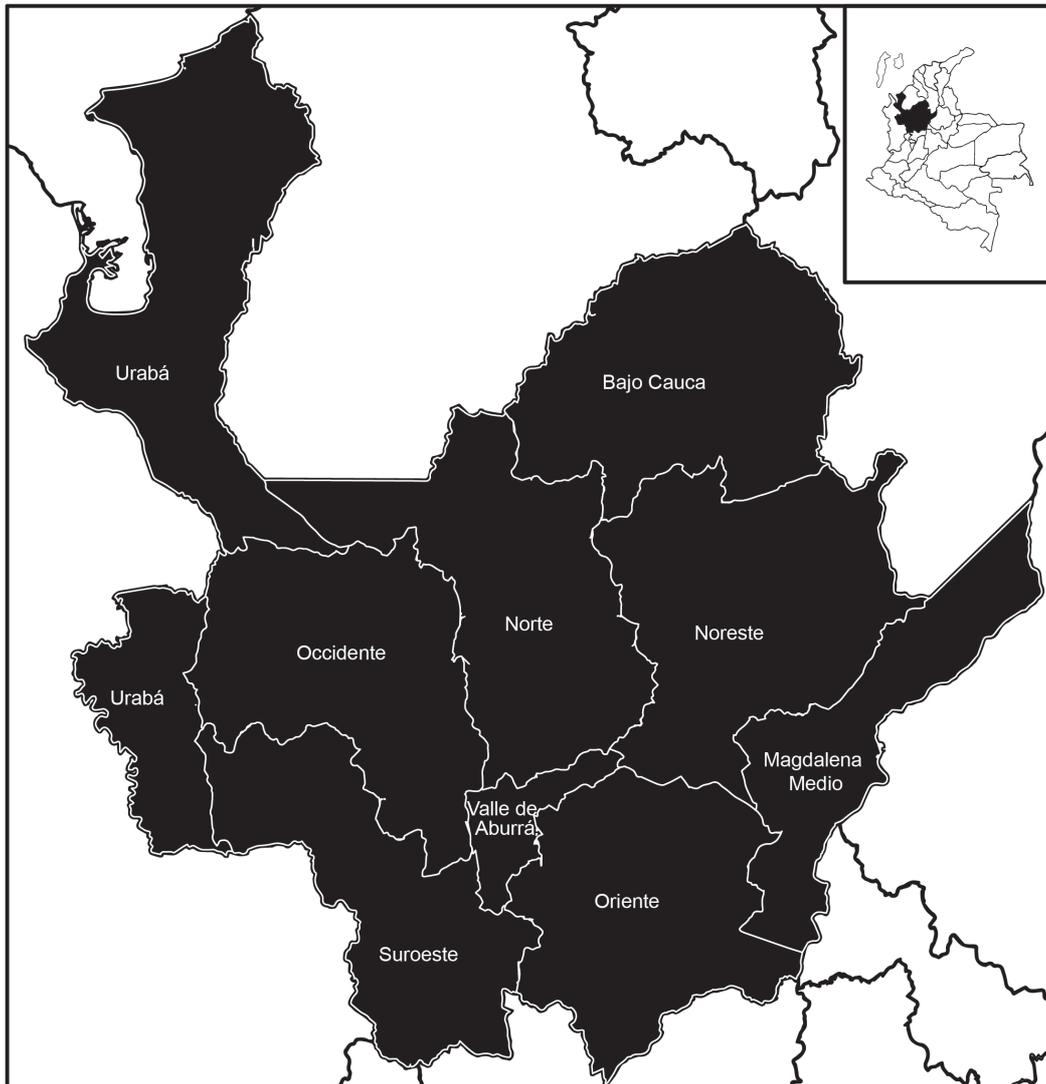
As Chapter 4 will illustrate, it is in these marginal communities, where the neo-paramilitary BACRIM assert their control over the daily lives of citizens. The BACRIM institute a dominant "culture of silence" (Freire 1986), which protects and upholds their "non-formal" (Nordstrom, 2004) networks of extortion, drug trafficking and illegal gold mining. Those who do not conform to the laws of the "lawless land" are punished by torture and death (Taussig, 2003). These are communities under siege, where populations find themselves "inscribed in the logics of war" against their will (Pécaut 2001, p. 18). Clemencia Rodríguez (2011) calls this an "involuntary conscription" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 5), which "impairs" an individual's ability to participate effectively in public life (McGee and Flórez López, 2016). Citizens navigate their private and social existence, and either "confirm" or "disconfirm" the

prevailing structures (Haugaard, 2003). This research constitutes an ethnographic study of those at the extremes of this complex "social navigation" (Vigh, 2006). For perpetrators of violence and "confirmers", violence represents a form of subsistence; a coping mechanism; an "insurgency" of survival (Holston 2008). For victims and "disconfirmers", journalism becomes one form among many of resistance; a "weapon" to wage peace in this forced war of conscripts. This will be developed further in subsequent chapters

In Colombia, despite the demobilisation of the FARC in 2017 and the paramilitary AUC more than ten years previously, violence remains very much a part of everyday reality, as we saw in Chapter 1. These are the communities of the *Llano Verde*; a land with no geography, yet home to both the victims and perpetrators of violence. The *Llano Verde* exists not on a map, but in the experiences of its citizens. The *Llano Verde* is a panorama of fear, violence, repression and resilience. It is also a land constrained by a culture of silence. It is within the *Llano Verde* that this study takes place.

4.5 A culture of silence[40]

My arrival, June 2013

I arrive after dark and after a 17 hour uncomfortable bus journey from Bogotá. I am met at the bus station by a cab the hotel had arranged.

"*Nunca se sabe*!" the receptionist tells me. "You never know!"

I am flattered by such precaution. The taxi driver offers me his card.

"It's best to call and not just go with anyone," he advises.

This is of course sensible advice in many places.

"*Nunca se sabe*!" he continues.

"Is there anything I *should* know?" I ask.

The taxi driver seems perplexed.

"*Caliente*. It's *caliente*," he replies.

Caliente literally means hot, but here it is code for violent.

When I arrive at the hotel, it looks closed. Out of business even. Steel shutters close off the hotel terrace where they serve breakfast by morning and alcohol by night. The door, too, is shut with an intimidating steel gate for protection. I ring the bell. It takes some time for the receptionist to open his way through the security measures.

"You can't be too careful now," he says.

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[40] I have tried to remain as true to the words of my informants as possible when translating. Some of the language may therefore be offensive at times to some readers.

"*Nunca se sabe*!" I reply.

"*Nunca se sabe*," he confirms.

It is not sensible for the hotel to be open at night, the receptionist says. Then a sudden explosion. The receptionist does not flinch. Such grenade attacks I would later learn are a common occurrence here, especially during a *plan pistola*[41]. The lack of acknowledgment from the receptionist (at least openly to me) symbolises the routine of violence, and perhaps even a deep rooted acceptance or indifference. He must be aware of the explosion, but either thinks it not extraordinary enough to mention, or rather he fears the questions I might pose if he engages in conversation about it.

Fear and statelessness, June 2014

Susan Rotker (2002) and Jésus Martín-Barbero (2002) portray fear as a permanent attribute of the Latin American citizen. Since violence can come from anywhere for whatever reason, citizens become "potential victims" (Rotker 2002, p. 15). As a result, nobody from beyond the intimate circle of family and friends can be trusted. Public institutions meant to provide security and protect citizens' rights are non-performing, absent or have become part of the threat. The *Llano Verde* is a semi-stateless land. Fear. Acceptance. Indifference. A triad of emotions fused and conjoined in a web of silence and internal private suffering.

"Some things are just to dangerous to recognise," I am told by one resident. Over the next few days, I witness a subtle body language, which externalise this silent triad of indiscernible emotions: countless turns to the side; glances downwards; the lowering of the head. These are the standard responses I encounter when asking about violence. They are the embodiment of impotence.

Breaking the silence, June 2014

Sometimes this silence is broken. But this is not an overt expression of resistance. There exists a secret code that is understandable only to those who live here. The code can even act as a warning system for fellow citizens. The *Llano Verde* drifts between *delicado* (delicate), indicating life is for the moment calm, but always with the shadow of armed groups looming large; and *complicado* (complicated), warning of imminent danger.

The word *caliente* also covers a plethora of sins. It is a collective noun for the various shapes of terror and suffering afflicted on the community here: murder,

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[41] A *plan pistola* is a neo-paramilitary BACRIM operation, characterised by a sustained, but fragmented series of assaults on security forces and their institutions.

torture, extortion to name but three. But within *caliente* comes an implicit acceptance of the violence. Just as when the weather is *hot*, there is little escape. When it is hot, we are forced to accept the temperature and can only adapt to it – perhaps taking temporary solace in the shade or under the protective if fierce blasts of air conditioning. The same can be said with the violence of a silent and semi-stateless land such as the *Llano Verde*. There may be occasional temporary refuge, but the terror cannot be escaped completely. It strikes me how everyone I meet has lost someone to the conflict, which has ravaged and polluted this region for more than half a century.

Nunca se sabe is also part of this code. This is an implicit assumption that everyone is somehow potentially involved in the network of terror. It conveys a distinct lack of trust, which extends to both locals and outsiders. There are not many foreign visitors in these parts, but nobody once asks me what I am doing here. This is not out of polite respect for my privacy, but instead representative of an ingrained preference for ignorance. Curiosity is dangerous here. It is usually simply better to not know or at least to pretend not to know. Taussig (1999) describes a "public secret" of "knowing what not to know" in Colombia. These secrets are concealed through a culture of silence (Freire, 1986).

Internalisation of fear, June 2014

This forced internalisation of fear, acceptance or indifference is an act of violence in itself. This must have incredible impact on both the individual, but also on the social fabric, which binds us together. We can be silent, but this does not stop us knowing, however much we may try to turn a blind eye. This devastation of the social fabric creates mistrust and halts social interactions (Clancy and Hamber 2008; Lykes and Mersky 2006; Herman 2015). It instigates "collective trauma" (Abromowitz, 2005) and "social suffering" (Kleinman et al. 1997). Life becomes chaotic, uncertain and citizens become powerless. The violence pushes people to the edge of their emotional and physical strength (Nordstrom and Robben, 1985) and potentially even towards violence themselves (Vásquez 2006: 341; Romero 2003a, p. 17). This is what some political scientists refer to as the "privatisation" or "democratisation" of violence (see Chapter 1).

BACRIM-land, July 2015

In urban centers such as the *Llano Verde*, the BACRIM are a shadowy presence visible only to those who know. To an unseeing eye, their hitmen are mere

motorcyclists, their extortionists customers, their lookouts neighbourhood kids and their finance networks nothing more than local businesses.

In the lawless backwaters that the BACRIM have inherited from their paramilitary predecessors as territorial strongholds, they wield power far more openly than in the more urban centres. It is from these rural communities that the BACRIM direct their network of illicit operations. With an absence of the state and its institutions, the hundreds of residents living in these villages instead abide by the rules and structures of the BACRIM.

In what is reminiscent of the paramilitary era, residents in villages surrounding *Llano Verde* say they are regularly summoned to attend meetings at the local school. "They summon us and say what we can and cannot do. They usually impose a curfew," says one local.

Another resident says at one point in 2015, they were being told to be indoors by 2pm. Police say that limiting the hours people can be out and about is used by the BACRIM to exert their control and authority, but locals say it is more than just intimidation.

"They want us hidden when they're moving their weapons and drugs or when there's an important meeting or visit from one of their commanders."

John P. Sullivan (2012a and 2012b) describes "criminal enclaves", where the state is "hollowed-out" by criminal or deviant activity. Robles Montoya defines this as *poder oculto* or "hidden power" (Robles Montoya, 2002). This is the formation of a network of power relationships, which surreptitiously works underground to co-opt and immobilise or restrict formal power in that space. These networks operate "at the expense of the rule of the law" and according to criminal or deviant interests (Robles Montoya 2002, p. 13). These are the networks, which are characteristic of "feral" (Norton, 2003), "fractured" (Koonings and Kruijt 2007) or "narco" (Sullivan, 2014) cities, as well as those "under siege" (Graham 2010). It is this hidden power, which dictates the laws and social norms of the *Llano Verde*.

4.6 *La Vacuna*

Extortion, June 2014

Around Colombia, most of the local BACRIM[42] cells that make up the *Urabeños*[43] network are expected to be self-financing. However, the windfalls from their role in the international drug trade are not enough to pay for the manpower and weapons needed to hold a territory, and of all their other criminal activities, extortion

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[42] For a definition and explanation of the BACRIM, see chapter 1.
[43] For an explanation of the *Urabeños*, see chapter 1.

has become the easiest and most reliable way for the BACRIM to meet these costs. In the *Llano Verde*, there is now a far-reaching shadow taxation system and everyone must pay what is known in Colombia as *la vacuna* or the "vaccine."

The BACRIM extortion networks reach every type of business, large and small, legal and illegal. While in many cases they calculate fees based on their own criminal financial analysis, in others they obtain insider information on production or profits.

In most small businesses, the *vacuna* is a percentage of estimated profits based on these calculations. Others, though, lend themselves to different payment schemes. Casinos for example, which are one of the BACRIM's biggest earners in the region, must pay 10,000 COP (approx. 2.5 GBP) per slot machine per month, while transport companies pay upwards of 30,000 COP (approx. 7.5 GBP) per vehicle and ranchers pay between 5 and 10,000 COP (approx. 2.5 GBP) per bull, depending on how many they own. In the impoverished *Llano Verde*, this is a lot of money.

Habit, July 2014

It is difficult to convey the normality of extortion. It is routine and habitual. People expect to pay. They know what happens if they do not. I meet a local official who spoke out many years ago against *la vacuna* and its negative impact on economic growth in the town. The BACRIM murdered his teenage son.

Llano Verde's main street is lined with carts serving juice and pizza. They are extremely popular and get very full in the evening. I frequent the same spot daily for my favourite *guanabana* juice. One evening, I become privy to the banality of *la vacuna*. As I drink, I notice a man in his early twenties counting a large bundle of cash. It seems strange. Then I watch as he approaches each cart and each vendor in turn as they hand over their payment. This is a ritual to which everyone is accustomed. They shake hands, they smile and sometimes even stop to chat for several minutes. Some even hand over a free juice or piece of pizza. It is certainly not threatening. Most of the businesses have the cash waiting. They are expecting this visit.

Everyone pays, July 2015

It is not just businesses forced to pay monthly fees. Teachers and medical staff also say they are victims of extortion. "Fernanda" works at the hospital. "They called me out of the blue and asked for 200,000 pesos," she says. "I tried to tell them I didn't have the money, but then they were waiting for me one day at work."

The BACRIM always target individuals in the same way. They start with a simple telephone call to ask for the money they want. Then come the intimidation and threats made in person. Finally, victims are summoned to make payment, usually in a park or a church. Failing to turn up almost certainly results in murder.

"They said they would kill my daughter if I didn't go so what could I do?" explains Fernanda.

Meeting El Gordo: a long wait, June 2015

"At the church, there's a bench. Wait there and someone will find you." These are the orders I receive by text message. I travel a few hours from the *Llano Verde* to meet with El Gordo in a town nearby. El Gordo had been a BACRIM commander until a few months previously. Infighting has forced him out. It is probably why he agrees to meet me. He must have an axe to grind, I think. Why else would he want to talk to me?

I do not know his real name, but I do know he had moved to this new place with his wife and son. I also know he is still heavily involved in the *Urabeños* network. Despite being forced out of the *Llano Verde*, he has joined another cell. He probably knows too much about the BACRIM network to be let off completely. This is my main reason for meeting him. I know he can speak with some authority on how the BACRIM organise themselves in terms of money. But I also know he has been a paramilitary member of the AUC and so it could shed some light on how this force has transformed into the BACRIM.

I sit on the bench, sweating in the heat and recovering from a very uncomfortable bus ride. The square is busy, filled with street vendors and people seeking respite from the blazing sun. *Ballanato* blasts from all corners of the square. I was able to distinguish at least 4 different versions of its characteristic accordion melody. While my ears are confused by the multiple tracks of simultaneous music, my gaze is caught by the multicoloured array of fruits at a nearby juice cart. The single best thing about Colombia is its fruit. The *guanabana* (*en leche,* or course) is too tempting to resist. It also provides a temporary reprieve from the forty degree induced thirst.

After twenty minutes, I start to become impatient. The coolness of the juice has worn off. Colombians are not known for their punctuality, especially in coastal areas, but even after several years of visiting and living in the country, it still frustrates me. After thirty minutes I begin to wonder if I have been stood up. Or worse. Is this a set-up? After forty-minutes, the panic sets in. Is this a trap?

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The ritual of waiting and its rollercoaster of associated paranoia should be familiar by now. But it is not. I do not think it ever will be. After fifty minutes, someone taps on my shoulder. I turn, actually forgetting that I am there to meet someone. I think I had started to doze off.

The motel, July 2015

"Come with me," came the order.

I get up to follow. A young man leads the way. He must be 18 at the most. He smiles politely. He does not have the face of a hitman, I think. But I know better than that by now, of course. Who does have the face of a hitman? I climb on the back of his motorbike clutching my camera bag and we race off down the road.

"Where are we going?" I ask.

"You'll see. I'm Mario. *Mucho gusto*[44]."

"*Mucho gusto.*"

I am happy to leave the conversation here, but Mario is the chatty kind.

"You're English!" he says. It wasn't a question.

"I am."

"I like blonde girls."

"Not all women in England are blonde. In fact, most probably aren't. It's not Sweden!"

"Where's Sweden? I wanna go there."

"Next to Norway."

"And where's that?"

"Far away."

"Oh," he seems disappointed. "Do you support Arsenal?" he says after a while.

"Not really." I was trying not to sound too bored with the now all too familiar questions about Arsenal's Colombian goalkeeper, David Ospina.

He doesn't like Ospina, he tells me, and he prefers Chelsea, but like many of his compatriots, he takes great pride in the fact Colombia has managed to export one of its own to the Premier League.

This is a conversation I have had several times, but at least Mario's chattiness is distracting me slightly. I still wonder if this is a ploy to calm me. To put me at my ease before I am shot. Or worse. My mouth is dry again. I am thirsty. It is the heat that is fuelling my fear and irrationality. At least that's what I convince myself, anyway.

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[44] Pleased to meet you.

After a short time and much to my confusion, we pull into a motel. Colombian motels are not generally used for overnight stays, but instead charge by the hour. They are dirty places. Tradition (and economics) dictate that young people mostly stay at home until they get married, especially in the regions. It means young lovebirds have to find alterative spaces to be together.

Motels are not discreet places, despite the nature of their business. This one is called *The Garden of Egypt*. The entrance is a massive archway with flashing neon pyramids either side. As we enter, the central courtyard is dominated by a giant sculpture of a pharaoh with an erection.

We get off the bike and enter into the reception. I am desperately trying to avoid staring at the sculpture.

"Funny, isn't it? It's to get people in the mood," says Mario.

Inside, I am overwhelmed by the burning of incense. I notice two couples, one checking in and the other checking out. All four are staring at me. I have become used to that in a way. My pale skin colour and Spanish accent give me away instantly as a foreigner or *gringo*, as I am often called. But their gaze seems more sinister this time. Then it dawns on me. I have just pulled into a motel with an 18-year-old. He might have even been younger. 16? Is this even legal? The age of consent in Colombia is actually 14. But why am I trying to make excuses? It doesn't matter! But they must think I'm paying for it. That's it. Why else would an 18 year old walk into a motel with someone old enough to be his father? In fact, what the hell are we doing here anyway? My train of thought is interrupted by the lady behind the counter, as if she has sensed my discomfort and unease.

"Don't worry. We are very discreet," she says.

Her male counterpart is not as friendly. He just grunts. Probably in disapproval.

"Your *friend* is waiting upstairs," he says. There is a strange emphasis on the word friend as he refuses to make eye contact with us.

 "Gracias," said Mario as he takes the key.

"Room 312. It's extra for a third, you know," he says, still without looking up.

I reach for my wallet as if I can pay to hide the embarrassment.

"No, pay after," says Mario, as he takes my arm and leads me upstairs, "El Gordo is this way."

I am still a little disoriented as I follow him up the stairs.

"Don't be scared," Mario chuckles. "This is just the safest place to meet el Gordo."

"It doesn't seem very discreet to me."

"It's funny. They think we're gay and are going for a threesome," he laughs loudly, "Idiots. If only they knew!"

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"Idiots? Who can blame them?" I think, still trying to imagine ways to escape a sordid threesome with a neo-paramilitary commander and his 18-year-old "toy boy". Still, it has allayed my earlier fears that I am being led to my untimely death. It is definitely the heat affecting my brain. It has to be!

Control, July 2015

El Gordo wears a plain white t-shirt and jeans. He is a large guy. I have noticed before how the physique of paramilitary commanders often differ from their younger subordinates. It is not the usual middle age paunch, but instead a life of excess: beer and good food. These guys have wanted for nothing. Strangely for a commander, however, he does not seem to take pride in his appearance. There is no jewellery and no famous brands. His hands are dirty and his footwear is shoddy. "Are you sure nobody followed?" he asks in a deep voice. He instantly carries an air of authority, but his appearance distracts me. This is a commander who no longer holds office, no longer carries clout. Looking smart and wearing expensive clothes is all part of a BACRIM commander's persona. The lack of effort gives him away as somebody who has lost power and influence. Somehow this makes me feel more at ease.

"Nobody followed us," replies Mario.

"Good. We have to be careful."

The room is dark. The walls are blue with yellow pyramids and golden hieroglyphics. A large bed shaped as a heart dominates the space. Two poles, both anchored to the ceiling either side of the bed make for interesting decoration. There is a hot tub in the corner, and below it, a small hatch. El Gordo opens it.

"Three beers!" he bellows. "Make yourself at home," he grins as he points to the bed. Mario takes a seat on the floor by the hot tub. As he sits down, I notice the pistol in the waist of his jeans.

"Thanks, but do you mind if I set up the camera?" I ask.

El Gordo approaches me. Despite my earlier observations with regards to his appearance, it is clear who was in charge here.

"You promise nobody will see my face or hear my voice?" I can feel his breath on my face. He has been drinking.

"Yes."

"It's not just me. They'll come after my family," he says stepping in even closer. This is a clear warning. He stares straight at me with the customary piercing brown eyes of most Colombians.

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Mario passes him a poncho, which he wraps around his head. Only his eyes are now showing.

"How's this?" he asks as he sits on the bed. His gaze still fixed on me.

"Good," I say, as I adjust the camera.

"So… Tell me what you wanna know."

Killing is power, July 2015

I begin by asking about extortion. I want to know if the threat to kill those who do not pay is real.

"It's an easy way to get killed. You can't say no," says el Gordo. "They will go after the people you love. That way people suffer more."

"Did you want people to suffer?"

"It isn't about suffering. It is punishment. It is about the money. These are the rules."

"Really? Or is that how you are able to feel better about what you are doing?"

"Maybe. I never actually collected _la vacuna_."

"But you ordered the hit on people who refused to pay?"

"Yes."

Killing is power. I will not lie that pulling the trigger gives me a rush. It is exciting. I am in charge. The first time is hard. You think a lot about it. Mine was someone who was helping the FARC so it was easy. These sons of bitches deserved it. After, the first time, you start thinking less about it until eventually it is nothing. It becomes a habit. An addiction, even. So it becomes easy. Sending people to kill is even easier. It's more boring because you don't get to pull the trigger, but it's not on your conscience. Rules are rules and if they're broken, you know what will happen. I am not responsible. They are. It is up to you to live by the rules. If you do, you will be safe.

As a commander, you're almost God for so many people. I provided jobs, food and security. In return, my men gave me respect, labour, protection and loyalty. I held the power of life or death, of pardon or condemnation. For my family, too, I provided everything. I worked up from nothing. I had a mine that started with just me and my brother. It ended up with 12 workers and 2 backhoes. It meant I could buy a house for my parents. But they've taken that from me. They burned everything. I had to flee and here I am. With nothing. My parents are still in my hometown. They have the house, but for how long? We have no money.

I grew up in a Conservative household in the middle of nowhere. I was born after _la violencia_, but I remember people talking about it. By the mid 1980s, the FARC were everywhere in Antioquia. I joined the paramilitaries to protect my family, to protect Colombia from the guerrilla.

I started as an _urbano_[45]. Basically working as a _sicario_[46]. But I think I was clever. I didn't just shoot people. I started to make contacts, I made the people in the town my friends. I learned this from my _patron_[47]. Often he would turn up with trucks of

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[45] Someone who works in the urban communities.
[46] Hitman.
[47] Boss.

livestock so people could eat together as a community. It was about earning respect. My superiors noticed this, which is why I rose through the ranks quickly. It is like a career. You have to start at the bottom and work your way up. I ended up in *La Caucana* and it wasn't long before I was in charge of 40 men.

The training was rigorous. There's nothing like that now with the BACRIM. Not really. Only those units based in the mountains do military drills. We worked closely with the military. If we killed guerrilla fighters, we'd hand them over to the army, who in turn would present the success as theirs. We would also give them back up if they ever needed it. The only difference between us was we were illegal.

Money and rules, July 2015

Enormous sums of money circulate through *Llano Verde*'s underworld, and the BACRIM have both sophisticated and rudimentary forms of handling the cash flows. Much of it is needed to keep the network functioning, while the rest feeds the upper echelons of the underworld, both inside and outside of the region.

Each sector's money flows are managed by a finance chief, who is usually someone clean with no criminal record or outstanding warrants. However, the job is something of a poisoned chalice. The temptation to steal – or the presumption of the temptation to steal – has seen many finance chiefs killed after relatively short stints in the position.

As Don Carlos [Castaño][48] apparently once said, if you want to be a man in your life, and a great one, *tiene que poner el pecho* (you must show courage), because if you are a commander and don't show leadership, the little men overrun you. This is true. Or it used to be. The *paracos*[49] had more discipline. What's left today are more ruthless, more selfish. You have to be constantly looking over your shoulder. It's greed. Everyone wants money and everyone wants power. It's ironic that my first kill was a commander. He had broken the rules. He was sleeping around with a lot of women. He mixed beer and guns. He broke the two golden rules. So I had to kill him. Today, most of those in charge do what they want. They try and control the lower ranks, but when they see their supposed superiors having fun, they want a piece of it.

I was the region's number 2. I left when they killed my *patron,* the number 1. Once that happens, you're out. I knew they'd come after me because I was next in line. This was someone who wanted power and so he had to destroy the line of succession. It was basically a guy who was in charge of the money. He was tired of handing it over and seeing the *patron* drink it away when he couldn't. He started to create a mutiny. A few of them joined forces and started wiping out the opposition. This included me.

I don't wanna fight back. I'm tired. And I'm not sure I would have the support I need. Most of our guys were killed. I have to think about my parents too. They are still there. Burning my mine was a warning. If I try anything else, my parents will be next.

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[48] Carlos Castaño Gil was one of the founding members of the paramilitary forces in Colombia. He worked closely with Pablo Escobar before forming the umbrella group, the AUC in 1997. He formed the group along with his two brothers after their father was kidnapped and murdered by FARC. He was murdered in 2004. Castaño was convicted in absentia of the murder of journalist Jaime Garzón (see Appendix II) and sentenced to 38 years in prison.
[49] This is slang for paramilitary and is the most common colloquial term used to describe paramilitaries and the neo-paramilitary BACRIM in the community.

A ritual, July 2015

Most underworld economies are cash based, and the BACRIM use networks of front businesses and accounts to move the cash into the economy. Many of the BACRIM costs, such as salaries and bribes are made in cash payments, but the rest must be laundered. Some is deposited into bank accounts in the names of clean members or frontmen. The rest is laundered through front companies, which in the *Llano Verde* include gold traders, leather goods shops, bars and a carpenter's. "Between the 20th and 27th of each month, they collect the money and take it to their finance office. On the 27th the cash has to be at the base," explains el Gordo. "That's where they dish out the money. On the 28th, sometimes a bit later, you turn up there to get your wages," said el Gordo.

Shame and survival, July 2015

I am beginning to see the real intricacies of the BACRIM financial operation. I wonder if the motel in which we are sitting is part of the BACRIM's money laundering ring.

"No way," says el Gordo. No motels. A few brothels, yes. But I wouldn't take you to any of them. I can't be seen with you. They'd kill me for talking to you."

"So why are you talking to me?"

"Because I know what we do is wrong. I want it to end. I want to go back home."

"How does talking to me help things come to an end?"

"Because more people will know what's happening. People on the outside."

"Will that help?"

"I can only hope it will."

"Do you regret the things you have done?"

"Of course. I'm ashamed. I look at my son and feel shame."

A few silent tears fall down his face.

> We really thought the violence would end with the demobilisation. There was a lot of suspicion when the order came to surrender, but I remember I was relieved. I had to set an example to my men. We had been promised jobs. It would be a new beginning. After all, it's what most of us wanted. We didn't join the *paras*[50] for our share of the drugs, but to protect our land and our way of life.
>
> The jobs never came. I was lucky because with my brother, we struck gold. Literally. With no other source of income, we decided to dig for gold. But for many others, it wasn't like that. They were struggling. They started to re-arm and re-group. They made me pay money, extortion from the profits of the mine. But they needed people

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[50] This is another slang term for paramilitary, also used in reference to the BACRIM.

with experience. They wouldn't leave me alone. They threatened to kill my family so eventually I had to give in. At first, I helped them raise funds from mining. But then, I got involved in trafficking routes. I'm against drugs. Totally. But if idiots in the USA or Europe wanna stick chemicals up their nose, that's fine by me. I was drawn by the cash. I was making a lot of money. By the time we started selling drugs in our backyard, I was too far in to get out. I hated what we were doing to our own people, even if most of them were just homeless bums anyway.

I have done some bad things. But it was to survive. To provide for my family. If I hadn't, who knows where we might be today?

For the first time in my life since I was a teenager, I have nothing again. But now I have a family. I know what it is to love. And I hate myself for taking that away from people. Perhaps I understand what I have done now. The implications of what I have done. But would I do it again? Probably. Right now, it's my only option if I want my wife and son to eat. It's a cycle. I will never escape. So I have to be strong.

Fines, June 2014

The *multa* or "fine" is another method the BACRIM use to charge extortion. They use it to obtain large amounts of cash quickly from those they perceive to be rich. Arturo is a teacher, who also owns land.

"They turned up at my house and said I had damaged some of their mining equipment in a neighbouring field. But it was complete fabrication," he says.

Arturo was told he would have to pay a lump sum of 5 million pesos. He was forced to take out a bank loan to cover it, which he says he will be paying back for the next five years. His son also had to give up studying medicine because Arturo could no longer afford to pay the tuition as a result.

"I had to give them the money. We have had to make these sacrifices because they threatened to kill me and my family."

Enslaved to the shadows, July 2016

Nordstrom (2004) highlights the "non-formal" networks, arrangements and systems that emerge during war or post-conflict scenarios. These are the "shadows" of war (Nordstrom, 2004), which "exist in the midst of formal state society and the minutiae of day-to-day living" (2004 p. 36). While the "shadows" may be illegal and illicit, Nordstrom argues they co-exist with more formal and official structures, and sometimes even replace them. She therefore prefers the term "non-formal" because "informal" suggests a separation and does not embody or acknowledge the intersection of these two realms. In the *Llano Verde*, well-organised extortion networks not only generate funds for the armed groups, but they constitute a system of dominance and authority. Trafficking networks generate employment and other economic benefits for communities with high unemployment and a well-defined wage structure means members of the neo-paramilitaries earn more than the minimum

wage.

Nordstrom (2004) shows how local citizens can become involved in these networks of shadows, sometimes even perhaps subconsciously. She cites "smugglers" and "criminals", who see themselves as people simply getting by in a complex setting of war or violence, without expressing direct criminal intent. In the *Llano Verde*, there are many citizens compelled to participate in illicit or "non-formal" networks from farmers who grow the coca, to bus drivers who agree to transport the paste. Yet these citizens would not label themselves as "criminals". A coca farmer is simply trying to provide for his family. Why grow plantain when a coca crop yields three times more profit? A bus driver would argue he cannot refuse to transport the packages. A refusal would be a death sentence for him and maybe even his relatives. Survival can therefore enslave citizens to these so-called shadows.

4.7 *La empresa*

Meeting Juan, May 2015

Juan wants us to appear as friends, "on the pull," as he puts it, and not the journalist interviewing the murderer that we are.

"Just a snort," he says to me. "You wanna taste of *the business*, then this is it. This is what we do. We party. We drink. We take drugs. And we fuck whores."

Juan has ordered me not to record the interview. He tells me I cannot make notes to avoid drawing attention. He dips his key into the small plastic bag of white powder he has been waving in my face. *The company*, or *la empresa* in Spanish, is how Colombia's neo-paramilitaries refer to themselves. Beads of sweat are dripping down his forehead.

"How much is *perico* in England?" he asks me.

Perico is what Colombians call cocaine.

"More expensive than…"

"This gram cost me 20,000 pesos," he interrupts before I could finish.

Juan lifts his key to his nose and snorts, tilting his head backwards as he rubs his nostrils.

"Cheap. That's cheap for you, right?" he says, still dangling the bag in front of my nose. "Snort!"

Maths has never been my strong point, but even I can quickly calculate that 20,000 pesos are roughly seven pounds. This is incredibly cheap considering a gram on the European market can cost anything upwards of fifty. In the *Llano Verde*, though, where the vast majority live in extreme poverty, twenty thousand pesos is a considerable amount of money.

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The bar where I have been summoned to meet Juan is dark. In fact, it is not really a bar, but more of a c*antina*. It is a small retail style outlet, with an open front, providing direct access from the pavement. Crates of beer and bottles of spirits are stacked in one corner. The chairs and tables are worn out garden furniture. The barman slouches in his seat. He is drunk, but with his wits about him. At the other end of the room, in front of the open urinal, two men are also delving into small plastic bags. Coke is taken in the open here.

Cumbia blares from two giant sized speakers, one of top of the other. The music is too loud to enjoy. The distinct sounds of the *gaita*, a type of flute, distorted and distracting. Colombia is always loud, deafening even.

"We never used to have a drugs problem here, you know. We just grew, processed and transported the stuff. But we needed new ways to make money."

At least, I think that is what Juan says. After three times, it seems rude to ask him to repeat it once more. The pounding beats of the *tambora*, a bass drum, are drowning him out.

Micro-trafficking

"*Perico* is for those who have money, " Juan tells me. "But *basuco* is much cheaper. It means we can make drugs affordable for everyone."

Basuco is marijuana spiked with cocaine and is smoked. It can be bought for around three pounds. The growing role of Mexican organised crime in the international drugs trade means the earning power of cocaine exports to the US is but a fraction of what it used to be. As a result, Colombia's resurgent drug gangs have been forced to diversify their income. They have created markets for drug consumption in their own backyard. It's known a *microtrafico* or micro trafficking.

"We shift up to two kilos of coke a week. That's…" Juan went blank. "How much is it?"

"2 thousand times 20 thousand… 40 million…. I think."

 "Yes. 40 million. Imagine. And that's just from *microtrafico*."

40 million pesos are almost 11 thousand pounds.

"Microtrafico is the lifeblood of the empresa," says Juan. He slouches forward putting his head into his hands.

"We've really fucked things up there," he says.

The cell commonly sources coca paste from the guerrillas of the FARC, a portion of which it will sell as the smokeable paste known as *basuco,* while the rest they process into powdered cocaine in laboratories hidden in the mountains. The drugs are then ferried by a network of trusted *mototaxistas* to towns all over the region. In local distribution centres, the cocaine is cut into small plastic bags weighing a gram

each. From here, the drugs are carried by a network of 'mules' made up of children and teenagers, who would otherwise be living on the streets. They deliver to the various plazas around town, each operated by a drug dealing crew. Some of the crews are salaried workers of the BACRIM, others pay a fee - a percentage of what they sell - to be allowed to work. The 'mules' are employed in return for food and a roof over their head. The network can expect to move around 2 kilos of cocaine a week in *Llano Verde*, the profits from which stay within the town.

"Profits from *microtrafico* are not used for wages or to buy weapons. This money is used for parties, for whores. It's also used to pay for lawyers and to support the families of *paracos* who might be locked up," explains Juan.

Micro-trafficking has basically created an addiction problem in a region that until ten years ago had little to no substance abuse. I sense this plays on Juan's conscience. "We used to clean the streets of addicts. Now we create them," he says.

Juan is a good-looking guy in his late twenties. He is military trained and despite what is probably a relatively new paunch, the trace of his muscles is not lost. He takes pride in his appearance. He keeps checking his hair in the reflection of his 'phone. At first I think it is vanity, but I soon realise it is the cocaine making him twitchy.

I meet Juan expecting a short discreet interview, but he wants to talk. Or at least the drugs are making him talk. He strikes me as lonely.

"Apart from my mum, you're the first person I've spoken to in days."

"How come?"

"Gotta keep a low profile. Do you smoke?"

"No."

"Neither do I, but I want a cigarette. Wait here." He get up and goes outside.

Juan has been forced to become an informant for the army since he was arrested three months before. It is the only way he is avoiding prison, and though it guarantees his freedom, it means he is now in exile and living away from his family, forced to leave for his own safety. Juan returns with two lit cigarettes.

"Here."

"Oh. I.."

"Here!"

Juan is clearly used to giving orders. He is also struggling to sit still.

"Do I smell?" he asked as he shoves his armpit in my face. He wreaks, but I dare not say anything.

Being a sapo

Juan has returned to the *Llano Verde* to visit his sick mother at great risk. He has become a snitch or a *sapo*, as they say in Colombia. There is nothing the gangs hate more than an informant.

"50,000 pesos a week the army pays me (£13). It's nothing for what I do for them. But they have me over a barrel," he says. "Sometimes I think I would rather die."

"You shouldn't say that."

"Why not? As a as soldier, I'm ready for it. All soldiers want to die in battle. Are you sure I don't smell?"

Juan and I are sitting with our backs tight against the wall.

"This way we can see who's coming and there'll be no surprises," he says.

Juan constantly has one eye surveying the room and the street outside. He is on the look out for those who want him dead. His former gangster colleagues know he is handing over valuable information to the authorities. Juan sizes up the place for a quick exit.

"There is a backdoor next to the urinal, he says. "We go that way if I tell you."

The laws of the underworld dictate that I am now associated with Juan, whether I like it or not. And association carries the same sentence as the accused. I try to gauge the quickest route to the backdoor. Just in case.

The "kaleidoscope" of conflict. A cycle of revenge?

I start to question what I am doing. Juan seems a decent guy, but I do not know him well and I cannot expect him to protect me. I begin to feel uncomfortable.

"I think I smell," he says as he interrupts my panicked conscience. He is starting to become a little obsessed with his body odour, which was entertaining, if a little odd. At any rate, it distracts me from my thoughts.

Juan has belonged to each side of what Daniel Pécaut refers to as the "kaleidoscope of conflict" in Colombia (2001, p. 93). He has been a soldier in the army, a paramilitary and a member of Colombia's leftist guerrilla, the FARC. This is not as odd as it might appear. Ideology is only one part of the violence in this country. I begin to think that the Colombian conflict is a complex cycle of revenge.

> I grew up here. I have an older brother and we were very close. We were very poor. I left school to work as soon as I could read. I remember my mum would say I didn't need an education. She was desperate for money, but my father was the one who said I needed to learn to read. Both of my parents were alliterate, my brother too. He started working on a farm when he was 8. He would help with the rice harvest or sometimes with the plantain. My father was killed by the ELN when I was 8. The farm on which he worked had refused to pay the tax or extortion money and so they killed all the workers. At least that is the story. It was lucky that my brother was not with him that day.

When I was about 11, I stole some bread because my mum had no money and we were not eating. I was 11 and we were so hungry. The army caught me. I had not seen that they were behind me. They beat me. Hard. I could hardly walk afterwards. They said that next time they would kill me, and then they ate the bread I had stolen in front of me.

When I was 13 my brother joined the FARC. He had started working in another farm, and that's how it happened. Farm workers were either recruited by the FARC or killed by them. He thought that was the best way to get revenge. He also just wanted to leave home. He and my mum fought a lot after my dad's death. My brother was eventually killed in battle with the army when I was 15. He had been brainwashed by the FARC. He used to tell me that the bourgeoisie was to blame for our poverty. But without business, where would the jobs be? That's what I used to ask him.

Most people joined one or the other anyway: the FARC or the *paracos*. There was not much else to do and it was a good life in that you had food, protection and you belonged to something. Whichever side it was. But the *paracos* were fighting for our country and to give us all work.

For me, I am not sure when it was exactly, but I came up with a plan. I joined the military as soon as I could to get training. I was 16. I was stationed in the *Valle del Cauca*. It's when I killed my first FARC member. It felt good. But the army was powerless really. We were losing. I had friends who were being murdered every day by those fuckers. It just made me hate them even more.

When I eventually left, I joined the 36th Front of the FARC. I was back here. It was hard to hide my hate for them. But I knew what I was doing. And after another year, I achieved what I really wanted, and that was to become a *paraco.* I could now use what I knew about the FARC and the army to fight against them, to destroy them.

I joined the *Bloque Central Bolívar*[51]. I rose quickly through the ranks because of my training and my knowledge of the enemy. Once we were able to surround a whole battalion of guerrilla fighters because I knew where to find them. We killed almost all of them. We tortured the rest. We cut off the feet of the commander.

Sometimes we would infiltrate villages held by the guerrilla. We'd be in plain clothes, but we'd make friends. Find out who the guerrilla were or where they were. We'd take these people food. They were being abused by the guerrilla. Then we'd capture and interrogate those responsible. We'd convince them to join us or collaborate with us. Sometimes we'd torture them, but others we didn't need to. It was easy to convince them of our cause. Many had just been brainwashed, like my brother.

There were many *paracos* who had been in the FARC or the army. We all rose quickly and would lead the drill training. I set up an assault course for new recruits. Then I led my own counter-guerrilla unit.

It is membership of the paramilitary militia under the leadership of the infamous Carlos Mario Jimenez or alias Macaco, who was sentenced in the US to 33 years in prison in 2011 for drug trafficking, that brings most pride to Juan. I am struck by his calculating motives. Impressed, even. It is undeniable that Juan has killed, but he seems vulnerable despite his determination and the cold, detached way in which he delivers his story. I cannot help but feel sorry for him.

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[51] The Central Bolívar Bloc was a group of paramilitaries under the AUC umbrella (see Chapter 1 and Appendix II).

"It was the happiest time of my life," recalls Juan. "I had a purpose and I never wanted for anything. I could provide for my mother who had suffered all those years."

Demobilisation and death

Between 2003 and 2006, in a deal with the then government of President Alvaro Uribe, the paramilitaries demobilised as part of the controversial Justice and Peace Law[52]. The deal was meant to provide the tens of thousands of militia employment and financial support in return for their arms, as Chapter 1 described. "I remember hading over my weapon. I knew then it would not end well. We'd been promised jobs. But who was gonna fight the guerrilla? The army couldn't do their job without us. They used to rely on us. It was a total sham. I was still full of rage and anger. I still wanted to kill. That's why a few years later, many of us started over. Some had never stopped."

Juan and thousands of others rearmed to form the resurgent groups of today, which are officially referred to as criminal gangs, or *bandas criminales,* the BACRIM (see Chapter 1).

Juan became known as alias *el Soldado*, or the Soldier.

"How many people have you killed?" I ask.

"A true gangster never talks about those he has killed, " Juan replies. "But it is a lot." He becomes still for the first time.

"How does that make you feel?"

"I never killed anyone that didn't deserve it."

Juan seems to get angry, especially as I push him for more.

"How can anyone deserve death?" I ask. This was too much. It is either overstepping the mark or it the cocaine is making Juan more tense. Either way, Juan is now standing and wants to move.

> Death is not something to be afraid of. Death is something to be earned. How we die defines how we have lived. Die fighting for what you believe in and not ridden with disease. I have always said that.
>
> Innocent people don't die. Only if they break the rules. Then they become targets. For me it was about revenge, anyway. Everytime I pulled that trigger was for my dad or my brother or just for the way we were being forced to live. Why should we be left to rot with nothing? Our lives matter just as much as rich peoples' lives. Everyone forgets this. Even the poor. It's like my mum. Sometimes she had just accepted the situation. It wasn't right. It's still not right. But we need to fight to be recognised.
>
> I'm trapped right now. I'm helping the army otherwise they'd lock me up. I would rather rat on *la empresa* than be in prison. That's selfish. And it hurts. It hurts

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[52] The Justice and Peace Law or Law 975 of 2005 was the controversial legal framework of then President Alvaro Uribe and approved Congress to facilitate the demobilisation of the country's paramilitary forces (see Appendix II).

because it feels like I given up the fight. They're using me. But I'm allowing it to happen. That's something, I guess.

"Let's go," he orders.

"Go where?"

"You'll see."

"Is it safe to leave?"

"With this it is."

He pulls a pistol from his trousers.

"Meet *la niña*," he says. *La niña* means girl. It is what those in *la empresa* call a gun.

"This will keep us safe," he says as he puts the gun back in his trousers.

We get up and head down Caucasia's main road, known as *la troncal*.

"I wanna show you the sights," he says.

"The sights?"

"The places were the *empresa* hang out."

We were walking straight into the lion's den. Juan chuckles.

"I've got your back," he says.

   A guided tour

   It is roughly around midnight. The streets are pretty quiet and dark. Streetlights are not that common in Caucasia.

"The darkness gives us the cover we need," Juan tells me.

We move along one block at a time. Juan's military training comes to the fore at each corner. He talks me through the hand signals I will need to recognise.

"This means stop," he says as he put his open palm to my face.

"This means be quiet," he explains, lifting his fingers to his lips.

"And this means cover me," he giggles as he put his arm in an 'L' shape above his head. I am not convinced if this is for show or is really a necessary precautionary measure, but does it matter? I am enjoying the adrenaline rush.

   Eventually we arrive at a house. Like most houses in the town it is small and simple with only one level. Juan knocks at the door. A teenager answers.

"Hey!" he screams. "What are you doing here man? We missed you! Guys, *el Soldado* is back."

Juan grins as another eight young men came to the door. Each of them more excited than the first to see him. The youngest must be around 14, the oldest in his early twenties. We sit on the small patio outside the house. More beer arrives, as do more drugs. None of them question who I am. If it is safe enough for Juan to be at my side, then I am someone to be trusted. But are they?

"Can you trust these guys?" I ask Juan, who pulls out *la niña* again. "I was the best shot in the gang. I'd shoot any of these before they had a chance to fire on us. Right guys?"

They all laugh.

"Don't worry."

We stay on the patio for an hour or so, drinking and talking football.

"These guys are *campaneros*," explains Juan as we left. *Campanero* means look out. "Each one is paid 700,000 pesos a month (£180) and they are given a phone. If they see anyone new, strange or suspect police activity, they call it through. Simple."

Most new members of the BACRIM are recruited as teenagers. Local members of the BACRIM network will identify troubled or vulnerable children, often those with money or familial problems, and approach them with an offer of easy cash.

"Alvaro" is 14. He is the youngest in the house.

"I run errands. I deliver packages. I don't know what's in them, but it doesn't bother me," he explains. "They offered me work after my mum died."

Those who start further down the chain as *campaneros* or *extoricionistas* know they are on a career path to murder. Eventually, the day comes when the commanders decide to test their mettle, often by simply pressing a gun into their hands and giving them a target to kill. Training, if offered at all, usually involves an afternoon of basic weapons handling and target practice with a BACRIM veteran.

"I know that one day I will be asked to kill someone. But I am ready for that," says "Tomy". "It's all part of being in the gang. We're brothers."

Soldier logic

It is around 3 in the morning when we leave the house of *campaneros*. We have been walking for considerable time when we arrive back on one of *Llano Verde*'s main arteries. My feet have started to hurt when I suddenly notice Juan takes out *la niña* once more. It makes me nervous. I am not even sure where we are anymore. Juan's guided tour seems to be off course.

"They should see me now. Come and get me you sons of bitches! I fuckin' dare you!"

"Quiet!" I exclaim.

He senses my anxiety.

"Don't be scared," he says. "Here," as he holds out the gun, "Take it."

I refuse *la niña*.

"You fuckin' pussy!" he shouts as he pushes me to the ground with the gun firmly pressing on my temple. "Now you should be scared. Just one pull. We're all just one pull away from the end."

It is more soldier logic. I dare not move. I am scared to look up. Juan seems out of control. He starts to laugh as he pulls me up.

It is time for me to go back to my hotel.

4.8 *El Sicario*

Meeting Manuel, June 2014

"Which room are you in?" asks "Manuel".

"It doesn't matter which room, I'm in. Just tell the receptionist you want me and then I'll come and meet you."

"Are you sure the hotel is safe? There is nobody there?"

"Very safe. It's dead quiet."

I am racing back to the hotel with my camera and tripod. Alias Manuel has been calling me all day to seek assurances I can be trusted and that my hotel, where we have arranged to meet, is safe. I have twenty minutes to get back and sort myself out before he is due to turn up. Colombians are never on time, but somehow I think Manuel will be as he's been so keen on calling me all day.

It is already dark as I make my way back. It is mosquito hour and I have forgotten to apply repellent. I can feel my arm being attacked, but with the camera in one hand and the phone to my ear in the other, I simply have to wriggle.

"Look I have to go. Don't worry. I'll just meet you there."

Manuel is also keen on knowing my room number, but I am not going to conduct an interview in my personal space. Even inviting him to the hotel is a bit of a risk, but at least it is public.

Brits on tour

As I arrive at the hotel, I notice a large bus parked outside. In the two years I have been visiting the *Llano Verde*, I have never seen anything like it. This is not exactly a tourist hotspot. As I enter, I hear English voices. As I get further up the stairs from the front door to the reception, it is not just English I recognise, but the distinct twang of the Thames Estuary. The reception is heaving with people from Essex! They are shouting at their Colombian guide and at the poor girl behind the desk, neither of who speak English. I am very bemused.

"Thank God you're here!" says the receptionist. "Can you help me?" she asks.

"Of course," I reply, still bewildered.

The group of about 20 people are on a tour across Latin America. They had started in Cartagena in northern Colombia and are on their way to Patagonia in Argentina. It is one of the most surreal moments I have ever encountered. These people are absolutely clueless they have stopped for a night in one of Colombia's

most dangerous hotspots. I have also just told Manuel the hotel is totally empty and here it is heaving with foreign tourists! I help the receptionist shepherd them all to their rooms before he arrives. I do not want to scare him off.

A cycle of pain and revenge

Alias "Manuel" is 18 and has been in *the company* for 4 years when I meet him. He had started as an errand boy, before becoming a *campanero*, a *piloto*[53] and then *sicario*.

> They killed my cousin. His name was Carlos. He was my best friend. We were the same age and had been close since we were little. Our mums are sisters and we became brothers. I never really had anything to do with my dad and his used to beat him and my aunt. Sometimes we'd run away for days at a time and camp somewhere to escape. We used to play hide and seek with the guerrilla. It was dangerous, but it was fun.
>
> One day Carlos just disappeared. It broke my heart. It was like losing my right hand, my everything. I remember feeling that nobody cared. I was lost. I stopped leaving the house. At his funeral, a fight broke out because his dad had hit his mum in public. He blamed her. I don't really know who stepped in to stop him, but it turned into a brawl.
>
> A few days later someone came to my house. I had never seen him before. He said *the business* had killed Carlos because he had been stealing. He would never do that, I thought. They were lying. The man said Carlos had been working for them collecting extortion from some of the farms nearby. They said he had been keeping some of the money for himself and so he had to be punished. I had two choices, he told me. Join and take over his work, or be killed. I was terrified. I was 14 years old. The man had a pistol in his trousers. He said I should make the wise choice and not be stupid. I asked him who killed Carlos and he just laughed. He said I had 24 hours to decide.
>
> A day later, two other men came to my house. This time my younger sister was there. She was 12. They told me they were from the *Rastrojos*[54]. One of them hit me in the face with his gun before I even had time to say anything. I told them Carlos would never be a *paraco*. They raped my sister in front of me. Then they beat me badly. They said it was my last warning.
>
> I knew I had to do something. My sister was broken. My mum was distraught. I knew one of our neighbours had links to the *Urabeños*. I went to tell him what happened. I said I wanted to join them and revenge the murder of Carlos and the attack on my sister. He took me to his boss. They gave me food and a beer. They said I should stay with them for a while. I was worried what would happen to my family. They said they'd be ok. But they weren't. They were murdered two days later. I asked for a gun, but they said I had to be patient. They put me up in a house on their side of town. At that time, the place was divided between the two gangs. They gave me a Blackberry. I began by doing small errands, delivering packages, watching shops or businesses or people. It was easy, but I wanted to kill. I wanted revenge.
>
> My future is the same as it always was. To fight. What else is there to do? I have never had opportunities. I would love to learn about the world. To be one of your students or visit your country and get to know your family, your customs. But I never will. That's just a dream. And dreams are for wimps. Until things here change, these will always be dreams for people like me. And that's not fair. That's why I've done

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[53] A *piloto* is the person who drives the motorcycle during a "hit".
[54] Another neo-paramilitary group operating in region.

what I've done. At the end of the day, I'm the same as my enemies. We are fighting for survival. To be noticed. Fighting for an existence. I see that now. And I hope one day all this death will be worth it. I hope my death will be worth it. The deaths of my family too. But if I'm honest, I doubt it. If all this fighting can't change and hasn't changed my country, then nothing will.

Life is cheap, July 2015

The *sicario* (hitman) is one of the more specialised of roles among the ranks of the BACRIM; their only job is to kill or to torture when called upon. In the *Llano Verde*, they are paid a wage of between 1.5 and 3 million COP (between 370 and 740 GBP) each month depending on how highly their skills are valued, and earn a bonus for each successful hit, which is usually between 200,000 to 300,000 COP (50 and 75 GBP), but in special cases can rise well into the millions.

It's just a job, August 2015

Freelance *sicarios* – those who are not on the books of the *Urabeños* – usually earn much more than their salaried counterparts, though it depends on the target. There are several high profile freelancers operating across the *Llano Verde*, usually bought in by the commanders when their own ranks cannot be trusted. Manuel introduces me to one of his friends, "Oscar":

> I saw my sister's boyfriend had money and I wanted a piece of it. We had nothing. We grew up hungry. I remember I didn't even have a pair of shoes until I was 8. I went to school until I could read and write and then I had to work to support my mum. I would do whatever job I could find. Sometimes working with the rice harvest, other times washing cars. Whatever it was, was not for very much money. I started stealing. Bread. Potatoes. Anything really. As long as it was food. I never stole to make a profit. Sons of bitches that steal people's belongings, they deserve to be shot. And I have shot a few of them.
>
> So I used to pester my sister's boyfriend. I'd ask him how he got his money and if he could help me. I annoyed him so much that eventually he caved in. He thought I didn't have the balls for it. But turns out I was a better shot than him. Anyway, he took me to meet the commander. He was a nice guy. Old and fat. He asked why I wanted to work with him. I said because I was hungry and wanted to help my mum. He appreciated that. He gave me a parcel there and then. I had to take it to a bar in the centre of town. I did and I didn't look at what was in it. I think it was a test. I passed it and some guy came to my house to give me 100,000 pesos[55]. We ate a feast that night!
>
> A few days later, I was told I had to go and work in a small village, about an hour from here. In the middle of nowhere. I hated it but I knew I had to start somewhere. I had to basically count cows and figure out how much money the farmers should be paying. I then had to make them pay. I did it for 3 months and at the end of each month, someone would come and collect the money from me. In the third month, the guy said I had to go back with him. I did. I was so happy to. Then they gave me a

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[55] Approx. £30.

Blackberry and introduced me to Jeyson. He was a new guy. They gave him a bike. He was my *piloto*. We were told we just had to wait. And we did.

I can't remember the name of the guy I killed first. All I know is that he was a thief. When you've killed more than 30 people, they all become one. I remember we killed him outside his house. But nothing else. I prefer to use the 38mm. It just feels better. I never ask questions about the target. I just do it. They don't kill innocent people so whoever I'm shooting deserves it. There was one guy called Pacho. They had ordered a hit on him like 5 times and each time someone missed or Pacho escaped. They started to call him "the devil" because of it. Who can escape being shot 5 times? Well, that's when the job came to me. Usually, there are 4 or 5 *sicarios* at any one time. Anyway, I found the guy. I followed him from the hospital. I shot him. But I had to shoot him 4 times. He just kept wriggling and squirming. He was definitely evil. After that, I was a hero. Best hitman in town, they called me.

I know I'm a killer. But it's a job. If I didn't do it, someone else would. I don't do it to hurt people. I do it to earn money. There's nothing wrong with that. We all have to earn a living.

The precarious presence of state institutions "leaves communities abandoned to their own dynamics, without being able to count on state apparatuses to resolve their tensions… with the result of generalized impunity and inefficiency of justice" (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003, p. 31). Becoming a (neo-)paramilitary can therefore become an attractive option for young Colombians, who seek validation and social recognition (Vásquez, 2006, p. 341; Romero 2003a, p. 17). Hopelessness has become so extreme that people are turning to violence themselves – whether in the form of vigilantism or through the embrace of a life of crime, so as to be on the giving rather than the receiving end of an unjust and unequal political economy – to recapture some control over their daily existence.

The anatomy of a hit, August 2015

The BACRIM *sicarios* do not operate alone, but are part of a team, each member of which has their own functions and responsibilities. The first stage of any hit is to gather intelligence on the target, a job usually carried out by *campaneros* but which for high profile or well-protected targets may involve obtaining more advanced information from contacts in the security forces, local institutions or businesses.

On the day of the hit, the *campanero* will often coordinate the action, informing the *piloto* not only where the target is, but also where to meet the *guarda armas*[56] first in order to pick up the weapon – the *sicario* is only armed for the time it takes to commit the murder.

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[56] The person that stores and transports the weapons.

In the *Llano Verde*, there are 2 38mm pistols and a 9mm revolver at the *sicario*'s disposal. There are two women who act as the *guarda armas*. They keep the weapons hidden, but ensure there is easy and quick access at all times. Oscar describes how he'd been involved in a *limpieza* or social cleansing:

> The call came at about 3 in the morning. It was from one of the commanders. He wanted me to kill a gay guy. This was gonna be the start of a *limpieza*, he told me. *Limpieza* is when they decide to clean up the streets. Get rid of the people who are doing wrong in the eye of God: thieves, gays, addicts, adulterers. They do it every couple of years. I said ok. He sent me a picture on the Blackberry and told me where this person was. I had to be quick or else I might miss him.
>
> I was excited to pull the trigger. It was easy to be honest. The guy was sitting on his porch and I just shot him and we drove off. I don't feel guilty. He was gay. That's wrong. Over the next two weeks, I would kill another two queers. I felt happy. I was doing an exciting job and I was cleaning up society, making it a better place and getting really good money for it.

Civico defines social cleansing as a "spectacular display of violence" (2016, p. 115), which constitutes a "political ritual in which power is manifested and expanded" (2016, p. 116). He adds that a *limpieza* is not a "necessity", but a "luxury" (2016, p. 116). In short, it is killing for killing's sake. It is technique to exert dominance and instil fear.

> There's a purge every couple of years or when we get a new commander. They have to show who's boss. Everyone looks forward to it. You get such a buzz.

Left to rot, September 2015

Oscar would eventually be arrested. We continue our interview from prison. I am struck by the strong sense of abandonment he projects, both on a deeply personal level, but also in a more collective form. It is not unusual for members of the neo-paramilitaries to feel they are fighting for the whole community.

> I don't think of it as murder. Murder is wrong. But the people I killed deserve to die. They went against the way the world is. I think God will look favourably on me for that in the end. I have thought about their families. And it is sad. But it must have been sad to be related to someone like that anyway.
>
> Prison is horrible, but this is just another way they punish people like me. Poor people. We have no jobs, no opportunities and they don't want us to have any either. They lock us up because they know we are doing the work they should be doing. We have been left to rot for so long. It is not surprising we replace the laws and set the rules.

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But when we do, they don't like it. They just want us to rot. They don't want us to succeed. Maybe they're scared of us.

Among the ranks of the BACRIM the *sicarios* are viewed with a mix of respect and fear – tough, but also crazy. However, the toll of their work on these young killers is often high. Some struggle with substance abuse, even taking drugs to prepare for a hit, and are haunted by the faces of those they kill. Others display little remorse for what they have done. But between the pressures of the law and the organisation itself and the pull between social power and isolation, it is often a short and disturbing career. Oscar continues:

I did what I did to try and build a future. A future for me, my girlfriend and now we're expecting. I want my child to have a father. I want to be there for him like my dad wasn't for me.

Life is hard. It always has been. I'm not complaining about that. Not anymore. I just accept it and try and make the most of it. I feel bad doing what I did to people who were my friends, but when you live like we do in this world of nothingness, then people understand you do what you need to, to survive. I have to think of my family. I chose my child's future over the future of my friends. Wouldn't you?

Nobody gives us anything. The government doesn't care. So we have to look out for ourselves. Do I wish life could be different? Of course I do. But dreaming gets you nowhere. To be honest, I don't think we'll ever get anywhere anyway. I mean I don't think anything will improve, but I have to try. If it doesn't work out, if I can't find a job, I can always go back to doing what I know. Killing. At least there is money in that.

Violence sustains the dream of a better life. It fuels desires and offers the illusion of someday being able to fulfil them. Of course, there are people who perpetrate violence "out of self-indulgence, self-interest, meanness or madness", but among those who have committed serious crime, "it is the rare perpetrator who has not also suffered" (Smith 2010, p. 369). For McMahon et al. (2009), the more young people are exposed to violence, the more retaliatory beliefs might develop, reducing an individual's efficacy in controlling their own aggression.

Chapter 4 has so far described in rich detail the nature of violence in the *Llano Verde*, which brings into question the notion of "post-conflict", as argued in Chapter 1. It will present below the theoretical implications of this "thick description" and make the case for what is referred to as Colombia's "after war". First, however, Chapter 4 tackles the second half the first research question guiding this thesis: why do journalists become specific targets of violence?

4.9 Anti-press violence: the perpetrators

The previous chapter explored the "existential shock" that can be experienced by ethnographers or participant observers in the field (Nordstrom and Robben 1995, p. 13). Meeting those who have perpetrated violence against journalists was one of those moments. Cynthia Keppley Mahmood (1996, pp. 14-25) describes how ethnographers become "existentially entangled" in their research. As a foreigner, I feel generally removed from the discourse of violence. I am an outsider, relatively protected from the laws of the "lawless land" (Taussig, 2003). As a journalist, however, when the subject of the interview turns to the murder and torture of reporters, and of people I have known and met, I feel more attached and more involved. There is an oscillation between the researcher/outsider and the journalist/insider, which manifests my "potential victim" status. Anti-press violence pulls me directly into my research and invokes a "deep existential encounter", which connects and intertwines my world with that of my informants on the deepest of levels (Robben, 2005).

Los chismosos[57], May 2016

I have come to like Manuel. We have met several times and he has been kind enough to initiate me into the complex and frenzied world of the neo-paramilitaries. I am proud I have won his trust, until the confession I had not been expecting. Though I am shocked and upset by what he tells me, I also become deeply intrigued.

> We know that if we kill a journalist, they'll come after us big time so it takes a lot of planning and is it really worth it? Well, with "Jorge"[58], it would be. He's such a *sapo* that the problem is we don't just want to kill him, we want to torture him. That's why it's hard coz we need to get him alive, and with four escorts, it's impossible.

The mention of torture is particularly horrifying. This is of course a tactic the paramilitaries have used before. In 2000 at the age of 26, reporter Jineth Bedoya was abducted, gang raped and tortured (Bedoya, 2014).
"Why do you want to torture Jorge?" I ask.

> To punish him. And send a message to other *sapos*. Look, Jorge has been doing this for a long time. We've tried to get at him several times, but it's never worked. Torture would send a message. That it's not worth it.

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[57] A *Chismoso* is a gossip.
[58] "Jorge" is one of the journalists involved in this study, whose real identities are being protected (as explored in chapter 3). He will be introduced in the subsequent chapter.

I remember one time he [Jorge] had just 'outed' the head of finance. This is the guy, who runs the extortion rackets. His picture and his photo were on the front page of the newspaper. This is what makes us angry - when we see our names in print. We don't want people to know who we are. Often what we really do is even a secret from our family. We don't get angry if journalists talk about what we do without names, but once they mention specifics, there's trouble.

Anyway, that's why I was ordered to throw the grenade at his house. I have been told to kill him many times, but it's hard. Well, it would be easy if I wanted to get caught. But if I wanted to get caught, I'd let him publish his bullshit.

It's nothing personal. He's just doing his thing, his job. And he's good at it. Why do you think we fear him so much? Because he could bring the whole thing crashing down.

There's respect for him too, actually. There are many people inside the *empresa* who tell him stuff. Even I have texted him before. There are times when you wanna get something out there. For me, they killed a friend. I wanted the sons of bitches to pay so I sent the details to Jorge by Facebook. He asked me a few questions. I answered. We never met. And he published the story. Nothing happened. But the names of these fuckers were out there and they were running scared so they left the town. That was enough for me.

Journalists can serve a purpose. During the war[59], we could find out the names of people in the other gang by reading the newspaper. That was awesome. Sometimes, we got whole hit lists. Easy work. We could kill the mother fuckers and the *sapos* [journalists] didn't even know it was because of them.

Look, people trust Jorge. I seriously think that if all journalists were as brave as him, *la empresa* would have a job on its hands. We wouldn't exist. The journalists do more to harm us than the police do, I think.

"So why would you kill him?"

He's on our back all the time. But he has escorts so it's hard to kill him without getting killed or caught. We're trying. There's a 56 million pesos[60] reward for whoever manages it.

Anyway, it's him or me. If the order comes, I have to follow it. The stronger man survives.

Listen, he is not a journalist. He is more like the police or the prosecutor. He does the work they don't do. That's mostly why we go after him, because he comes after us. He is not one of us. There are some journalists around here – and to be fair, Jorge sometimes does this – that really question the shit lives we have. They really question how and why we have been abandoned by the government. This is good journalism. We ask the same questions. That's what journalists should do. They shouldn't become police officers.

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[59] This refers to the fierce battle for territory in parts of the department on Antioquia between Colombia's two largest BACRIM: the *Urabeños* and the *Rastrojos*. The "war" lasted between 2008 and 2012. It ended with a truce, known as the *Treaty of* Versailles, which reportedly included the *Urabeños* paying an undisclosed sum of money to the *Rastrojos* in return for their withdrawal to neighbouring regions.
[60] £14,000.

"Would you kill me?"

> I'm not gonna lie. If you went to the police and told on me, then probably, yes. But as a general rule, we leave foreigners alone. Why? Because there'd be a lot of trouble. The government here cares more about what happens to foreigners than it does its own citizens. It's the same with the bigshot reporters that have sometimes come from Bogotá. We don't wanna talk to them – we'd rather talk to you – but we're not gonna kill them. They're what we call "forbidden". We'd need permission from the big bosses to kill them because killing people like that is too risky. The government would come after us and we'd all end up dead or in prison. So we won't hurt them, but we won't talk to them either. I don't trust them.

"Do you trust me?"

> Again, I'm not gonna lie to you. I didn't. But now I think so, yeah. And I'm talking to you because I want people outside Colombia to know how shit everything is here. Everyone talks about peace, but how can there be peace when I am sitting here with a gun ready to shoot the next son of bitch I don't like? But you listen. You don't judge. At least not to my face.

> […]

> If I'm honest, I don't like my life. But it's all there is. I made a choice. For me it was about revenge and about being able to live a comfortable life. I'm not happy, but I have food and girls and I can buy clothes.

> You can't think about who you kill. You just have to do it. Death is all around here anyway. We all know it's coming to us and most want it. Death means it was all worth it. We will have chance to ask for forgiveness at the gates of Heaven.

> We don't always kill reporters. But they are the enemy. Sometimes if we just scare them and show them a gun, they shut up. They stop writing lies. And nobody comes to get us.

> […]

> We don't decide ourselves to threaten someone. The order comes from up high. But it's easier to threaten than kill. We don't need to get close to someone to threaten them. We can send text messages or make phone calls. Sometimes we'll do that just for fun too. We don't need permission to do that. If we're bored or drunk or high. "Hey! Let's call the journalist and shit him up!" It's funny to hear how scared they get.

> If we want you dead, you're dead. But we like to scare people. It's not like baseball with three strikes and you're out. It's just whatever we want or what the boss says.

> The police generally leave us alone, but when our names are published in the newspaper, they act. We know that they'll come knocking. It means we have to hide or leave and that really fuckin' annoys me. We have to give up our lives coz some son of a bitch thought he could be clever.

This interview probably impacts me more than any other. This is because it reveals that what we might call a hatred for journalists co-exists alongside a sense of respect. It also shows how journalism can effectively be used by the BACRIM. This confounds my suspicions that anti-press violence is a much more complex notion than is generally accepted. These findings also become apparent in my interviews with

Oscar and they provide the basis for a more theoretical analysis, which is presented at the end of this chapter and developed further in the conclusion.

The confession, May 2016

Oscar is someone it has taken longer to trust. He is younger than Manuel and has a more junior role in the gang. But he seems more determined, more self-indulgent, more voracious. This is why I am not surprised by his ultimate confession, but it hurts. Listening to him describe how he has killed someone I knew is challenging. The fact he does not even know why he did it makes it even more difficult and especially painful. It is pure and senseless murder.

> I killed Dorance Herrera[61]. You know, the journalist? I went to his house and I shot him. I had to chase him down because he saw me coming and he ran.
>
> We got to his house, I got off the bike and the little bitch ran into his living room. I followed him in. I knew he couldn't get away, but I had to be quick. I'm not bothered that anyone saw. Nobody says anything around here. They know they die if they do. But you still have to be quick. He was hiding behind the sofa. I mean, the sofa? A scared baby. You can always see fear in peoples' eyes. It makes the heart beat faster. Some plead. Others are too shocked or they don't realise what's happening, but there is always fear. Dorance was scared. I shot him in the back. I missed his head. But once he'd stopped moving around I was able to get closer and finish the job.
>
> I don't know why they killed him. I don't ask questions, I just kill who I'm told and get paid. If I started asking questions, they'd stop trusting me or worse. I suppose they killed him because he lied or something.

Such disdain seems out of character for a man who was earlier so eloquently able to describe his sense of marginalisation and abandonment. But as he continues, it becomes possible to better contextualise his determination.

"Does it not matter to you why you killed him?"

> Course not. I mean, at first you think about that, but most of the people I have killed have done something wrong so I am sure Dorance did too. Look, journalists are just *chismosos*. They tell lies to sell papers. They tell stories to get famous. They just say what they think. They know nothing about *la empresa* or how we work. And they don't care about the town. That makes me laugh. They do nothing to help people. Not like we do. We protect everyone – from robbers, from the guerrilla. That's what we do and people respect that.
>
> What really gets us going is when journalists publish new stuff. If it's something that nobody knew until it was in the paper, I mean. If it's coz the police have arrested someone and released their photo, it doesn't matter. It's when someone has been sniffing around for themselves. That's what pisses us off. What matters are names. These could be of people or of the places we use… the houses, where we deal drugs, the places we collect extortion or even where we torture. But we're not that bothered

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[61] Dorance Herrera is a journalist I had met a few times during trips to the Bajo Cauca region of Colombia. He chose not to participate in this research because of concerns for his safety. He was murdered on 23 November 2015.

if someone writes about what we do. Everyone here knows we deal drugs and murder.

One journalist said he had exposed a group of *paras* stealing from a gold mine. He wrote about us destroying the town and how we ruin everything for everyone. But the guys who stole the gold weren't *paras*. They were just thieves. So I killed them. Coz stealing is wrong. I didn't kill the son-of-a-bitch journalist. That's more complicated. They'd come after me for that. But I should have done coz he just printed lies. Anyway, I just threatened him. I turned up at his house and said I'd shoot him in the balls if he lied again. He didn't. And believe me, I've been checking.

There was another guy. I texted him twice. I had told him he was a fuckin' *sapo* and that we were gonna come after him. He blamed us for rioting[62]. The boss didn't wanna kill him. Dunno why. Coz I did. He told me to go and see him and give him 24 hours to leave the town. If he didn't, then I was supposed to kill him. I turned up at his house. I had a revolver. I told him he had a day. He must have left coz the next day he was gone. I'm gutted I didn't get the chance to kill the son of a bitch. *Sapos* deserve to die. But when a *sapo* is a *sapo* and they're wrong…. They deserve a painful death.

"Do they really deserve it?"

Yes. Their gossip ruins our network. They are out to get us. They don't understand the good we do in the community. The way we police it. We stop robbery; we stop people having affairs. We protect them. I know we're no angels. But why do journalists come after us and not the government? We've been left to rot in this town so why not publish that? Why not show how people suffer, how there are no jobs instead of concentrating on us.

"But why a painful death?"

So nobody else copies. You have to set the law. I don't enjoy killing people. But if they can't do something as easy as keep their mouth shut, then well…

You have to remember that eath is not unusual in this place. It may sound bad to you. But you're not part of life here. We all know we will die.

And listen, I am not suggesting that all journalists are bad. If they write stuff that helps the town. If they question the way we have been left alone to fend for ourselves or question why nobody cares, then this is good stuff. That us what they should be doing instead of coming after us.

It becomes clear how fabricated distinctions between the (journalist-) victim and the (neo-paramilitary-) perpetrator are perhaps over-simplified. They conceal a more complex agency better defined or differentiated as violent or non-violent, shaped by a web of multiple roles and identities (Lubkemann, 2008), as Chapter 6 will discuss.

All of the individuals I meet in the *Llano Verde* (journalist, citizen and perpetrator) are caught up in a nexus of violence. It strikes me how each of them shares the simplest of human desires for happiness, recognition, purpose and survival. Chapter 5 will continue the presentation of my findings from the *Llano Verde*, but first it is important to discuss the theoretical implications of this chapter.

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[62] In 2013 rioting broke out as the town's workers participated in a national general strike.

4.10 Violent pluralism as an alternative social (*dis*)order: the "after war"

Chapter 4 has illustrated how the neo-paramilitary BACRIM maintain control through a system of direct violence, non-formal structures and corruption. This is what Maria Clemencía Ramírez (2010) refers to as an "alternative social order". These alternative social orders are antagonistic to, but at the same time affiliated with, the democratic state, and they force the participation of all citizens, limiting their individual and collective freedom. This results in a weakened and fragile social fabric (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003, p. 214; Duplat 2003; Rodríguez 2011, p. 99), which can lead to a sense of abandonment and hopelessness.

Within alternative social orders, violence is conceptualised as plural (Arias and Goldstein 2010; Ramírez 2010; Roldán 2010). It is not merely concentrated in the state or in deviant groups and individuals who contravene otherwise accepted norms of democratic behaviour. In violently plural societies, violence emerges as much more than a social aberration. Violent pluralism allows us to analyse the role that violence plays in preserving or challenging a particular form of lived democracy, understanding that reality in its own terms. Violence is therefore present in all its shapes: structural, symbolic and cultural (Galtung, 1990), as well as in its more recognisable direct form. Violence becomes multi-faceted and fluid:

> Violence can start at any corner in the direct-structural-cultural violence triangle and is easily transmitted to the other corners. With the violent structure institutionalised and the violent culture internalised, direct violence also tends to become institutionalised, repetitive, ritualistic…(Galtung 1990, p. 302).

However, this thesis argues that in place of this alternative social order, it might be better to think of a social *dis*order and consider the specific context of Colombia's marginalised communities, dominated by the neo-paramilitary BACRIM, as an "after war". By emphasising existing social structures as a *dis*order, it exposes these structures as abnormal, undemocratic and perhaps more importantly as soluble. While still acknowledging the persistent nature of violence, this argument rejects the indifference or interminability implied by Ramírez's theory of alternative social orders. If we accept violence is the result of specific social actions and structures, then a resolution of violence can also be brought about through a change in social behavior and an overhaul of dominant structures, however difficult this might be (McGee and Flórez López, 2016; Lubkemann, 2008). One might even consider such agency as "resistance", as both Chapters 5 and 6 will argue.

Therefore the macabre and brutal laws of this marginalised society, which we

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have seen described in detail above, constitute an alternative social (*dis*)order, which is characterised by an intense and longstanding multifaceted form of violence. This is Colombia's "after war".

It must be stressed that the concept of "after war" is not intended as anti-peace or warmongering. On the contrary. The point of emphasising the persistent nature of violence in this context is to highlight both the need for an overhaul of social structures and the necessity of intervention to restore and re-instate the legitimacy of the state and its institutions as part of an endurable and sustainable "positive peace", as was defined in Chapter 1 (Galtung, 1964).

The concept of "after war" is presented as an alternative to "post-conflict" because it takes into account the failures of the paramilitary demobilisation and anticipates challenges for the ongoing peace process with all armed guerrilla groups, including dissidents. It also acknowledges that although a political settlement may be in place, state and society "continue to operate through the institutions and systems that were generated in and by the conflict" (Nordstrom 2004, p, 145). The "after war" promotes the idea of a "positive" peace (Galtung, 1964) while highlighting the multifaceted violence in which many people on the margins of Colombian society continue to live.

As we saw in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, journalism studies has an overwhelming tendency to concentrate on the international experience of "war". Its focus on the dichotomy of war and peace risks ignoring the many forms of sustained violence, which do not fall neatly into this binary such as guerrilla insurgencies or gang conflicts, for example. By conceptualising these diverse forms of violence as "war", there is a risk of fuelling misconceptions and misunderstandings, which in turn may even inflame the violence in question.

In addition, the emphasis on the "parachute" experience of war in journalism studies excludes the reporters, who both live and work in these violent contexts. As a result, journalism studies risks falling short of understanding the specific practice, which might emerge in these contexts, but it also risks failing to account for the role journalism might play in sustaining or combating these violent structures. This becomes the focus of the next chapter and again in Chapter 6. Before this chapter concludes, there is an overview of how the findings above offer an enhanced understanding of anti-press violence and the motivations on which it is predicated.

4.11 Anti-press violence and "after war"

Anti-press violence is an inherent part of the structures, which underpin this alternative social (*dis*)order. Chapter 4 has explored why journalists become direct

targets of violence. The overwhelming motivation for anti-press violence is to evade capture and prevent information about illicit activity from becoming public knowledge. The perpetrators' reasons for violence are personal and entrenched. The perpetrators of this anti-press violence set their actions apart from their democratic implications. Yet anti-press violence co-exists alongside a deep respect for journalists. There exists an implicit understanding of a journalist's objectives. That is to say that when a reporter is considered as "one of us", there is less danger. When a journalist becomes a surrogate of the state and assumes the role of police investigator or judge (as we will see in Chapter 5), there is an enhanced risk. Journalists working for national dominant media or foreign reporters are considered as "forbidden targets", though this does not offer complete protection. There is therefore a link between a journalist's background, their style of reporting and the risk to which they are exposed. Furthermore, as Chapter 6 will argue, the significance of capture for perpetrators of anti-press violence extends beyond the realm of justice and the law. Anti-press violence might therefore be better considered as an "accidental insurgency" (Sullivan and Bunker 2011; Sullivan 2012a), where members of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM become "insurgent" citizens (Holston 2008) of this semi-stateless land.

4.12 Chapter summary

In response to the first research question, Chapter 4 has described the nature of violence as it affects one particular marginalised community in Colombia, referred to in the thesis as the *Llano Verde*, where the neo-paramilitary BACRIM continue to assert their dominance. It has shown that the *Llano Verde* is a region, where these forces operate with almost total impunity and has made the case for what this thesis calls an alternative social (*dis*)order or the "after war". The neo-paramilitary BACRIM have implanted a regime of fear and control, which permeates nearly all aspects of life with consequences for both the private and the social being. Violence in the *Llano Verde* is multi-faceted, fluid and dynamic. It is also "triangular", in the way that is structural, cultural and symbolic (Galtung, 1990). This brings into question the complacency of those who believe so-called "post-conflict Colombia" is commensurate with "positive peace" (Galtung, 1964), as defined in Chapter 1. Anti-press violence constitutes an inherent part of these structures. Chapter 5 will now consider the implications of Colombia's "after war" for the journalists who both live with it and report it.

Chapter 5 Resisting (Anti-Press) Violence: Reporting Crime, Corruption and Conflict

5.1 Introduction

What is the nature of journalism in the Llano Verde? How and why do journalists continue their work against such a violent backdrop? What are the broader implications for democracy and so-called post-conflict Colombia? These lines of inquiry constitute the second and third research questions, which are guiding this thesis[63]. In an attempt to answer them, Chapter 5 considers the contributions of four individual journalists to what is described below as "a divergent news ecology", characterised by an alternative social (*dis*)order (see the previous chapter). This divergence simultaneously shapes and is shaped by the individual repoters' practice. The aim is not to generalise. On the contrary. This chapter emphasises the diversity of journalistic practice emerging in these circumstances. The argument is made that for the journalists concerned, their practice is an act of citizenship, which is involved in what might be described as peace-seeking and peace-oriented reportage. This citizenship through journalism is not only an act that seeks the betterment of society, but is also a method of litigating the alternative social (*dis*)order or "after war" in which their lives and practice are situated. Journalism becomes a tool for understanding one's own place in the world. News becomes a "weapon to wage peace". Stories shatter the silence of domination and control.

This chapter continues the "ethnographic vignettes" (Civico 2016, p. 182) of my study, which are founded in "thick description". As with the previous chapter, Chapter 5 presents the empirics from my time in the field. An overview of the theoretical implications of my study is provided in Chapter 6. A detailed exploration of my methodology is provided in Chapter 3.

It might seem strange to start a chapter of a thesis about journalism in Colombia by making reference to Nigeria, but Sunday Dare's (2007) description of his guerrilla experiences reporting the Nigerian military dictatorships of the 1990s strikes a chord after spending time with reporters in Antioquia. While Dare's "guerrilla journalism" is more of a distinct practice than a theory, it serves to establish the unique nature of the ecology in which journalism is practiced in the *Llano Verde*.

Dare defines the journalism that spawned under Nigeria's dictatorship as "defiant" (2007, p. 21). While "guerrilla" has particular and negative connotations in Colombia, Dare's descriptions go some way to accounting for the "defiant" journalism

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[63] The specific research questions are outlined in Chapter 1, at the end of Chapter 3 and again at the start of Chapter 6.

of the *Llano Verde*. Dare says that in Nigeria, "the profession of objectivity suddenly turned aggressive". Reporting under a dictatorship took on an "advocacy role on behalf of openness, human rights and democratic governance" (2007, p. 22). It became "partisanly neutral on the side of truth" (2007, p. 49). The boundaries between personal and professional also become blurred. The task of upholding press freedom becomes more than a job, it becomes a duty, even a vocation. Indeed in his book, Dare pays tribute to one of his former colleagues, Baguada Kaltho, as a man who "loved life, but loved journalism more" (2007, p. 115) and who, in the end, paid the ultimate price.

Dare describes guerrilla journalism as "a departure from the normal newsroom experience, one of operating out of sight from different locations. It involved being constantly on the move to escape arrest or confiscation of our publications" (Dare 2007, p. 24). By analysing and categorising this practice as "guerrilla", the aim is to unveil the conditions, which force this type of journalism underground and into the shadows. The focus is as much about the practice of guerrilla journalism as it is about the failures of the dominant forms of reporting to cover the violence responsibly. Sunday Dare describes the guerrilla journalists of Nigeria as "the midwives" of the country's "nascent democracy" (2007, p. 118). In Colombia, democracy was officially born some time ago yet it continues to be nurtured and defended by individual reporters who "rather than close shop and head home after being slammed with a hammer" (Dare 2007, p. 19), defiantly engage in a struggle for democracy and press freedom, exerting "a pioneering display of professional guts and survival instincts" (Dare 2007, p. 21).

There is a sense therefore that the journalists of this study are attempting to recapture control of their daily existence. They are not only seeking to serve the wider citizenship, but also attempting to come to terms with their own lives and their own environments, which are characterised by a stubborn violence and "scant" state legitimacy (McGee and Flórez López 2016, p. 32). They are resisting against the violent structures in which they live.

Silvio Waisbord writes that journalism creates a "distinct epistemic community" based on "a common interest in a rush of deadlines, the thrill of scoops, disaster news, 'now' news and a drive towards entertainment" (2013, p. 199). In the silent land of the alternative social (*dis*)order, the epistemic community created by what we might call its unfamiliar or unconventional journalists is in stark contrast founded on a combination of fear, defiance and resistance.

5.2 "Jorge"[64]

A lone crusader, May 2013

"*Señor periodista*! Mr journalist! How are you?" Jorge shouts as he welcomes me into his home.

He is always smartly dressed. His distinct uniform consists of a green, white or black polo shirt and matching baseball cap, both clearly marked with the word *prensa* or "press". Despite the ill-fitting thick glasses he still appears to struggle with his sight and maintains a permanent squint.

"I'm very well!" I reply. "And how are you?"

"Great. *En la lucha.*"

En la lucha is more code. It is a common phrase in Colombia, but in the silent and semi-stateless land, where a journalist lives with daily threats, and where life and profession are a constant battle against a stubbornly persistent violence, the *lucha,* or "fight", takes on a deeper meaning.

Jorge's home is modest. He lives here with his mother. The large steel bombproof door and the countless security cameras dominate the entrance. It is far from discreet. These deterrents must serve as a constant reminder of the danger he faces. Inside, wooden partitions divide his office from the rest of what used to be the lounge. A sofa remains to welcome those who visit.

The computer keyboard sits in plastic wrapping. The widescreen monitor retains its plastic screen protector. The freshly painted bright pink walls contrast against the dim light of this concrete shell in which he lives and works. The bright colour is a symbol of vitality and perhaps even rebellion.

"Things are going well. I've gone digital. Printing costs have fallen from 1million COP (which is roughly £300) to just under 400,000 COP (roughly £130)," he says.

"That's great," I reply.

"And I have plenty of advertising. This last month I actually made some money. I sold a thousand copies."

"I like the pink walls."

"Me too! I like the colour. It's happy. It's hopeful. It fights against the dark."

This optimism and apparent happiness sometimes appear out of place and contradictory against the backdrop of chaos and violence. But the more time we spend together, the more I learn about the nature of his animation. By his own admission, Jorge is caught up in what he calls a "cycle". When I arrive for my second

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[64] The informants of this study are anonymous, as Chapter 3 explains in detail. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that all the journalists taking part in this study are men. This if for the simple reason that there are fewer female journalists working in these regions and none chose not to participate in this research.

visit, he has just released an edition of his newspaper. This is the height of his happiness. He feels he has accomplished something. There is a sense of gratification; of achievement. The low point comes somewhere in the middle of the month. He is reminded of his loneliness and the endless threats to his life from those who want to silence him. I am struck by the parallels of what he tells me with the stories I had heard from the neo-paramilitary members (presented in the last chapter). Once again the themes of abandonment and marginalisation emerge.

> The paper is all I have. The more I do it, the more it becomes my happiness. My only happiness. This is why I am stuck in this cycle. To be honest, being a journalist has cost me a lot. It's hard to keep the paper going and personally I have made many sacrifices. But why do I do it? Because I love it. The job is me. I am the job. It's my existence.

> Choosing to be a journalist here comes with baggage. I have always wanted to help people and in the world we live, in the violence we suffer, journalism seemed like a great way to do that. We need to question the violence we live with. It is not normal and we should not just accept it. But fighting against it takes courage. I hope I have that courage, not just for myself, but for others, those who dare not stand up and be counted. The thing is, if we don't act, if we don't say enough is enough, nobody will do it for us. We will just rot here.

> There are two Colombias, you know. The one for the rich, and the one for the poor. And the one for the poor is never talked about. It's like we don't exist. So I have decided to do something about it.

For Jorge, journalism has become a method for understanding the world he lives in. His understanding incorporates notions of change, improvement and even escape.

> I've learned a lot doing this job. I've matured. Just being out in the field I have become a better person. Nobody has taught me how to do it. It just happened. I say I am a journalist by empirics. That means I have learned on the job.

> I did study two semesters of journalism at university, but I had to leave when my father died. He had cancer. He died within a moth of being diagnosed. I was 21. We didn't have the money for fancy doctors or good medicine. He might have survived otherwise. I wish I could have done more. It wasn't fair. Not for him, nor for my mum. It was painful to watch her suffer so much and imagine what it must have been like to be left alone with four children? I have always wanted to give her a better life. I am not sure I ever will be able to, but I still try.

> I think it was soon after my dad died that I decided I wanted to change the world. Change the way we live. That sounds like a dream and maybe it is. But hey, dreams are what make us human, I guess. I have tried though. That's why I do this job. I always say I had 4 options: become a politician, a journalist, join the army or join the paras. I opted for what I think is the most honest of the lot: journalism. Journalism is my weapon to stop this violence and now I am on a crusade. This is my war. My battle.

Jorge's work is a source of self-confidence and even self-purpose. He works alone with his own newspaper, as is quite common in the hinterlands of Colombia's conflict. He is the publisher, the editor, the reporter and the head of sales. In the

towns and villages deserted by national and regional news, it is left to concerned and willing individuals to take up the mantle of journalism. Communities across the country must fend for themselves in the search for news about the neighbourhood in which they live.

What's in a label? May 2013

Some may wish to view the journalists of these silence and semi-stateless lands through the paradigm of community media. However, we must once again consider the specific context of Colombia. In the Global North, community media exist alongside dominant media and usually serve a special interest and small section of the public (Forde 2011; Harcup 2013). In Colombia, these organisations are the only source of news and journalism. Their audience is therefore the general populace. Clemencia Rodríguez differentiates between community media, which she refers to as "radio and television initiatives that have been granted a community broadcasting license by the state" and citizens' media, which she defines as "community media that purposely cultivate process of transformation and empowerment in their producers and audiences" (2011, pp. 24-25).

This study is also preoccupied with individual journalists, who are not only empowering themselves, but their audiences. Applying dominant existing theories, one might be drawn to the alternative school (described and analysed in some depth in Chapter 2) to account for this "type" of journalism. However, in the Colombian context, "alternative" indicates a leftist political bias, which the reporters in this study reject in preference for "independent". The problems with the application of "alternative" journalism extend beyond perceived political bias. Indeed, to label the journalists in question as "alternative" poses the question alternative to what? If the national and regional dominant media are failing to live up to what is required of journalism, then why should those who fill the vacuum be considered alternative? That said, the alternative framework should not be rejected altogether as the practice of the individuals in question shares some of its features. In his introduction to the _Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media_, Atton (2017) writes "the name [or label in our case] is less important than what goes on behind it" (2017, p.3). He argues against a "reductionist understanding" (2017, p. 9) and suggests that alternative media are not simply concerned with "presenting a different version of the world", but offer instead "multiple versions of the world" (2017, p.2).

Alternative journalism is celebrated for its capacity to "empower" citizens (Atton 2009, p.274), which as we will see is one of the main motivations of the journalists involved in this study. Existing literature often highlights the potential of

alternative journalism for creating "spaces" where alternative "voices" can be heard. This form of "empowerment" is loosely understood as a process that happens when new "narratives", insights or understandings make it possible for individuals and communities to participate and influence actively the decisions that affects their daily lives. In the context of a silent and semi-stateless land, the journalists in this study are empowering their fellow citizens to call for peace and break away from the culture of silence to which they are muted witnesses. They are operating outside of corporate and elitist structures and giving a voice to the under-represented. Alternative journalism therefore has the ability to produce information that plays a pivotal role in the production of alternative knowledge or understandings. In the Colombian context, this is a rejection of the "conversation downwards" or the "news from the centre" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009), as we saw in Chapter 1.

Perhaps more importantly, and most relevant to this study, Chris Atton says alternative journalism is a "radical challenge" to the practices of dominant news (2003, p. 267). However, in the context of the Llano Verde, I would suggest that "radical challenge" does not go far enough. The journalism of the reporters at the centre of this study does more than challenge the dominant practices of dominant news. It substitutes, replaces and supersedes dominant practice. The dominance of the Global North's[65] approach to journalism studies has therefore done little to understand the various traditions and diverse contexts in which journalism operates in the rest of the world, as we saw in Chapter 2. There are further reflections on the implications of this study for the alternative journalism framework at the end of this chapter.

Loneliness and approval, May 2013

Jorge describes himself as an investigative journalist. It is why there is no defined schedule with his newspaper. He prints it when he has enough finished stories (which can take time because of their investigative nature) and, more importantly, when he has the money to print it. In 2014, he publishes just four editions, earning just a little more than the Colombian minimum wage (1.18 USD per hour).

"What do you think of my work?" he asks me regularly.

"I am impressed."

"How? Why?"

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[65] Defined in Chapter 1 as referring to the Brandt Line.

Jorge is deep and thoughtful. His attention regularly and visibly shifts during conversation, and although he tries to maintain interest, usually his own thoughts or preoccupations get the better of him. Jorge is also a man of attractive contradiction, whose mood can change at the flick of a finger. He has an acute sense of self-awareness, which sometimes results in a lack of confidence. He seeks approval and recognition, but at the same time has a fearless and self-assured ego.

Jorge clearly feels isolated. His life is a "crusade", and sometimes he doubts if it is worth the "pain" and the "hassle". Jorge wants and needs to know his journalism is having an impact. Ultimately, I believe, he wants to know the sacrifices he makes are worth it.

> Sometimes I feel I am fighting alone. Sometimes I think people do not appreciate what I do for them, especially when I think of the sacrifices I have made. But that's when I remember I am doing this for myself too. I used to think that it was just unfair I ended up in a place like this and it made me angry. But now I realise it's up to me to do something about it.
>
> My life is caught up in the violent circumstances, which affect my country and my town. I cannot escape that. So I realised I need to try and understand the conflict and use my journalism to teach others. I want to understand what is happening around me. Many people in this town are happy to ignore it and just try and continue. I can't do that. I owe it to myself and my family to try and make life better.
>
> What's my goal? Peace. And happiness. It if was money, I would have chosen another career.

Jorge has four armed security guards provided by the *Unidad Nacional de Protección*, the National Protection Unit or UNP[66]. The body was created in 2011 and provides government funded security measures for those whose human rights are considered to be at risk.

> I'm used to having security now. But I do get depressed with 4 bodyguards always behind me, following me. It's annoying. It's like having a constant shadow, but four of them.
>
> I know I need them, but I have no social circle as a result. There are no friends I go out with. But then, to be honest, I have always worked anyway. I have never had any close friends. It is difficult to trust people here. They are just out for themselves generally. It is hard to find genuine people. Even if I did have friends, the presence of the security guards freaks them out so I just don't bother.
>
> […]
>
> Sometimes it's like prison. I can't go out alone because the paras will kill me. But if I go out with the escorts, nobody wants to know me.

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[66] See Appendix III.

[…]
I have no private life. I can't. They are with me everywhere I go. This is what I mean when I talk about sacrifice. There is no version of me that exists in public and then another that is different at home. I have little space in which to be me. That's why the job *is* me.

It is like I am trapped, but at least having these guards allows me to do more journalism, better journalism. I can go to places with them I never would have gone before. They offer me protection and that turns into motivation for me. But with that comes responsibility. There is only so far I can go because I do feel responsible for their safety. I would never live with myself if something happened to them because of my actions. Even if it is their job. How would I tell their family? What would I say? That worries me.

Family life happens away from Jorge's office and the living room, behind a curtained archway. His mother and nephew rarely venture out of what are effectively their living quarters. The front of the house is reserved for Jorge and his visitors, of which he has many. This divide stretches beyond the practical. It not only protects the privacy of his family, but is also a symbolic protection against his work and all that comes with it. His mother tells me they are prisoners of her son's work. But they also resemble prisoners in their own home. Her pride and love cannot conceal what must also be fear and maybe even anger. The divide is an attempt on Jorge's part to contain his family in what he and they regard as a safe space.

Jorge is surprisingly open about prioritising his work over his family. This might not be as surprising when one considers the significance of his work, however. His journalism is much more than a job. It is how he understands his place in the world:

My job is the most important thing in my life. Well, I wouldn't say it's more important than my family. But if I'm honest, I always put the job first. Even before them. So maybe that's not true. I would never tell them that. But they must know.

I actually come from a family of public servants. My grandfather was mayor here. He was murdered by the FARC when I was small. My mum worries that she'll lose me too. But at least she understands why I do what I do. She sees in me what she saw in her father: a commitment to our town and its people. But it's also a commitment to myself. I need to do this to understand why I'm here. It's only when I know why I'm here, I can maybe change it.

A thirst for news, May 2014

Judging by the response to Jorge's newspaper, there is a thirst for news in the *Llano Verde*. The arrival of the newspaper in the small towns across the region resembles the arrival of water in a desert ridden with drought. Huge lines of people scramble to purchase the latest edition. News becomes an aid package. The paper

temporarily forges the social bonds, which become fractured by the region's relentless violence. It breaks the silence, which is so determined and controlling, as we saw in the previous chapter.

The words on the page often tell already familiar stories, but sometimes it is the publication that outweighs the content. The official disclosure incubates a public sphere, granting temporary access for all those who have purchased the paper. It authorises discussion and transfers the responsibility of breaking the silence firmly to the journalist. By publishing the story, Jorge assumes the risk and becomes the target for the neo-paramilitary BACRIM, who police the silence here. He simultaneously sacrifices himself to the perpetrator and grants a freedom to his readers.

One particularly popular edition carries the results of a year-long investigation into a local mayor and other public officials, alleging links with local BACRIM cells. Jorge is met by cheering crowds, who clamber over each other to get hold of the newspaper. Fights break out. The police have to be called to restore order. Jorge's pop-star status reveals more than his celebrity. It unmasks an unquenchable thirst for news and journalism, and a desperation for participation in public life. Within the context of the Llano Verde's culture of silence, it is a cry of rebellion.

> They people here love me. They tell me this all the time. They send me cards, text messages, emails. They congratulate me on my work and encourage me to keep going. It's why I have decided to run for mayor. They say I should run the whole town. They know I would look out for them and they know I won't be held hostage by the BACRIM. They are really thankful for what I do and for the risks I take. They understand I put myself on the line for them, for the greater good.[67]

"How does that make you feel?" I ask.

Jorge pauses, then grins.

"Proud. Happy. Satisfied. Strong. Important…"

He seems to continue searching for words.

"Brave. Wanted. Powerful…"

"Humble?"

"Maybe. It's actually a great feeling. It's a feeling all journalists should feel at some point. If they don't, they are probably not doing their job properly."

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[67] The idea of a journalist running for office and what it might say about this particular news culture (or divergent news ecology) is developed further in the separate theoretical analysis at the end of this chapter.

I am once again taken by a quick change of mood. The reflective and depressed individual lamenting a life of loneliness and sacrifice is now reveling in a narcissistic glory of self-absorption.

"Your readers seem so desperate to know what you're publishing," I observe.

"Of course. They want to know. They have a right to know. Some of them already do know. But by seeing it in the paper, it allows for people to talk about it and maybe even do something about it. In this case, the mayor will have to resign."

The prophecy turns out to be true, of course.

Papa del pueblo[68], May 2015

Jorge receives regular visitors. He sits in a large orthopaedic chair, holding court as one by one his subjects are announced by his security guards and are escorted through the bombproof door. His mother assumes the role of receptionist and secretary. She serves ice cold water or if she is feeling particularly hospitable, *tinto* (Colombia's staple sweet black coffee) and freshly blended juice. This is before she begins her regular errands.

The visitors come with a range of complaints and some just come to chat. One resident says that since an extension of licensing laws, the noise from the *zona rosa* is disturbing many families. His grievances have been ignored by the town hall and he thinks he might get further if the situation receives some press coverage. Another complains of regular cuts in water supplies to her street and one teenager simply asks for help to look for a job.

I notice how in Jorge's down moments of his cycle, he often forces himself out of isolation to hold more of these surgeries. His motive is not newsgathering and this is not a search for distraction, but instead for reassurance. He always wants to know what people think about the newspaper; what they think about particular stories; what they think about him. And there is no doubt he wants to hear all of it.

It is obvious that locals hold Jorge in very high regard. They respect his journalism. They admire his bravery. And they knew he will do his very best to help them.

When I first see Jorge sending his mother on errands, I thought it a little selfish and even lazy. However, I soon learn that it is difficult for Jorge to walk leisurely around Llano Verde. Going to buy bread on foot not only poses a risk to his safety, but it also draws huge swathes of attention. It resembles a royal walkabout. A pop to the shop, which should take no less than ten minutes lasts more than an hour.

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[68] Father of the Town.

Suddenly, Jorge is surrounded. Some want to just shake his hand, others want to stop and chat. For his armed protection, it is their worst nightmare. For Jorge, it is the best medicine.

Jorge cares about the impact of his stories and the people in them. He regularly visits those he has written about to check in on them. A lot of his week is devoted to this. Sometimes he will just stop to say hi, but with others he will stay for an hour or more. At first, I think this is for my benefit, an opportunity for me to see the consequences of his journalism first hand. But, on the contrary, this is part of his routine, and part of his notion of "journalism as a solution".

> I always joke about changing the name of his paper to "*Asi reclamos*" or "This is how we complain". Journalism should help people. This is my motivation. Journalism is the need of society and society here needs me. Sometimes I don't even think I have a choice in the matter. If I decided to do something else, there would probably be riots! Journalism is my fate. It's my destiny. I'm the father of this town. That's what they call me, *El papa del pueblo*.
>
> I admit I like the attention, who wouldn't? I like it when people appreciate the great risks and hardwork I do. This is what I live for and this is the role of journalism as I see it. Journalism should provide solutions. That's my practice. Journalism as a solution.
>
> For example, if someone comes to me because they are a victim of extortion, I don't just report it. I help them report it to the police and the prosecutor. I show them how. I follow them through the whole process and guide them on what they should do. Nobody else will tell them. And because they have a reporter with them, the authorities are more likely to help. This is why I am so popular.

"Wanted", May 2013

Jorge publishes an insert of a 'wanted' poster of an alleged BACRIM member accused of carrying out extortion. But instead of advising readers to alert the police with information, he includes his own email address and mobile telephone number instead. He uses the information he gathers to write his article, but also to track down the real identity and whereabouts of the alleged criminal. He then passes this on to the police – sources and all.

> I work with the police. You might even say I do the work they are supposed to. But this is part of journalism. If we want change here, we need to start locking up the people who kill, the people who are in control. And this includes corrupt officials. Only then can we really change the society we live in. The problem is the police are corrupt too and they lack resources. So I do the investigation. I find the evidence and I take it to the prosecutor.

It strikes me how the journalism practiced by Jorge assumes a prosecutorial role. Journalism in the silent and semi-stateless land constitutes not just the reporting of information, but also a rallying cry for social change. In the context of war and

violence, this means highlighting ways to peace. In the absence of adequate state structures, it means appropriating judge and jury.

An unfamiliar journalism? May 2015

Journalism here is not just a watchdog. Journalists are not simply the bulwarks of democracy. As in Nigeria, they become "midwives" (Dare 2007, p.118). Journalism can become a surrogate for the state and its institutions. Journalism does not simply defend democracy, it must also imagine, conceive and maneuver in ways which foster the protection, guidance and ministration of its audience. The reader becomes a ward of journalism's democratic upbringing. They are citizens in search of a state; in search of a structure; in search of peace.

> My journalism is about finding ways to peace. Peaceful solutions. Not in the sense of the United Nations, but in a more practical sense, in ways that have an immediate benefit to people. Journalism can change the world and it does change the world. Maybe not on a collective level, but on an individual level. You tell those who no longer pay extortion because I got the gangsters who used to collect it locked up that their lives haven't changed because of my journalism… They would completely disagree… Because I was able to investigate the extortion and expose those behind it and get them arrested, the lives of so many people have changed for the better.

The confession, May 2015

Fernando the *sicario*[69] is introduced to me late one night. He is en route to Jorge's house while the security detail is off shift.

"Is that safe?" I ask.

"It will be fine. He has something to confess!"

Jorge is investigating an apparent *limpieza*[70], involving the murder of four gay men. The previous chapter defined *limpieza*. It is a violence, which "transforms and makes anew" (Civico 2016, p. 108). It is violence for the sake of violence, which formed part of the paramilitary modus operandi and remains a common practice with their BACRIM successors. Jorge knows Fernando is the killer in all four of these cases.

"He has already confessed to me that he pulled the trigger. Witnesses put me onto him. He is well-known as a *sicario* in these parts."

Eventually the doorbell rings. Jorge cautiously checks the security cameras to see who is outside. It is Fernando. Jorge does not seem to be scared. I cannot help but think there is a bullet waiting for the door to be opened.

Fernando enters. He seems calm. We sit down.

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[69] Hitman
[70] Social cleansing.

"You're going to confess, you're going to hand yourself in and you're going to tell me who is the person behind this *limpieza*. You are going to snitch on your whole cell," orders Jorge.

Fernando smirks.

Later I ask Jorge to reflect and he provides more insight into his idea of journalism as a solution:

> There was never any danger. I had been pressuring him and pursuing him for weeks. I have used this approach before. It's pure psychology. I told him how bad prison would be. How his family would suffer without him. Some might say this is basically threatening the poor kid. But who cares? My intensions are good and they always work.
>
> Fernando is not the first killer I have converted. This is part of my journalism. What good is journalism that just offers information? I get the story from Fernando, but in return I help him escape, which in the end helps all of us because there is one less *sicario* to worry about.
>
> Exposing these guys is just one part of trying to make life better for all of us. It helps and it has an impact. But I suppose I have a duty to them too. Killing is wrong. Most of them know that, but they feel there is no escape. Most want to stop doing what they are doing. We are all caught up in the same violence, after all. It is my job to show them there is a way out of this.
>
> Fernando is just one *sicario*, I know, but I have to start somewhere and I am willing to investigate, expose and convert them all one by one if I have to!

Jorge forces Fernando to confess to the District Attorney and he enters witness protection.

Self-doubt, May 2014

In 2013 Jorge believes in the system – not in politics, but in the security institutions. In 2014, this belief has waivered somewhat. He has seen how the police and the army turn on innocent people. Jorge has a simple view of the world. There are criminals, and there are victims. He is not naïve, but I feet he finds it hard to contemplate that this distinction can become blurred. The police and army are not the heroes he assumes they are. He has an overwhelming sense of disappointment and I have the impression he is still reflecting on the violent events of a 2013 strike (see below). He is still processing and contemplating what he has seen.

General Strike, July 2013

In the summer of 2013 (just after my first visit to the *Llano Verde*) Colombia is paralysed by one of its biggest general strikes ever. In *Llano Verde*, miners

demonstrate against poor conditions and protest the alleged privileged treatment of multinational mining corporations over smaller local firms. Violence erupts all over the country as police and security forces clashed with demonstrators. *Llano Verde* is no exception. In the words of the local mayor, the region witnesses "the worst public disorder in its history." Eight people die and hundreds are injured. Curfews are imposed, shops and businesses close and buses are withdrawn from the streets. For over a month, violent clashes between the police and army on the one hand, and protestors and miners on the other, continue. Some allege the violence is fuelled by the neo-paramilitary BACRIM and the leftist guerrilla. They use the strike as an excuse to bring chaos and fear onto the streets. As the police and army are busy trying to maintain public order, missions against the BACRIM and guerilla are suspended. The armed actors are able to advance their causes in the meantime, producing and transporting more cocaine, for example. Others allege the violence is also fuelled by police overreaction. Some of the journalists I work with show me evidence of police and army brutality. I see how young men are hit and even shot when they apparently pose no direct threat. This unsurprisingly angers the community and brings more people onto the streets.

Journalists become direct targets of this violence too. Police and security officials do not like having their operations filmed, and the miners began to see journalists as part of the state; part of the system they are protesting.

Defining moment, May 2014

Almost a year on, it is clear the strikes are a defining moment for the journalists of the silent and semi-stateless land. They become targets of all sides: the criminal and violent actors, the police and security forces (who are supposed to protect them), and the very public they aim to serve.

Part of the difficulty for Jorge is that he has a good relationship with the security officials. He speaks regularly to the police chief, to army colonels, to press officers. They give him tip-offs, and they offer him and his bodyguards extra protection when he visits unsafe areas. It is therefore hard for him to witness the police and army brutality against protesters, but it is especially hard to witness violence against fellow journalists. For the first time in his career, he sees how journalism can become the enemy of the state, and this brings into question not just the values of journalism's purpose, but his very own reason for living.

> The strikes changed everything. I realised that things are worse than I thought, to put it simply. I have always seen journalism as a champion of the people… for the people. I don't understand how and why people can turn their backs on us. The police beat

up colleagues, but so did protesters. They call us *chismosos*[71]. They don't see the benefits of good reporting.

[…]

Of course, this made me question who I am and what I do. I have already told you journalism is my life and by now you have seen how and why. For the first time, I seriously considered packing it all in. But what else would I do? How would I survive?

This is when I realised that being a journalist is not just to change the world. I am not just doing it for a better society. I am doing it for myself. This is all I know. The only way I know to counter the violence we live in.

I will not surrender to the bullets, the murder, the kidnap. Ever! And so I continue. It has made me more determined than ever. I realise I have to convince people to join me in this fight.

Jorge's determination is impressive and testimony to the fact his personal life is so entwined with this work. It also reveals the advocacy and campaigning aspects of his journalism.

News sense, May 2013

Jorge's desk is a mess. It is cluttered with files, papers and various notes of all kinds. He does not seem to have an efficient filing system so I am amazed at how he manages to find anything. He has four large files of stories waiting to be investigated. These are a mixture of tip-offs from locals and his own ideas. His inbox is also cluttered with stories, as is his Facebook account. He tells me he receives about 50 messages a day with people offering story suggestions and tip-offs. Whenever we are in his office, we are distracted by the constant ping of incoming mail and messages. The amount of information Jorge receives is an investigative journalist's dream. He does not even have to leave his own living room, but it is impossible for him to follow up all these leads. He does not have the time or the resources. Some turn out to be nothing anyway, but how does he know? How does he choose? He tells me at first that it was difficult, but over the years his instincts have become more attuned. This is the "nose for news" that journalists talk of, or the sixth sense that Zelizer outlines (2004, p. 31). Jorge says he prioritises anything that looks like it can be done quickly. He also gives preference to anything about corruption involving local politicians, and of course stories about the BACRIM.

Jorge's surgeries have little to do with his journalism. The complaints or general stories are not what interests him. He only becomes truly engaged if there are hints of corruption or BACRIM involvement. A large part of his newsgathering practice is the regular visits to his sources. These are secret meetings in neutral

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[71] Gossips (see the previous chapter).

locations. We meet one woman in the kitchen of a local burger bar, who manages to copy parts of the Mayor's diary to prove he is using his official car for recreational purposes. Jorge meets her every other Friday, but not always in the same place. There is also a public toilet, where he meets male informants. He holds these secret briefings probably four or five times a week. Sometimes they bring him stories, but usually Jorge has a long list of questions about one of his current investigations. These anonymous sources are invaluable to his journalism.

Despite the fact that Jorge is high on the BACRIM hit list, he is also respected and trusted by their ranks, as we saw in the previous chapter. It means they contact him regularly with information.

> Many of the younger guys want to talk. You would be surprised. Many of them have been forced into joining the *paracos*. They don't belong there.
>
> They never tell me their real names. They usually have fake Facebook accounts from where they message me. I think this is also how they keep track of people in the town too. Sometimes we swap numbers. Some of them develop into real sources, people I can turn to when I have questions. But they never last that long. A few months at most probably. Either they change their mind, or most likely, they end up dead.
>
> Sometimes they have an axe to grind and want to use my paper as revenge. Others, they think things or someone has gone too far and want it stopped. They trust me more than the police. They know I will protect their identity. Once one of them said to me: "We're on the same side. We both look out for our town and its people. You do it with journalism and I do it with the gang." And he's not wrong.

Such sentiments echo what I was told by the neo-paramilitaries (see the previous chapter).

Looking at some of Jorge's potential stories and emails excites the journalism in me. I want to choose one and get on with it. I see one message from a local *para*. He knows the locations of the town's brothels and claims under-age girls are being trafficked from other parts of Colombia. What a great story! Jorge, in contrast, had no sense of urgency to cover it. In fact, he has no sense of urgency to cover any of these stories in his inbox. This could be a culture clash. The heat of northern Colombia tends to slow people down. But I find it incredibly frustrating. Why does he not set himself deadlines?

Jorge is contacted by a woman who is under house arrest. She has been detained in what she claims is a case of mistaken identity. The police think she is a woman known as alias Indira, connected to the *Urabeños*, but she is not this person. She is being set-up and she knows by whom. It seems very easy to clear up. She says she knows where the real Indira lives. Why have the police and prosecutors not

been to visit her then? This could be cleared up with a call to the relevant authorities, but it takes Jorge two days to do this. He seems to put it off. Perhaps he is afraid of alerting them to the fact he is working on this story. On reflection, I think he wants to know more basic facts before he goes to the police.

There are occasions when Jorge seems inexperienced as a journalist. Maybe it is unfair of me to say that. Jorge practices a different type of journalism, so was it just for me to expect him to work the same way as I had in the UK? Some are basic errors. He interviews people on the 'phone and does not make adequate notes. He forgets and has to call back. He takes images that are out of focus or in the wrong aspect ratio. But other "mistakes" are more ethical. He writes a story accusing the Mayor of using his official car to travel on holiday. The car is only meant for official engagements, but Jorge has proof the Mayor has driven 200km to the coast with his family for a week. My ethics tell me it is only fair to ask the Mayor for his response. Jorge does not do this. He simply publishes the story; a story that is written with highly inflammatory language.

Jorge's journalism has an agenda. It may be an agenda for peace and all that entails, but he does not always hold his arguments up to scrutiny. There is no room for opposition or sometimes even another perspective. It is his way or no way.

Into the lions' den, May 2013
We make our way to the village where the local BACRIM have their headquarters. Close to the banks to the river for easy access to drug trafficking routes, this is a no go area for anyone other than the *Urabeños*. The dangers of these BACRIM backwaters are described in the previous chapter. The only entrance to the hamlet is by a small ferry, which is tended to by three men. Across the river, four armed lookouts are visible. It becomes immediately clear why we are wearing bulletproof vests. I initially suspect this is a show for my benefit, but when I see our welcoming committee, I realise it is just a necessary precaution. To cross the river would be a suicide mission for Jorge. It might not end too happily for me, either.

Four men wait for the ferry. They are gold miners and have finished work for the day. Jorge knows a young man has been beheaded in the village, yet another sign of the BACRIM's fierce justice. This is a fact-finding mission.

The four miners live in the village. They recognise Jorge and greet him. In my experience, this is an invitation to talk, but Jorge does not push it. They continue to offer snippets of information, which Jorge could exploit through further interrogation, but he is reluctant to pursue it. This confuses me. Perhaps because he knows that

we are under the watchful gaze of the *campaneros*[72]? For the first time, I sense fear in Jorge. We are in "enemy" territory and he is unsure how to conduct himself. By engaging these miners in what could be a lengthy conversation, we are not only exposing them to danger, but also putting ourselves in the firing line. Jorge seems embarrassed to be scared. Of course this is his terrain. He knows it well. But he is wise to be scared. The best war reporters are never shy to tell you they are afraid. We leave without a story. Is this inexperience or is it, in fact, the total opposite?

Jorge is keen to show me another hamlet. This is where the *casas de pique*[73] instill terror and fear among the local community. We are in a small shack on the edge of a river. Straw and wood carefully put together to create a home. There is just one room. A man sits in a rocking chair. I crouch beside him. Jorge stands. His security team provide cover outside. Jorge begins to ask about alias Indira. The miner seems more intrigued by my presence. I tell him I am a journalist. My first concern is that he thinks I am part of the security team or a police officer. I ask what he does for a living. He is reluctant to tell me at first and very hesitant, but he begins to talk little by little. As a journalist, I have always been taught to try and relate to interviewees as equals. I speak to him about the weather and his children playing outside. I am trying to strike up a rapport, to win his trust. This could be what helps the miner open up a little. Or it could be the simple intrigue with my foreign looks and strange sounding accent.

Jorge, on the other hand, approaches the man more directly. He asserts himself as a journalist immediately. I note how he declares his occupation before even saying hello or giving his name. Jorge does not care for the miner's personal circumstances, and the miner does not care for the questioning or the intrusion into his home.

Perhaps I should take a back seat, but involvement seems a natural course to take. I want to help Jorge get a simple answer to his question. I want to apologise to the miner for invading his home and his life without permission. And I am probably most of all just very curious to learn about the miner's circumstances.

As the miner speaks, Jorge crouches to our level. I feel as if we are excluding him, and this is, after all, his story, his interviewee. We listen to the miner, and Jorge helps me understand what he is saying. The miner speaks with an unfamiliar dialect, which to my non-native ear is hard to understand. The miner is forthcoming with some information about Indira, but this is not a breakthrough. Eventually, he asks us to leave. He says he is worried that we will be seen and he is anxious the BACRIM

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[72] Lookouts.
[73] Torture houses.

may hurt his family as a consequence. I have been naïve. I have not realised the severity of the situation. We are in *Urabeños* territory. Of course our very presence puts him at risk. Is this something Jorge had even considered before walking uninvited into the miner's home? Is this why Jorge had been so mater-of-fact?

> It can be hard to get people to talk here. I rely on friends for help usually. People I have known for years and who trust me. In places like these though, I don't know anyone. We all beat around the bush. Nobody is direct. You have to know how to navigate the code of silence. They know what I want and what I am there for. I do not need to be explicit. I am simply ready in case they decide to talk. They are polite and I always leave my card because you never know. Sometimes they do call. Sometimes people have just had enough. Especially in those villages where there is no escaping the BACRIM. I can't force them to talk. And I can't hang around. It's dangerous for all of us and someone is always watching. I know they will go and visit everyone I have talked to. They will want to know what I was asking about, what was said. It's just part of the drama.

Jorge often talks of wanting plastic surgery. This is part of his drama. It is about more than wanting muscles and to enhance his appearance. It is the embodiment of a desire for change, a wish to escape an ensemble of insecurity and existential doubt in order to chase the peaceful dreams of life as a protagonist, free from the backdrop of violence. Journalism is his stage and the newspaper is his performance. The published words shine a spotlight of truth in a darkened world of corruption and violence obscured from accountability. The script creates a path for all to follow, an exit from the auditorium of passivity and silence towards a loud and spectacular chorus of openness and participation.

5.3 "Rodolfo"

Rodolfo speeds off from the radio station on his Boxer motorcycle. As he slows for the junction at the end of the street, an explosion knocks him to the ground. Rodolfo pauses before he finds the courage to look behind him. A small fire takes hold of the front of the radio station. His employer Juan Carlos waves his arms frantically, blood dripping from his forehead. Rodolfo runs back to work. The front window is completely shattered. The door hangs from its hinges. The airwaves fall silent. Another victim of this region's frequent grenade attacks.

Breaking the silence of self-censorship, May 2013

Rodolfo is a freelance video journalist for regional and national media. He lives with his wife and three children. He also regularly disseminates news stories on

Facebook. Rodolfo has no journalism qualification. He started his reporting career in 2008 working for his town's local radio station.

> I used to work on the breakfast programme. It was great. I was basically their "war" reporter. I did all the violence stuff because few others wanted to do it. But after the grenade attack on the station, they basically ordered us to stop doing real journalism. That's when I left. How can you call yourself a journalist and ignore what is happening around us? It is a failure. A failure of the job, but also a personal failure. I had to leave. I could not live with myself. I could not ignore the violence and corruption and pretend everything was ok.

Rodolfo says the radio station was expecting him to engage in what he calls *autocensura* or "self-censorship". Although seen a dereliction of duty by many of their colleagues, self-censorship is a life jacket for many journalists, who work in violent surroundings. In recent years, the number of journalists murdered in Colombia has fallen dramatically, but the statistics are only part of the story. Fewer reporters are being killed not because the security situation has improved, but because fewer are engaging in the type of coverage that puts them in harm's way (Bock 2014; Gómez 2012), as Chapter 1 explained.

Rodolfo takes great pride in his rejection of *autocensura.* He is another journalist who defines himself by the quality of his work. He also cares about his appearance. He watches what he eats and maintains a good physique, even if he is a little thin. "More bones than muscles," his wife says.

Rodolfo has worked for both of the main national TV stations, *Caracol* and *RCN*. During the miners' strike in 2013 he was both a correspondent appearing on national TV and working as a freelance camera operator. Rodolfo has also been quite vocal on Facebook about the strike and very critical of the violence.

Rodolfo's enthusiasm for journalism is infectious. His passionate belief in press freedom and his drive to report what is happening in his community is admirable. He is constantly pitching stories and trying to report for the legacy media. When the main channels fail to take him up on his offers, he turns to social media instead. For him, getting the story out is the most important thing. Not the money.

> I worked in a garage washing motorbikes before I came a reporter. But that wasn't enough. I was not helping myself and I was not helping anyone. People are not aware they have rights and that means we get taken advantage of. Journalists need to educate people. We need to find stories that can do this. I have stood up for what I believe in and now I want others to do the same.

I found journalism by accident. The local radio DJ would come to get his bike cleaned and we got chatting. Once or twice I would visit the radio station to clean his bike there, and it looked interesting. I started reporting on local stories, but I soon became quite serious about it. I realised that journalism has a power. You can change what people think, how they think. That is the biggest problem here. I would say it is the biggest single job of journalism where we live – to awaken people from their sleepy ignorance.

One of the reasons I work for national media is to give a voice to my community. Colombia is divided and many people have no idea how we live here or in regions like this. There is hardly any coverage of what we go through and I want to change that. To bring about real change, we need to convince the elite to listen to us; to care about us. So I have two main duties, if you like. First, to mobilise the people in the community where I live to confront the world they are forced to live in. Second, to convince those with power to help us.

Journalism gives me a purpose. It makes me feel alive. It makes me feel like I am fighting back. Like I'm not letting them get away with it.

We live in a crazy world. I need to know I'm not crazy and I need to look at my kids when they're older and say I did my bit to make their lives, to make our world, a better place. Journalism is the only way I know how… Well, it is easier that running for President. Let's put it that way!

Rodolfo's answers reveal similar themes to those of Jorge. Journalism in the Llano Verde is distinct. The reporters who live here are motivated by a deep desire for social change and ultimately for peace.

The Golden White Stuff, May 2013

Rodolfo is not a native of this region. He was born on the coast and arrived here with his family when he was a small child. His father had come in search of work and during the course of his life, would switch between gold and cocaine; whichever would bring in more money. As with many regions in Colombia, the gold mines and coca leaf plantations are the main drivers of the economy here. Taussig (2004) suggests there is a cultural continuum between what he calls "the age of gold" and "the age of cocaine". That is to say that armed groups and the entire casual labour force shift their efforts between these two commodities. In 2010 and 2011, as the price of gold reached record levels ($1,900 an ounce), the neo-paramilitaries increased their involvement in illicit mining and by 2015, they were making 7.5 billion pesos annually (£1.9billion), according to the Colombian government (*La Semana* 2013). However, mining in large parts of Antioquia is dependent on the exploitation of alluvial deposits and these are quickly exhausted. Furthermore, the price of gold has fallen ($1,200 an ounce) and a series of legal reforms and military operations have successfully reduced the BACRIM's involvement in the illicit gold trade. Combined with a reduction in the drug crop eradication programme in Colombia, the country has once again become the world's biggest producer of cocaine. In 2015 the

cultivation of coca increased 34% on the previous year and in 2016 the increase continued at a rate of 50% nationally. In Antioquia in 2016, there was a 33% increase in the cultivation of coca (UNODC, 2017). Rodolfo wanted to escape this cycle, but this was about more than personal wealth for him, it was about identifying the social structures which dominate:

> The easy option would have been work down the mine or go and pick coca leaves. I wanted neither. These are the probably the only source of employment for so many people here and people always switch between the two. They go with whichever is bringing in more cash. But I wanted something else. I don't know what. It's why I started working in a garage. At least it was legal. I was biding my time. I knew that anyone working in gold or coke is never more than a bullet away from the paramilitaries.
>
> [...]
>
> These are the industries in which people here are trapped. They connect all of us, but not in healthy ways. We need clean industry here so people can escape the grip of the paramilitaries and the guerrilla. Journalism was my escape and now it's my tool to try and educate people about the structures within which they operate.

We have been trekking for hours in the fierce heat. Rodolfo has agreed to take me to meet some of his family. They live deep in the jungle about three hours from the *Llano Verde*, where they own and work on a small coca plantation. The *Llano Verde* is a place where the laws of *mercancia* (the nickname for cocaine) replace those of the state. However, what Civico describes as the "despotic monopoly" (Civico 2016, p. 201) of the paramilitaries over the cultivation of coca and the production of cocaine is today more of an autonomous franchise (much like the change in the organisation of the militia themselves). This does not mean the "technologies of punishment" (Civico, 2016, p. 201) are any less severe for those that break the laws of the *mercancia*, but stakeholders involved in the production of cocaine have increased and diversified. The domination of drug lords and cartels has faded towards a more open source doctrine, in which private citizens are not confined to particular roles of servitude, but can grow and process the plant for themselves. The slave has become an entrepreneur. While the FARC and the BACRIM are still largely responsible for trafficking the *mercancia* across Colombia and beyond, the bottom end of the chain has opened up.

Eventually after hiking up hills and wading chest high through a stream, Rodolfo and I arrive at his family's small shack on the edge of La Corona. Rodolfo introduces me to his aunt and uncle and to his small cousins. I am exhausted. "We don't get many visitors. It's very exciting to have a foreigner here," says the uncle.

"Please don't let me disrupt you. I'm just interested to see how you work."

They sense my shortness of breath.

"It's a long journey, huh?" the aunt chuckles. "We'll fetch you some water."

"It most certainly is. Thank you."

The farm is small. In fact, it doesn't resemble a farm at all. It is a small wooden shack with a patio that is surrounded by shrubbery. There are no coca plants here.

"They're a few kilometres that way," says Rodolfo as he points up a hill, sensing my confusion,

"Oh I see. I might need to rest first before we set off up there!"

The coca cultivations of today are much different to their predecessors. With the disappearance of the drug lords, the cultivations are wilder and smaller in size. The plants are not lined up in tightly organised rows, but instead are planted sporadically and hidden by larger trees and shrubbery so as not to be detected. The large-scale coca farms that spawned in the 1980s and 1990s are virtually non-existent today. They are easily detected from the air and since the involvement of the USA in coca eradication, these industrial style cultivations are simply not practical. Aerial fumigation programmes have reportedly been highly successful in eradicating illicit crops. However, in 2015 the Colombian government decided to end the programme after evidence was presented that the chemicals used in the fumigation were seriously damaging the environment and could even cause illnesses, including cancer. Aerial fumigation has since been replaced by a more hands on approach, led by antinarcotics batallions of the Colombian security forces, who raid cultivations by helicopter and pull up plants manually. Rodolfo tells me:

> There is no BACRIM without cocaine. There is no FARC without cocaine. Sure, there are many other ways the BACRIM earn money these days, but it's the cocaine that brings in the real money. For them and for us. The Mayor's office has been here, the regional government and the national one too. Even the United Nations. They all want the same thing. They try and convince the people here to grow plantain, or the new one is palm oil. But why would they? It just doesn't bring in the money. They can implement all the schemes they like, but unless these pay more, people will just keep growing coca.

> My father works with coca, as did his father. Sure, things have changed, but it's a family business for so many around here. In fact, since the paramilitaries have disappeared, it is easier for everyone to take a share of the pie. Poor people in the countryside are growing coca because they can earn more. Before, they had to work on the bigger farms in a particular role, but now they can be their own boss and see it through from start to finish. It's about money. It's about wanting a better life for yourself and your family. If my father grew vegetables, he couldn't afford the lifestyle he has now. It's not that he's rich, he's not, but he can pay the bills and they can eat. They're still poor, but not as poor as they would be.

The cultivation of the green coca plant is the first step in a long chain of cocaine production. Harvest happens monthly. In larger farms, the leaves will be picked by *raspachines.* These are often people who freelance moving from one place to the other. Harvesters called *longos* will collect the leaves, usually starting at dawn and finishing around noon. Once collected, the leaves are taken to a *caleta* (hut), which is the processing plant. This is where the leaves are processed with strong acids. The *longos* chop the leaves until they are all shredded. The leaf is soaked with urea and water and then the *longos* stomp on the leaves for about an hour. Thereafter, the leaves are treated with gasoline and sulphuric acid before being fried and dried. On bigger farms, this might be done by a *quimico* (chemist). This creates the basic paste of cocaine, which is then crystallised in more complex laboratories before it is exported. It is the paste that is bought by both the guerrilla and the BACRIM for transportation to other parts of Colombia. The BACRIM will buy paste from the guerrilla and crystallise it into cocaine. The guerrilla do not produce cocaine directly.

In the AUC years, the paramilitaries of the *Llano Verde* waged a bitter and brutal war against the FARC and their smaller cousins in the ELN[74]. However, old hatreds have given way to new business relationships and until recently the FARC and the *Urabeños* had an agreement. Each side would stick to their territories and the economic interests within. The guerrillas, whose territory covered most of the lands used for coca cultivation, would buy paste from the farmers and sell it on to the BACRIM. If they wanted to move their paste through BACRIM territory to another zone then they would pay a transport fee.

With the FARC as a national organisation now handing in its arms and preparing to rejoin civilian life, the *Llano Verde* underworld is reorganising. During the FARC's peace process, the *Urabeños* have confronted an alliance of FARC and ELN guerrillas in some of the local municipalities.

In one area, local politicians and miners report the FARC's commander has declared they will not demobilise and extortion payments will still be expected. While this could mean a new criminal FARC unit, it could also involve an alliance with the *Urabeños*, as the two groups cooperate closely in the area.

> Who you sell it to, depends where you live. May father has always sold his paste to the guerrilla. They would turn up once a month. Other people have to take the paste to them. Some can choose if they take it to the FARC or to the BACRIM. There's no real system. It's not like before where they'd kill you for selling it to the wrong person. It's coz they work together these days anyway. And they all pay the same. But if you

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[74] See Appendix II for a brief overview of the Colombian conflict.

don't have a fixed buyer, you will be charged extortion too. And sometimes by both. So it's not worth it.

About a month ago, the regular guy showed up here. But he came with someone new. He said this new person would be paying my dad from now on. It was as simple as that. Nothing else has changed. The price has not changed. Just someone new is buying what is made. I suspect he is BACRIM because the guerrilla around here have surrendered and disappeared.

The implications of Taussig's continuum extend beyond the realm of economics. Civico highlights the "power" of cocaine, which enslaves people to "consciously or unconsciously follow its laws". The "spirit of cocaine", writes Civico, "produces a reality with innumerable interconnections" (2016, p. 138). These interconnections stretch beyond those directly involved in the cultivation of the coca plant and the production, sale and transportation of cocaine. Similarly, the extraction of gold creates shockwaves beyond the surface of the mine. These feral laws of gold and cocaine are part of what Nordstrom defines as "non-formal" networks, which are defined in the previous chapter (Nordstrom 2004). They supersede the social and human bonds, which have been ruptured by an enduring violence in the region (see Chapter 4). These interconnections create a dependency and shape the feeble, but obstinate fabric of this substitute society, perhaps better described as the "warscape" (Nordstrom 1997).

Cocaine and gold become "the reification of desire", but also the incarnation of repression (Civico 2016, p. 140; see also Taussig, 2004). They represent the capitalist dream of a richer future, but simultaneously trap all those in the region into structures of servitude and subservience. This contradiction of liberation and repression creates "despotic-capitalist" structures in which neo-paramilitary power emerges and in which these armed groups are able to assert their control and domination of both public and private life (Civico 2016, p. 134).

The triangle of life, May 2013

Rodolfo strikes me as an energetic and sociable person. He is easily spotted with his trademark baseball cap, marked *Prensa* or Press to the front, and with his name to the sides. At the end of my first visit, he gives me his cap as a gesture of friendship. In a short space of time, we become very close. I meet his wife and his son, am invited to dinner and socialise with his small circle of close friends. What begins as Rodolfo playing a simple host to a foreign guest ends in friendship, even brotherhood. We share a passion for our profession of journalism. We share a belief in its importance for democratic society, and we also share a passion for people and

for stories. We understand how the sometimes antisocial nature of journalism affects one's personal life. We share tales of partners who don't understand our commitment and dedication to the job. We have friends who are angry at being cancelled on last minute. Rodolfo refers to "the triangle of life". The peak is the job: journalism. The two other corners represent family and the self. My career has always been important to me, but thanks to Rodolfo's triangle, for the first time I admit to myself that my job has been prioritised over everything else. I realise at that moment what I am doing in *Llano Verde*. Why I care. Why I have chosen to embark upon a PhD. Why I have chosen this topic.

> They say you need to balance life and work. But here that is easier said than done. First, we all have to work as much as we can because there is no money. We are poor and if we want to have money to enjoy life, we have to work for it first. Second, in my line of work, as you know, there is no separation. I am constantly on call and ready to leave at the drop of a hat. But it's more than that. Journalism is a calling. It is my life and so the personal and the professional combine. They are blurred. That's why sometimes I work for free. The story is what is important.

Upon reflection, the strong bond between Rodolfo and me is unexpected. He is older, with a family. We are very different people. He loves football and loves women even more. He has several lovers, some of whom I meet. He woos them with tales of near death experiences in the reporting field. He tries to impress them with inside knowledge of corruption scandals. He does not understand why I don't share his passion for women, especially as he thinks I am single. I never share the fact I'm gay with Rodolfo. Colombia is a macho country. Homosexuality is legal, but it is frowned upon. Homophobia is rife and I am afraid he won't understand. I am worried how this might impact on the research process. I am afraid it will close doors. My sexuality is private. Nonetheless, Rodolfo and I share a camaraderie. I admire him. His drive and determination make me question my own. And from my interrogation and affection, Rodolfo gains what I think is a sense of purpose. My attention to his work and his life provide some kind of gratification. He places himself at great risk for his work, but does anyone appreciate it? Who even realises? For the first time, he meets someone who not only acknowledges this, but also applauds it. Maybe even idolises it. We have been brought together by our love of journalism, but also perhaps by something much deeper. Were we both searching for a purpose? For a meaning? For an understanding of who we are and why we do what we do?

I am incredibly touched and humbled when Rodolfo offers me his cap. It is part of his identity. He wears it every day. For Rodolfo, the cap is a badge of honour.

He is proud to be a journalist and wants the world to know it. He knows what journalism is for. What it should be.

Why I'm here, May 2013

The research project suddenly becomes very personal. I am disillusioned with journalism in the UK. I remember why I left the BBC 4 years earlier. Stuck in the repetitious machinations of rolling news, I had realised the profession I loved was under threat. A new kind of *factory journalism* had emerged. Reporting had become a production line. There was decreasing originality and insufficient room for creativity. I had lived to work, but work was no longer what it was. I have lost my purpose. I could relate to Rodolfo even more. Has journalism ever been what I think it is? Did journalism even matter? This, I realise, is why I am in Colombia. I have set out to search for other people who devote their lives to journalism. I want to know and need to know that journalism can matter; that it does matter; that I have not been wasting my time for 10 years. I, too, am in search of a purpose. I have defined myself by my career. So has Rodolfo. I need to know that is not a mistake. This is what we share. It is about more than journalism. It is about who we are. But are we driven by a naïve idealism? Is there something missing from our lives? Or is our work actually able to impact on the world? We both need to know that what we do with our lives actually means something. But why do we need this satisfaction? Rodolfo's cap now hangs on my bedroom wall and serves as a reminder of these questions, these doubts, these quite very personal insecurities. Questions, too, to which there are still no answers.

Displacement and depression, May 2014

For a month in January 2014, Rodolfo and his family were forcibly displaced from *Llano Verde*. Several texts messages warned that they all had 24 hours to leave or face death. The text was backed up by a personal visit. Rodolfo was pulled from his motorbike and kicked to the ground.

> I was going to buy bread. I had popped out for just a few minutes. I had been receiving the messages but had felt threatened really. There is something worse about physical violence, of course. But perhaps before I had just not really thought about what was happening.
> They guy pulled me from the bike as I was waiting at a traffic light. My head hit the ground and he kicked me. Twice. Once in the chest and then in my head. I was winded. I couldn't breathe. Then he bent down and said: "We've told you. Leave or die." I was in a lot of pain but I was protecting myself with my hands from more blows but I still manages to look him in the eye. He was young. Not particularly strong. But I

could tell he meant what he said. There were many people around, but of course nobody intervened or said anything. Nobody would dare. I got up and went home.

Telling my family was hard. My wife cried and panicked. My son too. So I had to be strong. I hid my fear. I called *Caracol* (the national broadcaster) and they said I should go to them in Medellin. We packed a bag and left for the bus station in a taxi. They were watching, making sure I'd left. They were outside my apartment. They gave us a little wave as the taxi pulled away. I was scared of what they would do to our home, but tried not to think about it. We couldn't ask anyone to take care of it because it would put them at risk. It was only months later when we came back that we saw they had taken everything. Even our beds and the sofa. There was nothing left. This is worse than the text messages, the kicks. They had invaded our home and taken everything from us. We are still trying to recover.

In 2014, Rodolfo stops working as a journalist entirely. He says he prefers to not work than censor his own reporting, but he has been suffering depression ever since.

The Rodolfo I meet in 2014 is quiet. He is nervous. He is constantly looking over his shoulder. He smells. He is drunk. He has given up journalism. He tells me he is drinking every morning to cope. He is self-censoring, he says. And he does not know how to live with it. His son is safe, but what about his wife? She has the only wage on which they now survive. Rodolfo is lost. He could not continue to report. He has asked the Colombian government's human rights ombudsman for protection. He has the support of FLIP[75]. But still, two months on after the request, he has had no response. He is even scared to be seen with me. His hands tremble and his eyes fill with tears as he takes the gift I brought him from the UK: an England football shirt. Rodolfo no longer knows himself. His courage, his drive, his passion has gone. It is overwhelming. It is depressing. And I am powerless.

During the 12 months between my first two visits to Colombia, Rodolfo and I stay in touch on Facebook and via Skype. He keeps me up-to-date about what is happening in the *Llano Verde*. We chat football. He tells me about his latest lovers, and he tells me about the new death threats he has received since the miners' strike. Rodolfo and his family are very lucky that the regional TV station helps them out after the death threats against him, but the assistance does not come without conditions. *Caracol* find Rodolfo and his family a flat in Medellín (six hours from *Llano Verde* and the regional capital) and give them some money to support themselves in return for a short-term contract for Rodolfo. Whilst his family is trying to orientate themselves in a new city and come to terms with what has happened, Rodolfo is forced to work in the newsroom every day. He tells me how his marriage is barely surviving the pressure. He says he feels like a "failure":

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[75] The Colombian Foundation for Press Freedom.

> I feel like I have failed as a husband and a father. I cannot provide for them and in their time of need, I have to go and work. My kids are always asleep when I get home. I basically have a few minutes with them each morning.

After three months, *Caracol* end their support for Rodolfo and his family. The UNP (National Protection Unit) deem it safe for them to return to *Llano Verde*. Rodolfo is not convinced. He sends his children to live with their grandmother in Venezuela. After their first security study, the UNP send Rodolfo a telephone and a bullet-proof vest. They also pledge financial assistance for travel. They warn him not to take the same routes to work every day:

> This is a joke. I live in a small town and I have to move between six districts to do my work. I don't have an office. The countryside is my office. There is basically only one road between each district, unless I wanna walk through the jungle…. So how can I change my route? And would you wear a bullet-proof vest in this heat?

Three months later, the UNP's second security study of Rodolfo's situation finds the threat level to be much higher and they recommended personal armed security. This is on the 8th September 2014. At the time of writing, almost three years later, these protection measures are still not in place.

I know times are difficult for Rodolfo, but I am not prepared for what I find when I see him again in June 2015. He has become a shell of who he once was. Rodolfo offers for me to stay at his apartment in the centre of *Llano Verde* when I return for my third visit. I think about his offer seriously, but I turn it down. I appreciate his hospitality, but I need space. Space to be able to reflect. I am worried that staying with him and his wife will not allow me the time I need to write field notes, to think. It appears I have offended him, but then, I actually realise he is probably quite relieved.

Rodolfo is an alcoholic. He decides to stop working as a journalist because he would rather be unemployed than be a reporter who engages in self-censorship:

> I had to stop work. It means I have nothing. No job, no food. I am dependent on my wife. But rather this than death. I know I'm a failure as a journalist. But I want to stay alive. I don't know why. This life is pointless.

We are told journalists are dispassionate people. That they can separate themselves from the facts, that they can be impartial, that they can remove themselves from the story. In this context, where not only the life of the reporter is threatened, but also those of their family, these ideals seem impossible. Journalists are the story. Or they

are in the story. The private and the public, the professional and the personal, collide and collude with the intimate in ways, which make these concepts sometimes inseparable.

5.4 "Esteban"

An overweight spotty teenager makes his way to school. His uniform shows the week's wear and tear and carries the strong odour of frying *empanadas*. Every morning his mum would wake in the early hours to make sure she has enough for the morning rush. Esteban would eat at least two before school until his fourteenth birthday. This is the day he decides he no longer wants to be fat. This is the day he decides to rebel. Not against his mum. It is just the two of them. But against the world.

"I want to be someone," he decides.

He is tired of being picked on and he is tired of the teachers telling him there is no future. He does not want a life in the mines, nor in the coca fields. He witnesses how many of his classmates are turning to violence; how they succumb to the paramilitary predators who patrol the playground. He wants that much less.

"I'm gonna be someone. I'm gonna help my mum and I'm gonna help my town. It is time things changed. I am a man now," he says to himself in the mirror.

A qualified independent, May 2014

Esteban is a journalism graduate and has set up his own local television news agency, which broadcasts a weekly news programme on regional TV and also has a website and social media channels.

He invites me to his studio. It is basic, but perfectly workable. It is a converted bedroom, belonging to one of his friends. A green cloth is pinned to the back wall to provide the green screen effect. A small semi-professional camera stands on a tripod, and to the left, there is a makeshift edit suite with a small monitor, and a Mac computer running Final Cut Pro. From the ceiling, hangs a professional LED light.

Esteban is 24 years old. When I met him in 2013 he had only just graduated from university with a degree in journalism. He was freelancing for local radio stations. When I meet him for a second time in 2014 he has most definitely grown in confidence. He has his own business. A year previously, Esteban had been shy and reluctant to talk to me, but now he has war wounds. He has real experience of reporting in the field and has been threatened and beaten because of his journalism.

I remember my 14th birthday like it was yesterday. It really was the day everything changed. Everything I have now, I have worked for since that moment. I am very happy.

I think it was soon after that I decided journalism was what I wanted to do. I used to read the newspapers and watch the TV bulletins all the time. I used to practice reading the news in the mirror. Pretending I was broadcasting to millions. Not many people can say they grow up to achieve their dreams.

It was important for me to get a qualification in journalism. There are so many people here who say they are journalists, but they are not really. I mean they do journalism, they publish their own newspapers, for example, but I don't think they always understand what they're doing or even how to be a good journalist. That doesn't happen in the big cities. In the big cities, there are qualified journalists working for papers, TV and radio. This is what I wanted to begin with, but then I realised I could do more here where I live.

People get obsessed with labels. I think it is important to show I am a professional journalist, with a qualification. What do I mean by professional? Exactly that. Someone who has a degree in journalism. Someone who understands ethics and objectivity. This leads to a better understanding of why and how journalism matters. Empirical journalists - those who learn on the job - make a valuable contribution, but anyone can learn to write a story on the job. It is the legal and social context that is lacking. When I was beaten up, this was a violation of my rights under Article 20 of the Constitution. This is not something empirical journalists would understand because they haven't studied the law. Therefore they can be a danger to other people and not just themselves.

[…]

It is also important to show I am independent. Free from the political interference that happens so much at national level.

The national and regional media are owned by some of Colombia's richest families. Do you think they cover news that matters to poor people like those that live here? They just exploit us and come here when there are gory pictures of dead people. They don't come when we tell them the mayor is stealing millions of pesos. This doesn't interest them. So that's why I'm here. And that's why I set up my own business. To be independent of the elite that control most of the information in this country.

Poster Boy, June 2014

Esteban is the poster boy of a departmental campaign to get more teenagers from poorer backgrounds into university education. A 7 minute film featuring his achievements and ambitions features regularly on local TV. This is the first thing he shows me when we meet for the second time. He grins with pride as we watch it. Twice.

When we met in 2013, Esteban wore braces. He was timid. He was reluctant to make eye contact. He looked a little over 15. He struck me as naïve. But it was appealing. He reminded me of myself when I had been his age starting at the BBC. He showed me his bag. In it, was a notebook, pen, dictaphone (held together with sticky tape) and a curious looking box. The box was marked FLIP (*Fondacion para la*

Libertad de Prensa or the Foundation for Press Freedom). It contained guides to Colombian legislation. A "how to" should you find yourself arrested or the victim of a threat or violence. One of the major issues in Colombia is that journalists (especially in the regions) are unaware of their rights. Esteban declared the guide "his bible". He'd never used it, but read it regularly so he could familiarise himself with its contents.

In 2014, not only have the braces gone, but so has the apprehension. Esteban's voice is louder. His body language more pronounced. He appears more like a politician than a journalist. He has views, strong views, and he wants to convey them. This time, he looks directly into my eyes, sometimes not even blinking, it seems. I think I am intimidated.

> I am good at what I do. I have grown up a lot. I have my own agency, but this is not the end. I have ambition. I think any journalist in Colombia with ambition must break away from the system in which most work. Look at Juanita Léon or the people behind *las 2 Orillas*[76]. They have ambition. A personal ambition to be the best reporter they can. But a public or professional ambition too, which involves rescuing journalism from the elite and restoring people's faith in good reporting.

Searching for the positive, May 2014

Esteban concludes that local journalism has its part to play for the area's plunge into abject violence. His reporting, in contrast, sets out to correct this. He believes "good" journalism is possible without taking risk. For him, a journalism that counters violence does not have to be judicial, in the sense that is assumes the role of the police and legal authorities, but instead, can simply highlight "the positives".

> Newspapers are obsessed with conflict. Journalism has become nothing more than sensational body counts. This is not what people relate to. People needed to see their lives and their community in a new way. Why can we not focus on the positive? If people can see there's more than violence in our town, they might not so easily resort to violence.

> My agency does not cover conflict, corruption or violence. We look for the positive, for what people want. We don't do investigative journalism. We don't have the resources and if I am honest I am not sure we have the balls! I think investigative journalism costs more than it earns. I can't run my business that way and I can't ask my staff to take risks. The only people that can do investigative journalism are people like Jorge. And they do it badly, which is why they are threatened. Professionals know when to stop. Where to draw the line. There's nothing more valuable than my life. If you want to accuse me of self-censorship, that's fine. But my life is at stake so of course it is acceptable to ignore certain stories or not go around investigating.

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[76] See Appendix I and Chapter 2.

My motivation is that I have to do something. It's why I became a journalist in the first place. I can't sit idly by. But we can't expect people to take risks and we need to understand how and why some people might be willing to take more risks than others.

Each of us has our own story. Those who have kids are less willing to take risks. That's understandable. Their personal lives take over. I don't have kids yet and so it is easier for me to believe in the collective and strive towards improving life for the collective. A journalist has a public role, but the personal can intervene… and there is nothing wrong with that. We are human beings.

In the field, Esteban behaves like most journalists I know. During my time with him, we cover three stories. The first is the local teenager who wins Miss Colombia. The second is how a nearby community receives UN support to produce their own brand of chocolate. The aim is to provide sustainable alternatives to cocaine production. And the third is how the Mayor has taken "unofficial leave" for the whole of the World Cup and has travelled to Rio with his family. This is Esteban's idea of "positive".

"This is what people want to see," he says.

This is what guides his editorial judgment. He ignores grenade attacks. He ignores body counts. But as the third story shows, there is still some interest in politics. Corruption, I am told, is off limits.

The story about the Mayor is apparently not corruption per se. This is not investigating alleged ties with organised crime, for example, or exposing irregular financing, which could land a reporter in trouble. This is a story based on facts, following the traditional watchdog role of journalism - the Mayor has taken a long period of apparent 'unofficial' leave, and is simply being held to account.

Esteban uses journalism vocabulary in a way that Jorge does not, for example. He is able to articulate the role of a journalist using academic terminology.

Esteban uses the usual channels to seek out the actual leave record and leave entitlement of the mayor, but has been denied. He uses both official and unofficial sources from inside the Town Hall to write the story. He also contacts the Mayor's office to offer a right of reply (something Jorge does not necessarily understand or care about). This is also denied. He uses a still image of the Mayor and his family in a Brazilian football stadium to illustrate the story, and writes it as most trained journalists probably would. It is factual, fair and accurate, with the aim of holding the Mayor to account. It is not accusatory or inflammatory. This is in stark comparison with Jorge's stories about the Mayor. But it is hard to see how this fits with the notion of "positive", in comparison to the first two stories, I think.

It's positive in that it's not campaigning. I am not political. I am not doing this story as other journalists might because of my own personal agenda, I am doing it for the agenda of the people. I don't care which mayor is in office, They need to be held accountable to the people.

Esteban most definitely devotes most of his time to the Miss Colombia report. He finds the girl's family, friends, former teachers and ex-boyfriends. He is not digging for dirt, as might have become the tabloid way in the UK. Instead, he is seeking simple reaction. It is a piece to celebrate. This region apparently does not produce many national celebrities. Combined with the newly crowned Miss Colombia's "homecoming", which sees her welcomed back by hundreds of people, the material makes for a well put-together news package. We even wait for 3 hours to be able to talk to the girl herself. This is dubbed an exclusive by Esteban, though I am not sure why as there are scores of other reporters who talked to her, and many before we did. Esteban also does a *piece-to-camera* among the celebrations.

Of all the journalists I work with, I sense Esteban finds it most difficult. He appears not to understand what I am doing, why I want to watch him at work. He is happy to express his views on journalism in the region and in Colombia more widely, but when I come to work with him, to observe him, he seems a little defensive.

Esteban is polite with people. He has a pre-prepared speech about his news agency, about what it is. It is still new and so not everybody has heard of it. He does not command the respect that Jorge does, for example. This might be because of his age, but it appears that he certainly gives people more thought than Jorge. His style of interviewing is certainly more considerate, though it takes some time for people to warm to him.

Esteban always introduces himself as a "professional". He even explains where and what he studied. Esteban has found his feet, but I fear his ideas and convictions about journalism and society might be misplaced. I share and admire his passion for wanting to make his community a better place, but the more time I spend with Esteban, I begin to question this new found confidence. He seems to put up barriers emotionally. He does not want to get close. He does not want to be friends. I began to see his confidence as a cover for fear and insecurity, emotions he hides behind a barrier of protection and professionalism.

Esteban and Rodolfo are the only two with a real commitment to deadlines, perhaps because they work in broadcast and provide material to third parties. The others produce news items as and when they can. Waisbord's "now news" is a distant concept for all of the journalists in Llano Verde (2013, p. 199).

Where he's needed, May 2014

Esteban believes journalism can "change the world", and if reporters do not strive to do so, they are simply not doing their job.

> Journalism has a social purpose that goes beyond the partition of information. It is about provoking change and highlighting solutions to the violence, or the root causes, and not just the sensational here and now of death. We are all witnesses to the violence of this region, but not all of us know that we can do something about it.
>
> There is an *ideal* journalism, which is obviously what we all want to achieve. We want to be investigative reporters, who can expose corruption and armed groups, but the violence, and of course the fact we can't afford it, act as a constraint. The *real* journalism is that we cannot. To do those things means death. And although journalism is my life, I cannot be blamed for wanting to stay alive. As a journalist, it is my job to defend society, to defend the people. But if I die, who will defend me?

Esteban's belief that journalism has the power to change society has not faltered since I first met him, but his views on how have most definitely changed. The sense of naivity has gone, but it has perhaps been replaced by one of self-preservation or even self-defence. A coping mechanism, perhaps. Esteban's attachment to what he calls responsible journalism, a concept he had introduced me to 12 months earlier and a concept, which he had initially struggled to define, now actually takes on new meaning. He is resolute with his views. He will not be challenged. For Esteban, journalism is a liberating force, a source of good in the world, a source of peace.

> I want to show that peace can exist. We show how normal people are dealing with conflict… how they are trying to solve it for themselves. These people can be examples for the rest of the community. We don't talk to the police, to the army, but we talk to people. Our neighbours. Our friends.

The journalists of the *Llano Verde* do not separate themselves from their audience. They share the same violent spaces and live by the same non-formal networks of repression as their readers, viewers and listeners (Nordstrom 2004). Professionalism, as it has been defined in the Global North, would most certainly require the journalist to distance him or herself from the story. This is simply not part of the psyche here. There is an understanding that the reporter and the reported, the interviewer and the interviewee are all caught up in the same complex web of silence

and semi-statelessness. The journalist is not a detached observer, but an involved campaigner and perhaps even protector.

With his grades and his experience, Esteban could leave this region, he tells me, and go to work in Bogotá. But this is where he is needed. This place needs better journalism. And that is what he is providing.

War wounds, May 2014

During the miners' strike in 2013 Esteban had been filming for his news agency, when he was attacked – unprovoked – by the police. He showed me the footage. He is filming a protestor being arrested and beaten by 4 police officers in riot gear. Another officer, baton raised, starts running towards Esteban who is filming. Esteban shouts out "*Prensa! Prensa!" or "Press! Press!"* before both Esteban and the camera crash to the ground. We can hear the thud of the baton hit Esteban's head repeatedly as he screams in pain. He is unsure what happened next. He had been beaten unconscious and woke up in the hospital hours later.

The footage of the assault was difficult for Esteban to watch. He flinched repeatedly but did not look away, probably conscious that I was observing his reaction rather than paying attention to the footage. He did not need to tell me this had been a defining moment in his career.

Most physical aggressions against journalists in Colombia are committed by the security forces. In 2012 17% of journalists said they had been attacked by state security forces. In 2013, this figure rose to 21%. Interestingly, assaults from illegal armed groups fell from 16% to 14% over the same period (FLIP, 2013), though since then they have increased (see Chapter 4).

Esteban was severely beaten by members of the ESMAD, *el Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios*. This branch of the national police was created in 1999 to deal with public order problems and has since gained notoriety in Colombia for their heavy-handed approach. They have been accused of an abuse of power and many human rights violations (*La Semana*, 2013). Chris Paterson (2014) writes about how the U.S. Government has been directly responsible for the deaths of over forty journalists and media workers in conflicts in Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, Paterson reconceptualises the notion of "friendly fire" and concludes that journalists face a "friendly threat" instead. He bases his arguments on recent changes to Western military strategy, which seek to control information and include a willingness to employ a deadly force against civilian reporters. I would argue that such actions (officially sanctioned) go beyond a "threat", however, and that in Colombia, where anti-press violence is executed by state forces (usually without

sanction, but with complete impunity), this poses not a "threat" but creates an actual weapon of war. Furthermore, there is nothing "friendly" about a strategy, which involves government security forces deliberately targeting journalists, even if they are on the same "side". In my view, and in the Colombian context, a "friendly threat" would be much better conceptualised as simple state-sponsored violence. This state-sponsored violence is characterised by both sanctioned and unsanctioned assaults on journalists and other media workers with the aim of preventing the halt of information. The aim of those perpetrating this coercion is shared with the members of the neo-paramilitaries: to reduce scrutiny and accountability. In the case of Esteban, he was attacked by the ESMAD because he had filmed four police officers beating a man and they wanted to destroy the footage to prevent it entering into the public domain:

> "Prensa! Prensa!" I just kept screaming. I could see these two giant robocops heading towards me. You know how they look. In their protective gear. They tried to grab my camera and I just kept shouting. Then one hit me in the head with his gun. My camera fell to the ground. They just ignored it. I thought they would pick it up and take it away, but they didn't. Instead they attacked me. The other officer kicked me in the stomach. They pulled me up and then punched me again. I fell. They kicked me. I thought they were going to kill me. They didn't even take the camera.
>
> I was doing nothing wrong. It was during the 2013 riots. They started beating a protester for what looked like not apparent reason. I started to film them and they saw me. There were four of them around this poor guy, kicking and punching him. And they didn't stop. Two broke away and the others came towards me.
> This is normal behaviour for the ESMAD. They are animals. And the worse thing is, they get away with it.

The violence and demonstrations, which tore his hometown apart had made him question the world around him. Society had been engulfed in conflict. Youths went on the rampage because they could, he explained. He was saddened and disappointed journalists had become targets. Not just by the police, but by the public. He had struggled to understand why. For him, journalism was a liberating force, a source of good in the world. He suddenly realised he was isolated in his perspective, and journalism itself must be to blame, he concluded.

It strikes me that this is more than Esteban coming of age. It is more than a simple recognition of his blinkered innocence; more than a recognition of gullible ignorance. It is a young man trying to come to terms with his surroundings. He is trying to understand the shortcomings of his previous convictions. But this is not just about the journalist or the reporter's public role within society, this is about Esteban himself. "Who am I?" he questions. He is rethinking everything that up until that point had defined him, not only as a journalist, but as a person.

I used to think journalism was just about helping others. I mean, I know it is my job, but I chose it because of the type of person I am. I always knew I wanted to do the type of work, where I can create change or improve the situation. But what I didn't realise is that this change is also a personal change. The job is just as much about understanding my own place in life as much as it is about everyone else. I need to have a reason to be alive, and this is it. My job has to give me a purpose. There is no other option for me, whatever the risk. This is just something I accept.

5.5 "Juan Carlos"

Juan Carlos bellows loudly into his microphone as we go live on air: "He's been here for a few months now and you might have seen around him. He might have even asked you a few questions. Well, now it's our turn. The *gringo* is here in the studio. Mathew*s*[77], what do you love about our country?"

Shouting is of course necessary on radio. Without it, the voice is simply not carried into the hundreds of homes currently tuned it to the breakfast show. As I sit next to Juan Carlos and share his microphone, I pause for a moment. It is a chance for my eardrums to recover and I briefly consider how I will respond. The standard answer to this question is, of course, the food and the women. The honest answer is politics and men, but this would do nobody any favours. I decide to stick to the lies. Well, partial lies. I actually do like Colombian food quite a lot.

Public journalism as the alternative to self-censorship, May 2014

Juan Carlos runs the community radio station, where Rodolfo worked before he resigned. In 2011, the station stopped reporting crime, corruption and conflict after their offices were attacked with a grenade. The station continues to report news they define as 'in the public interest', but this does not include violence or corruption. Juan Carlos's community radio station is the second most listened to station in the region. What started as a pirate station, now has over 25,000 listeners a week. This is a quarter of the local population. It was one of the first stations to be granted a license under the 1991 constitutional reforms (see Chapter 1).

Juan Carlos is a talkative person. My interviews with him are the longest. Perhaps this is why he makes a good DJ! Juan Carlos is also very matter-of-fact. He is a practical person. He admits to engaging in *autocensura* or self-censorship, but

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[77] The extra "s" on my name is standard practice in Colombia for reasons, which remain unknown to me.

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feels there is no alternative when one's life is at stake. Instead, he says, he has found a way of doing journalism that still benefits society and does not get him killed.

> We live in our own world. We are forgotten by the government. In parts of this region, there is no state presence at all. In others, the state is only weak. We have only ourselves to stand up and defend our rights. And that's how I see my role. That's why I started my radio station. I was bored of graphic design.
>
> I obviously didn't make the transition for the money. There is no money in journalism, everyone knows that! But it wasn't about money. It was because I was tired of living the way we live here and I just felt it was time to do something.
>
> I love my wife and my children. Of course. But if I am honest, they don't give me the buzz I get from journalism. This buzz comes from the fact I know I am doing something. Something for my family. Something for the whole town. Something that will help us understand and help make the place better. A purpose, if you like.
>
> Journalism is not just information. If it is, we are failing. It must go further than information and improve the lives of citizens. We live here. We know what the issues are. If we ignore them, we are failures. And we do ignore the violence, and so we are failing in that regard. I admit it. But that's not our responsibility. I'll admit it, but I won't be blamed for it.
>
> The government and the state should be providing better circumstances in which I can work. This is their responsibility. They are failing to protect us. In the meantime, we have an alternative way of telling stories so we don't feel like total failures.
>
> I don't care we ignore the violence and the conflict because I provide another kind of journalism. It is a journalism for the public. This is equally as important, but ten times safer. I am not failing. I still feel like a journalist. In fact, we cover the stories that get neglected because of the conflict. There are stories outside of this realm. These are stories that people need to know to make our community a better place. And these are stories that won't get me shot… hopefully!

Juan Carlos may not cover conflict or corruption per se, but he covers original stories that matter to people. He shares the widely-held perceptions of journalism in Llano Verde that reporting is shaped by advocacy. Interestingly, he holds the state accountable for not being able to guarantee the security he needs to carry out his journalism.

Large parts of Juan Carlos's news programme are taken up with a phone-in. Two local stories are covered: the local hospital at breaking point and river pollution. The audience response is impressive. The phones ring constantly.

The first story concentrates on how a 4-month-old baby has not been tended to by doctors and has died in the waiting room at the local hospital. Staff are apparently overstretched and the baby is not given priority. This is followed up with other tales of people being left on stretchers in the corridor, a lack of antibiotics and a general lack of equipment. This is a story that the radio station engages with for months and it leads to major changes in the local hospital admissions system. It has a strong campaigning feel.

The second is about pollution. Juan Carlos is trying to educate people not to dump their rubbish in the river, he tells me. People apparently do not understand the dangers involved, and in some communities people are becoming ill after contact with the river.

Juan Carlos clearly cares. He has a message and he wants to get that message out:

> Just because we live in violent times does not mean we should ignore other important aspects of our lives. If we do, those who perpetrate the violence against us have won. It is my job to remind people of that.

Like Esteban, Juan Carlos is keen to lift his audience from the misery of conflict. This seems noble, but I have concerns that this may also embody at best a sense of acceptance, and at worst, indifference. I understand the need to "get on with life", but at the cost of ignoring the violence? Perhaps this is how Juan Carlos copes in such circumstances. As he does not feel safe, he cannot pursue the type of journalism he wants to. Therefore, the public interest model is a substitute. The acceptance and indifference implied conceal his true impotence perhaps.

5.6 Running from the filed

The tables turn, May 2014

I answer the door on autopilot, half asleep and not realising the time. Stupidly, I have not stopped to think about who might be knocking at two o'clock in the morning. By the time I have realised, it is too late. Two men stand before me. Their eyes fixed on mine. They push me into my room. I fall on my bed. They have an instant advantage.

"*Mejor que se vaya*," said one. "It's best you leave."

There is no expression in the man's voice. He is not shouting. He is perfectly calm, but it is clear this is an order. There is a pause, which I'm sure is only seconds, but feels like hours. They stand over me. They do not repeat their warning. I eventually nod my head. They turn and leave.

Scared, I contact one of my informants. Jorge comes immediately to my hotel. His company, and of course that of his 4 security guards, offer me great comfort and more importantly, security. The first bus leaves for Medellín at five in the morning. The three hours waiting in the hotel are the longest of my life, knowing that the two young men who had threatened me are now outside sitting on motorbikes waiting to see if I leave or not.

"There is no point calling the police," Jorge said. "Not now we're here. We can call the *Personero*[78] in the morning and you should go to the police in Bogotá or Medellín. Anywhere but here!"

Now I know what it feels like. I have spent months trying to understand what it must feel like to be intimidated or physically assaulted. I have been threatened just for doing my job and I am terrified.

Jorge humours me. He can of course relate to what has just happened:

You're lucky you can leave. You're free. I'm stuck here. I have to live with it. But I don't want to complain. I kinda like it if I'm honest. These are the cards I have been dealt so I guess I just have to accept it. When Luis was killed, for example, he was set free as well. I was almost happy for him. I am still trapped. I do my job knowing that tomorrow I may die. This is my prison. Death is always around the corner.

I know I have my bodyguards and if it wasn't for them, I'd be dead already. I don't feel safe, but I don't think about it. If I did, it would stop me from doing my job. It would stop me from living. I don't want to get caught up in a state of anxiety and fear. I have to be strong for my family. If they see me weak, they will worry more. So I guess this is what keeps me from getting scared.

In 2010, they launched two grenades at my house. I was sleeping. It destroyed the front door and the windows and almost killed my sister. We would have left *Llano Verde* then if we had the money. But I'm glad we didn't. On reflection, I think the attempts on my life have made me stronger and more determined. You know, the more isolated you become, the harder your work.

There are two options: run or stay and fight. I am not a coward. At first, obviously you feel scared, but this transforms into something else, into strength, or at least it can do if you want it to. It is easy to be defeated, but where would that get us?

When we lost Luis, it was heartbreaking. That's when it really comes home. One of our own murdered. My family begged me stop after that, and I admit I thought about it, but I just couldn't. There is something, which drives me. I don't know what, but it does.

After Luis's death, we need to send a message. I fight back with more journalism. We cannot let them win. Look, if it was just the job or just the money I needed, I would have stopped doing journalism years ago. I earn peanuts! But it makes me happy, despite all of this, and that's important. It's the only thing I know how to do. But of course I impose my choice on my family. I know that.

[…]

I understand if you don't come back here. You're not used to this. But I wouldn't worry too much. I'm sure it was nothing really. Just scare tactics. They like to scare people. And let's face it, if they wanted you dead, they would have shot you. Really. You wouldn't be here. They don't make mistakes.

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[78] The *personero* is elected by local councilors. They are responsible for the oversight of the local mayor and other local officials. They must investigate allegations of corruption and must also ensure the protection of citizens' human rights.

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I am unsure if these are words of encouragement or if I am being mocked, but it is only days after the incident, that I truly reflect on this. I leave *Llano Verde* without a second thought. This creates an overwhelming sense of guilt, which eventually turns to shame. I am in *Llano Verde* to investigate why journalists are being threatened and attacked, and at the first sign of trouble, I leave. In contrast, the reporters I have been working with rarely have such opportunity. This undermines my attempts to fully participate in the community I am investigating. I am once again reminded of my outsider status. The aim of my research is not only to observe how a journalist operates in this region, but also to experience it; to live it. It is often said that journalism is in one's blood. It is not something that can be taught or learned easily. It is instinctive. It is a way of life. It is a vocation. The shame therefore gives way to self-doubt: do I even have what it takes to be a journalist here?

Before this chapter concludes, the next section will summarise and reflect on some of the key themes and issues the stories of the four journalists above have presented. These ideas and concepts will be further developed in the conclusion. The intension is to build on arguments first presented in Chapter 2 and to introduce the concept of a divergent news ecology, which can account for the changing and varying nature of the arenas in which today's journalism(s) operate. The aim is of course to understand and ascertain the nature of the journalistic practice that emerges in the violent alternative social (*dis*)order of the *Llano Verde*, as detailed in the second research question, which is guiding this thesis.

5.7 A divergent news ecology

In this study, the divergent news ecology constitutes the alternative social (*dis*)order of after war, which is characterised by anti-press violence, and where this anti-press violence is just one form of a violence that is "plural and dialectical" and which permeates all aspects of both the collective and individual lives of citizens. In another context, a divergent news ecology may take on other features.

In the *Llano Verde*, the journalistic practice described in the preceding sections of this chapter may appear "unprofessional", alternative or even radical. When held up to the "routinised" journalistic practices of dominant media (Boczowski 2010), the journalism of the informants included in this study might be considered as unfamiliar if not unconventional, but this is the heterogeneous practice that has emerged in the absence of national and regional media, and in what Chapter 4 defines as the alternative social (*dis*)order of Colombia's "after war".

This divergent news ecology is characterised in part by a drought of information. Chapter 4 illustrated how a multifaceted violence can fracture social bonds and "impair" an individual's ability to connect and communicate with her fellow citizens (McGee and Flórez López, 2016). In this culture of silence, news therefore carries not only information, but additionally embodies the wider human experience. The thirst for news symbolises a desire to participate in public life. News becomes the vehicle through which individuals enact their citizenship. Journalists become the facilitators of an evanescent "public sphere" (Habermas, 1989), or perhaps more appropriately, a "civil sphere", which "stresses the critical role of social solidarity" (Alexander 2006, p. 43), temporarily repairing the bonds that the violence of the "after war" has broken. By facilitating the "civil sphere", the journalist makes public what many citizens may or may not already privately know, but as a result, can now openly acknowledge. For the journalist, the publication of this information potentially involves considerable risk. This is especially true when the journalist becomes a surrogate of the state. In the absence of effective institutions within this alternative social (*dis*)order, a reporter potentially assumes the role of police officer, judge and prosecutor, investigating and exposing the criminal and corrupt, while simultaneously providing assistance for their victims. Individuals or fellow citizens are not only sources of information for the reporter, but also constituents, who require support and guidance.

This chapter has also shown the creative strategies, which some journalists have nurtured in order to mitigate risk and avoid self-censorship and a denigration of their "professional" duties (see the stories of Esteban and Juan Carlos above). While their practice may not be investigative in the sense that it is judicial, it is still distinctly in the public interest, in that its purpose is to seek out and highlight potential paths to peace.

The journalists' stories illustrate a dualism in their reporting, which encapsulates an individual desire for the betterment of society, but also a propensity to understand or assert one's own existence and place in the world. This journalism extends beyond the realm of news and pure information, providing more evidence of how the practice of journalism in the *Llano Verde* encapsulates an individual agency for the social or collective good. Journalism in this divergent news ecology is a vehicle to understand the violent social structures in which these reporters find themselves, but it is also an exercise in citizenship disclosed by its advocacy for peace and its facilitation of the "civil sphere".

The journalism I have witnessed in the *Llano Verde* is more than simple reporting. It is comprised of a rebellion, which attempts to break the daily violence

and structures of corruption, criminality and conflict. This is a form of resistance, which is perhaps not structured or organised in its form, but is instead shaped by individual "commitment". It is a resistance to uncover, understand, challenge and even overhaul the world in which one lives. These reflections will be further developed through the theoretical lens of citizenship in the subsequent and final chapter. First, what can be concluded from this study about the dominant debates within journalism studies presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis? More specifically, how can existing scholarship serve to enhance our understanding of this divergent news ecology and its constituent journalism of resistance?

5.8 Theorising a divergent news ecology

As previous chapters of this thesis have stated, one of the aims of this research in light of the complexity of this divergent news ecology, has been to deconstruct and problematise the overarching dichotomies within journalism studies of amateur-professional and legacy-alternative. This thesis has consistently argued that these over-simplified binaries fail to fully account for the complex nature of contemporary news landscapes. Occupational and normative ideologies of professionalism (Waisbord 2013) associated with the values of objectivity, accuracy and impartiality, such as those defined by Deuze (2005b) and Zelizer (2004) in Chapter 2, are often "granted universal status" (Hanitizsch 2007, 368). However, the rise of so-called counter-hegemonic forms of journalism brings such universality into question. As Weaver (1998) has noted, substantial differences between national journalistic cultures persist. Such differences cannot be captured by a simple binary that pits the "regime of objectivity" - as defined by Hackett and Zhao (1998) and outlined in Chapter 2 - against an alternative practice or what we might call a "regime of advocacy". Instead the alternative journalism framework, which is defined in some detail in Chapter 2 and again introduced at the start of this chapter (see Atton 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2017; Forde 2011; Harcup 2013), must be contextualised in terms of dominant forms of reporting or "professionalism" (Atton 2017, p. 1). Alternative journalism is comprised of more than substitute occupational norms and standards. It encompasses a direct challenge to "expert culture and professionalisation" and "contributes to critiques of media power" (Atton 2017, p. 1).

For example, the peace journalism framework, which was outlined in the literature review, arguably reveals more about the hegemony of war reporting than it serves to highlight alternative forms of newsgathering. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) suggest 17 good practices, which are presented briefly in Chapter 2. Some of what we might call this "code of practice" is evident in the work of the journalists in this

study. For example, peace advocacy is at the core of their reporting. It is also possible to identify a focus on "presenting solutions" and "an orientation of the news towards people and the grassroots". Furthermore, "reporting and naming wrongdoers" is common practice in the *Llano Verde*. However, none of this really captures the crusading nature of the journalism in the *Llano Verde*, nor does it account for the sense of individual "commitment" involved (this becomes the focus of the next chapter). Lastly, peace journalism appears more applicable to "parachute" contexts (see Chapter 2) where the warring parties are easy to define. Such practice aims to deconstruct the enemy and break down the dichotomy of us and them. In the alternative social (*dis*)order of the *Llano Verde*, the enemy is not so easy to discern. The opponent is not a person or a group of people – it is a persistent violence that is not just direct in form, but also structural, symbolic and cultural (Galtung 1990).

Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008, pp. 6-33) offer a fourfold schema of perspectives on alternative media. This can be used to assess what Hackett and Gurleyen describe as "diverse orientations" (2017, p. 58) to the "regime of objectivity". In other words, it presents alternative journalism as more than a simple adversary of "professionalism".

The first of their conceptualisations explores the extent to which an organisation might be *community oriented and participatory*, which is loosely interpreted as the extent to which news reflects the values of "geographically or interest-based communities" (Hackett and Gurleyen 2017, p. 57). The *Llano Verde* could be said to constitute such a community, given the levels of marginalisation and its alternative social (*dis*)order. This approach is useful because contrary to the framework suggested by Hanitzsch (presented below), it can account for contextual understandings of objectivity based on the value systems of the audience or community (see Iskandar and el-Nawawy 2004). In the *Llano Verde*, this would include the peace advocacy that has been described throughout this chapter. In other words, this approach recognises that attachment (as opposed to neutrality) can be a constituent part of objectivism (see also Forde 2011, p. 53).

The second conceptualisation of the schema being discussed measures *the challenges to hegemonic media and its representatives*. This encapsulates Downing et al.'s (2001) theory of "radical" media, which resonates with the notion of journalism as resistance being presented. Here the priority is the representation of the marginalised and the under-represented. As the empirics of this study have illustrated, the journalists in question go to great lengths to include voices from their community and in so doing question the dominant rhetoric coming from state and government structures they perceive to be failing. Such resistance exists in a

vacuum, where the marginalised community in question is semi-stateless, as argued in Chapter 4.
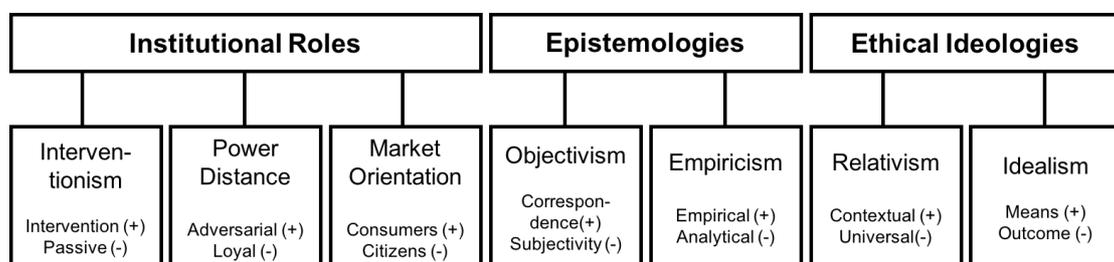
The third approach considers alternative media as *helping activate and democratise civil society*. This is associated with the empowerment of citizens. As we have seen above, the divergent news ecology of the *Llano Verde* is characterised by what this thesis has argued is a drought of information. Journalism in this context is intrinsically empowering.

Finally, the fourth conceptualisation considers alternative media as "*rhizomatic*". Hacket and Gurleyen consider this to be the extent to which there is a "potential for reciprocal influence and hybridization" between dominant and alternative forms of media (2017, p. 58). The *Llano Verde* might be considered "rhizmoatic" in this sense since the journalism of its divergent news ecology constitutes occupational, normative and epistemological features from both ends of the dominant-alternative binary. However, an analysis of journalism culture and its "dimensional structure at the conceptual level" uncovers even further nuance in relation to journalism's "*ideas* (values, attitudes, beliefs), *practices* (of cultural production) and *artifacts* (cultural products, texts)" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 369. Italics in the original). This constitutes Hanitzsch's proposed universal theory of journalism cultures.

a). Implications for a universal theory of journalism cultures

Chapter 2 introduced the "seven dimensional space of journalism cultures" as defined by Hanitzsch (2007, p. 380). This framework is useful because it implies a flexible and more inclusive approach, which accounts for a wider range of diverse journalistic practice or "cultures" (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3. The constituents and principle dimensions of journalism culture.

Institutional Roles			Epistemologies		Ethical Ideologies	
Interven-tionism	Power Distance	Market Orientation	Objectivism	Empiricism	Relativism	Idealism
Intervention (+) Passive (-)	Adversarial (+) Loyal (-)	Consumers (+) Citizens (-)	Correspon-dence(+) Subjectivity (-)	Empirical (+) Analytical (-)	Contextual (+) Universal(-)	Means (+) Outcome (-)

Interventionism

Hanitzsch notes how journalists in Latin America are likely to "endorse a more interventionist approach to reporting" (2007a, p. 373). In Colombia in particular, the

rise of the *crónica* means a special type of advocacy reporting has emerged (Arroyave and Barrios 2012). Indeed interventionism is one of the key characteristics of the divergent news ecology of the *Llano Verde*, as we have seen above. All five of the journalists in this study are very open about their commitment to peace and "act on behalf of the socially disadvantaged" (Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 373). Jorge goes as far as to become an advocate and even legal representative for the victims he works with. In comparison, Esteban refrains from direct participation in the sense that he becomes involved with the people he is reporting on, but he does intervene in the sense that his journalism and editorial judgment are preoccupied with promoting change or more specifically, peace. While Esteban (and similarly Juan Carlos) may not be "passive" because they advocate for change, they are "passive" in the sense that they maintain a sense of fairness or balance in their newsgathering and reporting. To use Hanitzsch's terminology, they see themselves as "precision journalists" (Hanitzsch 2011, p. 40) or "transmitters of news", but they are not "disinterested" because they use a specific (partial) value judgment to decide what is news in the first place (Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 372). On the contrary, Jorge might be considered more "active" because his intervention sometimes manifests as more analytical in style and is based on commentary and opinion.

Power distance

Although local news organisations can often have extremely close ties to power in the regions of Colombia (Waisbord 2000b; Rodríguez 2011), the journalists in this study operate independently of this clientelism, as we have seen. At first glance, it might be tempting to categorise their approach as "adversary" or watchdog-like (Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 372). Jorge most certainly devotes much of his time to holding the local mayor and his administration to account. But this "fourth estate" categorisation becomes problematic when we consider that the *Llano Verde* is semi-stateless (as defined in Chapter 4), which means many state institutions are either simply absent or ineffective due to a lack of resources and/or the corruption, which is so endemic. The government (or power) structures within which these journalists operate are inherently linked to the violence of the alternative social (*dis*)order. In these circumstances, this adversarial approach takes a more radical form. This idea of radical (or perhaps "commitment") underpins the notion of journalism as resistance, which will be explored further in the next chapter. For Esteban, Juan Carlos and Rodolfo, this resistance embodies a call for a complete overhaul of governing structures, which extends beyond simple accountability. For Jorge, who has considered running for office himself, this resistance or intervention verges on direct electoral participation. Though the journalists in this study describe themselves

as "independent", and even though at least two of them sometimes work for or have worked for dominant legacy news organisations, it is also worth noting that because of the local nature of their journalism, they predominantly operate outside of the (restrictive) market structures, which define and dictate the Colombian mediascape. This is another form of resistance against the structural violence of commercialism and clientelism. However, news does remain a commodity in the *Llano Verde* – just on a much smaller scale.

Market orientation

As Hanitzsch writes, "market orientation is high in journalism cultures that subordinate their goals to the logic of the market; it is low in cultures that produce the news primarily in the public interest" (2007a, p. 374). However, the experiences of the *Llano Verde* problematise this dichotomy somewhat. The "independence" of the journalists in this study is defined as an independence from partisanship and from the dominant legacy news corporations. The reporters in this study assert that their journalism is both "in" and "for" the public interest, but they must also balance the needs of the market if they are to sell their journalism and earn a living. This means they must balance their journalism with the needs of the consumer and the advertiser. In the *Llano Verde*, the local market is admittedly small, but it is also distinct. The *Llano Verde* is a world characterised by a drought of information and is where news becomes an aid package, as described above. In such circumstances, this brings into question the assumption that market orientation "gives emphasis to what people want to know at the expense of what they should know" (Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 375). This is because in the *Llano Verde*, it would seem these are one and the same thing. Although news is popular, it does not reap large economic benefits for the journalists involved in this study. They struggle to both balance the books and fund the lengthy investigations that in some cases have become expected of them.

*Epistemologies (*including *Empiricism/Objectivism)*

As we saw in Chapter 2, a reporter's epistemology is directly linked to their occupational norms and practice. The legitimacy and credibility of a reporter's work is "bound up with claims to knowledge and truth" (Eström 2002, p. 26). There are several interesting points to make in relation to epistemology. First, there is a general observation. My research (like that of Deuze 2005b) has shown that legitimacy and credibility in the *Llano Verde* depends just as much on autonomy and independence, as it does on claims to knowledge. Journalists like Jorge and Esteban who produce and fund their own journalism (albeit with small amounts of advertising) command high levels of respect in the community, where there is an embedded mistrust of dominant news media.

Second, the journalists in the *Llano Verde* (like may others around the world) believe they are in search of "the truth". They believe the best way to present this is through the presentation of factual evidence. They believe their journalism "mirrors" reality (Zelizer 2004, p. 31). For Hanitzsch, this represents a "precision", which separates facts and values and is grounded in "empiric justification" (2007a, p. 377). For the journalists of the *Llano Verde*, however, this precision or what in 2011 Hanitzsch also calls "correspondence" takes on a different form (see Figure 3 below). While still reliant on factual empirical evidence, the guiding principles are balance and accuracy. That is to say there is an acceptance that bias will influence their reporting. Indeed the impartiality that has historically emerged in Colombia has not given rise to neutrality (Waisbord 2000a, 2000b). Precision does therefore not imply detachment or passivity, as Haniztsch suggests. Conversely, it can be more "active" and include forms of advocacy and interpretation (see the section on interventionism above). The reporters of the *Llano Verde* say they not only "mirror" reality, but that they believe it is their job to highlight potential ways to change the reality in which they and their audience live. Hanitzsch acknowledges that there are universal values that can be "objectified" such as peace and human dignity (2007, p. 378), just as he points out it is possible for precision journalists to engage in "analytical justification" (2007, p. 377). However, this is perhaps under-developed in his theory and so questions remain about the relationship between a reporter's personal value system, their epistemology and their normative assumptions with regards to journalism.

In the *Llano Verde*, objectifying peace implies a neutrality that would perhaps conceal the advocacy characteristics bound up in what this thesis argues is a journalism of resistance, where resistance is defined by an open call for change and an attempt to overhaul or even bring an end to the violent structures in which these reporters live and work.

Ethical ideologies

As Chapter 2 argues the debate about ethics in journalism focuses on the relativist-ideological divide (Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 378). Indeed Hanitzsch (2007a) provides an exhaustive explanation of the philosophical underpinnings of varying ethical approaches as part of this dimension. The priority in this thesis, however, is to assume a more pragmatic approach to the ethical stance of the journalists involved in this particular study, and for that, we will digress from Hanitzsch's theoretical approach for a moment. It is worth reminding ourselves that there is no ethical code of practice for journalists in Colombia. The Colombian constitution dictates that individual news organisations are responsible for enshrining their own code of practice, though it is not clear how many have actually done so. As Appendices IV

and V demonstrate, there have been attempts to draw up a code of ethics for covering conflict in the past, but the journalists in this study were unaware of both of these attempts. Instead, these reporters link ethics directly to the occupational standards of balance and accuracy, rather than any moral code.

Working in a complex environment like the *Llano Verde* invokes its own set of particular ethical challenges. Some of the reporters in the study would pay sources for tip-offs or other information, for example. Others would also openly accept rewards from the police or other authorities. That is to say they would hand over information to officials, sometimes in the hope it would lead to the capture of wanted criminals and bring in extra cash income. The idea that "negative behavior" is sometimes necessary to produce good is part of Keeble's (2005) "ethical relativism" (cited in Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 379), which dictates that ethical dilemmas "cannot be decided in the abstract", but instead must be "grounded in the concrete of actual situations" (Hanitzsch 2007a, p. 379).

In summary, it is important to stress that the constituents and dimensions in Hanitzsch's theory outlined above are not distinct from each other. The divergent news ecology of the *Llano Verde* does not fit neatly into any of these categorisations. It may contain elements of some and contradict others, as we have seen. The diverse experiences of the *Llano Verde* show how the binary poles determined by Hanitzsch as positive or negative leave space for a multitude of variations and perhaps even combinations. Perhaps this is what Waisbord (2013) means when he says contemporary forms of journalism are "hybrid". Indeed Voltmer (2013) describes a journalism landscape defined by competing journalism cultures. The experiences of the *Llano Verde* show these cultures do not have to compete, but can in fact co-exist. The experiences of the *Llano Verde* also illustrate that Hanitzch's categorisation (albeit with space for diversification) risks not providing sufficient thought to the importance of violent context or to the specific motivations of individual reporters working within such violence. As we have seen, the alternative social (*dis*)order of the *Llano Verde* brings along its own constraints, challenges and responsibilities. Within such a context, this thesis argues that journalism embodies an act of resistance, as we saw above and can now define in more detail in relation to existing theory.

5.9 Journalism as resistance

The notion of journalism as resistance is not presented as a professional ideology, but as we will see in the next chapter, is rather a form of newsgathering grounded in witnessing. It is a distinctive practice that emerges in the divergent news

ecology described above. The intent is not to present the journalism of *Llano Verde* as uniform, but conversely to account for some of the underlying principles and common features derived from what this chapter has already illustrated is a specific, but very diverse form of journalism originating in a particular set of (violent) circumstances.

Journalism as resistance is characterised by extremely high levels of "interventionism", where the journalist becomes a participant and their reporting assumes an advocacy role. There are also extremely high levels of "power distance", where the aim is not simply to hold the state and its institutions to account, but is instead an attempt to challenge and overhaul them. Journalism as resistance is an attempt to both pinpoint and eradicate the structures, which underpin violence in all its forms. This radical or even revolutionary sense of reporting sometimes manifests as investigative in form, but always embodies an open challenge to the state to fulfill its duties.

Resistance may also involve the journalist usurping the state, assuming a judicial role – investigating wrongdoing, exposing wrongdoers and their networks and also representing victims in their pursuit of justice. The journalist, who becomes a surrogate for the state is not simply concerned with publication of their story, but also guides and nurtures their sources, who effectively become their constituents. The ultimate resistance may even involve the journalist running for political office.

Journalism as resistance can be market oriented, but where the market constitutes a "zone of silence" (defined in Chapter 4) and where the journalism remains firmly in the public interest. Selling their journalism is an economic priority for the reporters concerned, but they overwhelmingly consider their audience to be citizens and not consumers.

There are high levels of "objectivism" in journalism as resistance, where objectivism is defined by balance and accuracy, and not by impartiality or neutrality. Instead there is an acceptance of advocacy (in particular a call for change or more specifically for peace) and there is an inherent sense of attachment to both the world and the fellow citizens who inhabit it. The reporting is dependent on empiricism, but this is an empiricism that allows room for interpretation. If professionalism is based on the "regime of objectivity", then resistance is founded upon a "regime of advocacy".

The ethical practice of journalism as resistance is firmly guided by a sense of relativism (especially in the absence of a defined code of ethical practice). Most notably, there is also a very personal "commitment", where this is defined in the first instance by a deep interconnection between a reporter's individual life and their

circumstances as an individual and their "professional" duties in the public world. Resistance, as it is defined in this context, therefore embodies an attempt to challenge and overhaul violent structures, but also an attempt to understand one's own place within them.

5.10 Chapter summary

Chapter 5 has outlined the distinct occupational practices as well as the normative and epistemological experiences of journalism in the *Llano Verde*. It offered a "thick description" of four individual reporters and argued that it is difficult to categorise and theorise this divergent journalistic ecology along either of the binaries prevalent within journalism studies: the dominant-alternative and the amateur-professional, as we saw in Chapter 2. The point is, however, that in this post-professional, "post-industrial" world (see Bell at al., 2014), news ecologies are increasingly complex. This complexity is compounded by a plurality of violence and the alternative social (*dis*)order of Colombia's "after war" (see Chapter 4). It is argued in this chapter that journalism in such a context constitutes an act of resistance. In conclusion, Chapter 6 will show how this resistance takes shape through a process of individual *engagement* or "commitment", which is grounded in one of journalism's key concepts: witnessing.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

Before the concluding chapter presents an overview of the structure of this thesis and the main arguments it has presented, it is pertinent to underline the research questions, which shepherded this study, one final time:

RQ1: What is the nature of violence and how/why is it perpetrated against journalists?

RQ2: What is the nature of journalism and how does the violence targeted at journalists impact both on them as individuals and also on their work?

RQ3: What are the broader implications of this (anti-press) violence (and the response to it) for wider journalistic practice and so-called "post-conflict" Colombia?

All of these questions were applied to the specific context of a Colombian region in the department of Antioquia, which this thesis has called the Llano Verde[79]. The purpose of this dissertation was therefore to investigate how violence can impact on citizens, and why it is perpetrated against journalists more specifically. It examined why a group of individual reporters turn to journalism, despite great risk, and it questioned if the violent circumstances in which these citizens and journalists both live and work – defined in Chapter 4 as an "after war" - generate a particular form of journalism or distinct news ecology.

The conclusion will discuss the theoretical implications of the empirics, which have been presented in Chapters 4 and 5 in more detail. It will examine both anti-press violence and journalism within the framework of citizenship, problematising the exaggerated dichotomy of victim and perpetrator. It will present the notion of "commitment" or *engagement*, which emphasises the role of the individual and their citizen agency. In an alternative social (dis)order, the individual can abide by its culture of silence and the "non-formal" (Nordstrom, 2004) laws and networks or even turn to violence herself. Journalism in this after war, it is argued, is a method to counter these violent hegemonic structures. The framework of citizenship explains how and why individuals take risk and engage in sustained periods of reporting, but it can also partially explain why individuals may commit violence over sustained periods of time.

First, I will review the structure of the thesis. The dissertation began with an introduction to the research project, which provided an analysis of "post-conflict" Colombia and a brief historical overview of (neo-)paramilitary actors in a context of

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[79] For an explanation of why the geographical location of this study has been kept anonymous, see Chapter 3. For a description of the Llano Verde, see Chapter 4.

"privatised" violence (Koonings and Kruit 1999, 2004; Kaldor 2012; Defort 2013). It also introduced the Colombian mediascape and described the "zones of silence' (FLIP 2017a) to contextualise the Llano Verde.

Chapter 2 provided a literature review of journalism scholarship. It argued that existing dominant frameworks of analysis, which concentrate on the overly-simplified binaries of amateur-professional and dominant-alternative were inadequate. The aim instead was to determine the complexity and multi-faceted nature of modern news ecologies and highlight the need for an understanding of contingency and context. The chapter began with a presentation of what this thesis referred to as journalism's epistemological and normative divides. It also considered the various assumptions of professionalism, principally through the works of Waisbord (2013), Deuze (2005b), Zelizer (2004) and Hanitzsch (2007, 2011), and considered "professionalism" during "wartime" with special attention paid to the "participatory journalist" advocated by Morrisson and Tumber (1988). The rise of the so-called "citizen reporter" was presented through an analysis principally of the work of Stuart Allan (2013) and Clemencia Rodríguez (2011), who have both re-defined ideas of citizenship and how they relate to journalism. There was an analysis of the alternative journalism framework, which was based mainly on the studies of Atton (2002, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2017), Downing (2000, 2008, 2011), Forde (2011) and Harcup (2003, 2006, 2012). Alternative journalism places counter-hegemonic practice at the core of its approach and is a "critique in action" of more dominant forms of reporting (Atton 2008, p. 284). The chapter ended with a brief assessment of "peace" journalism and an examination of the challenges faced by reporters in Colombia's new age of "post-conflict".

Chapter 3 set up the study methodologically. I clarified my position as both journalist and academic through an examination of standpoint epistemology and the "situatedness" of knowledge (Stoetzler and Davis 2002). The advantages of qualitative studies were identified and the ethnographic methods of the study (participant observation and life history interviews) were presented. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach were also assessed and I provided an overview of the challenges faced in this research. Furthermore, Chapter 3 reflected on conducting research in dangerous places.

Chapter 4 explored the nature of violence in the Llano Verde and defined the alternative social (*dis*)order of what this thesis has referred to as Colombia's "after war". It described a "culture of silence" and defined the "non-formal" (Nordstrom 2004) networks of extortion, *sicariato* and micro-trafficking. It showed how violence can be the result of abandonment, marginalisation and revenge. The chapter also

examined why journalists become direct targets of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM. It is argued that anti-press violence is an inherent part of the structural, cultural and symbolic violence (Galtung 1969, 1990), which underpins the alternative social (*dis*)order. Anti-press violence can be exercised as "punishment" for journalists who expose details of these non-formal networks. The perpetrators want to avoid capture at all costs. Journalism can also be used to gain information about rival BACRIM groups, but perhaps most interestingly, the perpetrators of anti-press violence also show respect for a journalism, which seeks to question and highlight the difficulties of life at the margins.

Chapter 5 offered "thick description" of what it described as a "divergent news ecology" at the margins of Colombia. The stories of four individual journalists were presented and the chapter detailed life and work in the alternative social (*dis*)order of "after war". It also provided a detailed look at how journalists perceive and respond to the anti-press violence targeted at them. The chapter concluded that journalists are citizens and that in these exceptional circumstances of "democratised" violence, the practice of journalism embodies an act of citizenship and even resistance. This citizenship is both an attempt to better society through direct participation and peace advocacy, but it is also an assertion of one's own place in the world. These claims will be further explored in this chapter.

This introductory section has provided an overview of the structure of this thesis and a summary of the key arguments has been presented. The next section of the conclusion now seeks to provide further theoretical exploration.

6.2 Shifting the lens: (Anti-press) violence and citizenship

If we hold true that: "… journalism serves to provide the public with sufficient information to make informed choices about their lives," (Sambrook 2016, p. 17) and that journalism can:

> …further act in the interests of transparency, supporting good governance and ethical standards, in a watchdog role through investigation and scrutiny, and it can support social cohesion through hosting public debate at a level beyond the capacity of individual citizens… (Sambrook 2016, p. 17)

…then the culture of silence of the after war (defined in Chapter 4) inhibits journalism's potential to fulfill its responsibilities. The information drought, "blackholes" (Correa-Cabrera and Nava, 2011) and "deficits" (Cottle et al. 2016) therefore have severe consequences for the functioning of democracy. In times of after war, this has direct implications for peace, especially if we share the position of

Carey (1978, 1989, 1997, 2000) and others (defined in Chapter 2) that journalism is about inspiring social change (see Atton and Hamilton, 2008; Forde 2011; Harcup, 2003, 2005, 2013; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). Anti-press violence is therefore predominantly and correctly viewed as a threat to democracy (Waisbord 2002, 2007; Correa-Cabrera and Nava, 2011; Cottle et al. 2016).

However, this thesis examines anti-press violence within the theoretical framework of citizenship in an attempt to think beyond the consequences for democracy towards the motivations and structures, which underpin violence against journalists. After all, those interviewed in Chapter 4, who perpetrate anti-press violence do not say they do so to inhibit journalism's democratic potential (even if it has this effect). They commit such violence for much more personal reasons. The aim therefore is to problematise the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator, and to provide a better understanding of the circumstances under which anti-press violence can emerge. This shines a light beyond the implications of anti-press violence to provide a more nuanced approach to understanding why such violence might occur in the first place. In so doing, anti-press violence is revealed as an extension of more general forms of violence - structural, cultural and symbolic (Galtung 1990) -, which together sustain an alternative social (*dis*)order, as defined in Chapter 4. Such structures imprison citizens, who as Rodríguez argues, become "conscripts" to the violence (2011, p. 5) or perhaps even "insurgents"(Holston, 2008) as we will see below. First, let us define the concept of citizenship as it is applied in this study.

a). Defining citizenship

Concepts of citizenship are varied and contested (see for example Beiner, 1995; Kymlica and Norman, 1995; Callan 1997; Cohen 1999; Carens 2000). James Holston describes citizenship as "unsettled and unsettling" (2008, p. 3). For the purposes of this research, a citizen is an agent who belongs to different kinds of collective associations and defines their identity from participation in activities associated with these different kinds of membership (Kabeer 2005, pp. 21-2). In other words, citizen agency is the raising of an issue in the public sphere (Lister, 2003). Similarly, for Mouffe, citizenship is defined "by daily political action and engagement" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 24). This rescues citizenship from the liberal democratic framework, which for Mouffe, confines the citizen as the "passive recipient of specific rights and who enjoys the protection of the law" (Rodríguez 2001, pp. 18-19, quoting Mouffe 1992, p. 235). Conversely, the radical democratic concept of citizenship requires us to consider citizenship "not as a legal status, but as a form of identification… something to be constructed, not empirically given" (Mouffe 1992, p. 231). Rodríguez concludes that "citizens have to enact their citizenship on a day-

to-day basis, through their participation in everyday political practices" (Rodriguez 2011, p. 18). In the after war of Colombia, characterised by an absence or weakened state institutions, it is "horizontal citizenship", which becomes the priority whereby citizen agency is considered beyond its relationship to the state, to consider the nature and dynamics of relationships among citizens (McGee and Flórez López, 2016, p. 8).

b). An "insurgent" citizenship

Chapter 4 described the after war of Colombia and its alternative social (*dis*)order. The multifaceted nature of violence impairs citizens from participation in public life (McGee and Flórez López 2016), fracturing social bonds and even creating a "privatisation" of violence (Kaldor 2012; Defort 2013), which in turn becomes a violence against society itself (Pécaut 2001). If we accept that violence breaches "the attachments of family, friendship, love and community", then it also "shatters the construction of self that is formed and sustained in relation to others" (Herman 2015, p. 51). Colombia's after war therefore undermines the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of "existential crisis' (Herman 2015, p. 51). This existential crisis demands an existential response. Indeed existentialism therefore becomes the first point of inquiry in subsequent sections of this conclusion.

Citizens on the margins of Colombian society submit to the reproduction of violence, communicating through code and signals, and by hibernating in the dominant culture of silence (Freire, 1986), waking only seldom and when it is safe to do. Others may even turn to violence themselves (such as the BACRIM) in order to protect their security and ensure their democratic survival. This is part of what Holston refers to as an "insurgency" of citizenship, which is destabilising the "entrenched" qualities of marginalisation and control" (2008, p. 4). Mary Kaldor sees human security as "the interrelationship between freedom from fear and freedom from want" (2011: 445), but Holston charts how the democratic promise of egalitarian citizenship has actually resulted in quite the opposite. A citizenship insurgency emanates from those living at the margins or what Holston calls the "periphery" (2008, p. 4). His spectrum of citizenship from "insurgent" to "substantive" reveals much about how citizens relate to the state in which they live, but also how they relate to each other (see also Holston 1999). Insurgent citizenship encapsulates those people struggling to survive and asserting their existence, while a substantive citizenship emphasises a citizenry, who not only enjoy the voting rights that a polyarchy confers, but the full range of social and economic rights that true democracy supposedly guarantees.

Using Holston's framework, journalism would also be considered an act of insurgent citizenship in that it embodies an attempt to understand and overcome marginalisation. Considering both the journalist and the neo-paramilitary BACRIM member as an insurgent citizen is useful because it problematises the over-simplified dichotomy of victim and perpetrator. This in turn acknowledges anti-press violence as an inherent part of the alternative social (*dis*)order and the complexity of structures, which underpin it. Additionally, it reveals citizenship as a form agency and as a concept that is to be constructed by the individual. This does not equate journalism with murder, but by placing the reporter and the neo-paramilitary within the same conceptual framework, our understanding of both is enhanced. This thesis suggests there are two dimensions to insurgency in this case: brutal (or violent) and tame (or non-violent). Brutal depicts the violent insurgency of the BACRIM, while tame portrays the non-violent insurgency of journalists.

The members of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM interviewed in Chapter 4 said their main reason for threatening or killing journalists was to "punish" and to evade capture and prevent information from entering the public sphere. The significance of capture extends beyond the realm of justice and the law. It symbolises much more than incarceration, the curtailment of freedom or punishment. It also has implications for the perpetrator's democratic and economic survival, and therefore citizenship. Neo-paramilitary forces fear being exposed and will seek revenge if the names of their members and/or their strategic locations are revealed. If there is a culture of silence, then it is the neo-paramilitary BACRIM who police and maintain it through both direct and indirect violence. In terms of citizenship, capture signifies a return from the collective of the neo-paramilitary gang to a life of marginalisation; a life of struggle, wants and desires on the sidelines. Their violence is therefore the result of a brutal citizen insurgency in the self-interest aimed at preserving (in part, at least) their economic self-interest.

A journalist is also concerned with issues of peace, violence and marginalisation. However, there is a duality to their citizen insurgency, which is comprised of an attempt to understand and overhaul dominant structures for both self and communitarian interest. This is a tame citizen insurgency, which in fact becomes a resistance aimed at provoking social change. This will be developed further below. First, the idea of citizens as agents is explored in more detail.

c). Structure and citizen agency

The above section has highlighted the importance of citizenship as action. However, an individual's agency cannot be separated from the structures in which they operate. Again, by considering the relationship between structure and citizen

agency (if only briefly), it provides a more nuanced understanding of journalism as citizenship, as well as anti-press violence.

"Structuration" is Anthony Giddens' (1984) theory, which explains the constant interaction of agency and structure, with human actions simultaneously structuring society and being structured by it. In the context of an alternative social (*dis*)order, this means that an individual's agency simultaneously fuels and responds to (potentially fighting back against) conflict. Citizens therefore navigate everyday life encounters by meeting actions and events with responses that either "confirm" or "disconfirm" prevailing structures (Haugaard 2003). Henril Vigh (2006) calls this process "social navigation". Indeed it is important to recognise that agency is not homogenous. For Vigh, the concept of "motion within motion" depicts how agents are able to move according to an assessment and evaluation of factors such as their knowledge, past experience, their present situation and their potential for the future. This takes place against a backdrop of instability and danger within an environment that is in constant flux. In short, it is the "motion within motion", which influences and inspires a myriad of responses to violent surroundings. This nuanced understanding of agency affords a deeper insight of why individuals choose to commit acts of violence beyond the simple label of "criminal".

The neo-paramilitary BACRIM's policing of the culture of silence is to ensure that what they deem to be strategic information does not enter the public or "civil" sphere (Alexander 2006). It is to mute those who dare to speak out and break the most deafening quiet, which currently allows the armed actors to sustain their dominance, control and ultimately their survival.

Neo-paramilitary agency is therefore "alienated", as will be developed below. It is an agency of self-interest and is not a tame "social" agency or non-violent agency for change (McGee and Flórez López 2016). It is conversely a violent agency, which "confirms" and sustains society's dominant structures and enhances the collective power, authority and control of the neo-paramilitaries, as well as attempting to "secure" one's own individual position in an otherwise precarious world.

Journalists, on the other hand, pose a direct threat to the neo-paramilitary BACRIM. It is a reporter's "calling" or "vocation" to break the culture of silence and expose the corruption and illicit activity of the neo-paramilitary networks. Journalists question both the violence and the structures, which nurture it and in which they find themselves, rather than seek to perpetuate them. A journalist's agency is therefore in contrast a non-violent agency or an agency for change (McGee and Flórez López 2016). Such agency, this thesis argues, forms a resistance. This idea was introduced in the previous chapter and will be developed below.

d). Citizenship as "worldly" action

The framework of citizenship sheds light on both the individual as journalist and as the perpetrator of (anti-press) violence. In the alternative social (*dis*)order, defined in Chapter 4, the external world of violence becomes part of one's internal psyche. The German philosopher Hannah Arendt[80] maintains clear distinctions between private and public in her work on citizenship, and as a result has been criticised by feminist scholars (O'Brien 1981; Pateman 1983), but her emphasis on the public realm and plurality in her work are underestimated (Lane 1983; Hansen 1993). For Arendt, the individual remains free to choose to participate in the public or the political, but is quite clear that "a fulfilled human existence cannot be situated in the private realm – the realm of labour and the necessities of life – alone". An existence worth living "must be rooted in the public as well as the private" (Thuma 2011). Therefore "the ideal of a comprehensive citizenship… engages people not just as isolated individuals, but as members of a social body" (Hansen 1993, p. 50). An assertion of citizenship therefore becomes an assertion of freedom. This freedom, for Arendt, is a worldly concept based in plurality, and to assert one's freedom requires action, or in the words of Arendt, "performance", which is defined as "a worldly reality, tangible in words which can be heard, in deeds which can be seen, and in events which are talked about, remembered and turned into stories" (Arendt 2006, pp. 154-55). Political status is defined and created by these actions. For Bonnie Honig, the performance constitutes bringing something into being that did not previously exist (1993, p. 99; see also Arendt 1998, p. 178). These performances conceive the public or "civil" sphere (Alexander 2006).

The public realm becomes the scene "of an existential drama", where the stage is "the worldly space that unites individuals while simultaneously separating them" (Hansen 1993, p. 64). This performance, however, requires the achievement of "worldliness" (Hansen, 1993). In this sense reporters "perform" journalism as an act of citizenship. Their presence in the public realm is made clear through stories. These stories have a worldly nature because they are bound-up in ways of empowering others to participate or perform and shape a form of resistance against the structures in which they find themselves (Arendt 1998, p. 175). Conversely, although the violence of the neo-paramilitary BACRIM may also be considered "action" or "performance", it is not worldly in its nature as it upholds the dominant social structures and the repression of many fellow citizens.

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[80] The examination of Hannah Arendt's philosophy is not intended to be exhaustive or in-depth, but relies on an interpretation of how it might be applied to this particular context.

In summary, Hannah Arendt believes individuals must earn their citizenship through action. Each individual has the potential to act. In fact, it becomes a responsibility to do so. Citizenship demands and is shaped by resistance (Arendt 1965, 1972). The 'we' of a community arises when people act together (Arendt 1977, p. 200).

6.3 Journalism as witnessing, citizenship and resistance

Chapter 2 provided an in-depth analysis of how journalism can be conceived as an act of citizenship (see for example: Papacharissi 2009, Allan 2013). Although the notion of citizens' media is not directly linked to journalism, it still has much to offer this debate. Rodríguez's theory of citizens' media (presented in Chapter 2) is directly connected to Chantal Mouffe's theories of radical democracy and citizenship, which were defined above. Citizens' media therefore become a vehicle to resist the negative impact of armed groups (legal and illegal) on their communities' social and cultural fabric. Citizens' media are based on communication as performance, rather than as information dissemination or persuasion (Rodríguez 2011, p. 35). The aim becomes to privilege "the point of view and lived experiences of unarmed civilians and their voices over armed actors" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 61). Citizens come together to create media as a way of dealing with the violent surroundings in which they live and "open up a public sphere allowing feelings of togetherness to materialize, which in turn eroded the isolation and loneliness that had been imposed by fear" (Rodríguez 2011, p. 59).

Allan (2013) suggests an imagined continuum of witnessing by way of enhancing our understanding of the relationship between journalism and citizenship. His work is discussed at length in Chapter 2. His continuum, which presents "complex", "diverse" and "contradictory" positionalities recognises the "intimate imbrication of subjectivities" involved in witnessing (2013, p. 108). For ease of argument, the continuum is shaped by "indifference" at one end and "purposeful" witnessing at the other (Allan 2013, pp. 174-175). Allan constructs his continuum along the duality of reporting outlined by Chouliaraki, namely to record reality (eyewitnessing) and evaluate reality (bear witness) (2010, pp. 528-529). However, witnessing in the violent context of alternative social (*dis*)orders takes on a more experiential nature and therefore journalism becomes not just an expression of one's "civic impulse to intervene" (Allan 2013, p. 108), but also a commitment to act; to participate and to resist. A journalist's role extends beyond an evaluation *of* to a participation *in* and resistance *against* reality. This is what this thesis calls *witness-resistance*. The stories of the four journalists in Chapter 5 (and one in Chapter 4)

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provide descriptive accounts of what this witness-resistance might look like in detail. Indeed the previous chapter made the case for journalism as resistance. The aim here is to provide further clarity and to blend the notion of resistance with the key journalistic concept of witnessing.

a). Witness-resistance

Chapter 2 outlined the influential study on the embedding of journalists with the armed forces during the Falklands conflict (Morrison and Tumber, 1988). Though this study was preoccupied with the "parachute reporter", it offers an in-depth explanation of how reporters in violent environments can become "swamped by the very real, human need to belong and to be safe" (Morrison and Tumber 1988, p. 99). The journalists embedded with British forces during the Falklands conflict did not simply observe their subjects, but "lived their lives and shared their experiences". Such terms of reference could easily be applied to the indigenous journalists at the margins of Colombia. They live in the same alternative social (*dis*)order as their fellow citizens. They experience the plural and dialectical nature of violence in the same way as those they observe or witness. It is through this process of shared experience and in the journalists' "crusade" that witnessing becomes participation and resistance. If we apply the theory of Arendt explored above, then such witness-resistance is not just for the collective, but also embodies a coping mechanism for one's own self and to give one's own self a purpose (as we saw in Chapter 5). This is a *committed* act of resistance in which the private and the public self are entwined.

6.4 Commitment: from absurdity to action

There have been several references already to existential crises and existential solutions in this chapter. This section aims to consider the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre and establish the importance of "commitment" as a solution to these existential problems. The conclusion is not intended as an in-depth study of Sartre, but instead interprets his work as it might apply to this particular research context.

The aim here is to expand the notion of Allan's "civic compulsion to intervene" (2013, p. 108), which instead becomes a *committed compulsion to change*. The former can be spontaneous, the latter can only be done over a long period of engagement. Similarly, Cottle's "injunction to care" (2013, p. 244) becomes a *commitment to act*. The former intent on provoking empathy for a distant audience, the latter aimed at inspiring change for one's neighbour. Commitment is not a spontaneous decision to report on a disaster or any other transient moment, it is a prolonged and sustained attempt to both understand the world and to change it.

For Sarte, humans are *délaissés* (abandoned) or "thrown" into the world, without choice and devoid of purpose (Sartre, 1938). He simply "is". Indeed Sartre makes a clear distinction between the verbs *to be* and *to exist*. Being is a description of a passive state; it requires no will, no effort, no reason to "be"; hence anguish and solitude. In order to *exist,* a resolute effort of lucidity and consciousness is required. This discovery that both the material world and one's own existence are "absurd", in that they are meaningless, leads to a feeling of *de trop* for many of Sartre's characters. This is a feeling of unnecessary, unjustified, disorientation and leads to the question: "What am I doing here?" Sartre believes the emptiness of the world makes the lucid human who perceives it, first desperately alone, then utterly free. *S'engager* or "to commit" is a process and is roughly divided into three stages. First comes the recognition of *absurdity*. Secondly, comes *l'angoisse* (anxiety). Finally, comes freedom, but only if one acts, can one be free - and the only act that counts is *l'engagement* or "commitment".

The salvation of the individual therefore lies in her conscious work towards the progress of both herself and humanity or what is perhaps better referred to as the "fused group" (Sartre 1960). This is defined by Thompson as "a revolutionary movement in the immediate hours of its victory, when what up to that point have been serialised ensembles become a genuine collective united in a common emancipatory endeavour" (2009, p. 210). If we consider both journalism and anti-press violence as "acts" of citizenship, then the work of Sartre helps provide further detail of our agency as citizens and allows us to distinguish between these two acts in terms of their motivations, goals and implications.

a). The journalist and commitment

In the second volume of *Situations*, which includes *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* or "What is literature?", Sarte explains how literature can be a form of commitment. He says for a writer to be committed, he must be concerned with actuality, with the present "situation" (Sartre 1948a, p. 98). Sartre heavily criticised writers he saw as indulging in literature for an end in itself. Instead, the real business of the writer is first to come to grips with his *situation* (that is, his social environment, the place and the time in which he lives) and then to exhort his readers to take action which will improve the conditions of life revealed by that *situation*. In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?,* Sartre writes:

> We no longer have time to describe or narrate; neither can we limit ourselves to explaining. Description, even though it be psychological, is pure contemplative enjoyment; explanation is acceptance, it excuses everything. Both of them assume that the die is cast. But if perception itself is action, if,

for us, to show the world is to disclose it in the perspectives of a possible change, then, in this age of fatalism, we must reveal to the reader his power, in each concrete case, of doing and undoing, in short of acting (1948a, pp. 349-50).

The writer, then, cannot be an impartial chronicler; he or she must take sides, in order to reveal to his readers their possibility of choice and of action, to "put the human person in possession of his freedom" (Sartre 1948a, p. 335).

However, the only valid action, which takes full account of our responsibility to ourselves and our "situation", is direct political radicalism. Sartre does not recommend conformity to the values of any society, but recommends social reform and protest against the abuses of the time, the "situation".

This is the essence of *la littérature engagée* or "committed literature", which seeks to emphasise the social responsibility of "art" or "artists". For the purposes of this thesis, a journalism of resistance supersedes the notion of literature, whereby art and artists become reporting and reporters. Interestingly, though committed literature is now most commonly associated with Sartre and other post-World War II authors such as Albert Camus and André Malraux, the origins of committed literature are to be found in the revolutionary calls to action of Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire. It has also been associated with the writing of Victor Hugo and Emile Zola (Nelson 2015, p. 61). Commitment is therefore not just the acute awareness of one's own existence, but also a promise to better society through seeking reform against the current structures in which one finds oneself. One attributes purpose to one's existence by seeking to improve all of society (this point will be developed further below).

Commitment describes the process by which one decides to act. Journalism in this sense is a commitment to oneself as well as to society and to humanity. The responsibility to commit is up to the individual. The notion of commitment empowers the agent. It shows individual reporters or citizens are not powerless to counter the structures in which they live and/or work. Commitment embodies an option that allows individuals not only to assert one's own citizenship in the name of peace, but also to question and challenge the structures within which they operate. It is an act of witness-resistance.

The journalists involved in this study are local indigenous journalists. That is to say that they live and work in what this thesis argues is an alternative social (*dis*)order. This is characterised by anti-press violence, which includes both direct and indirect forms of aggression in a region where violence is "plural", (Arias and Goldstein, 2010), "democratised" (Koonings and Kruit, 1999) and "privatised" (Defort, 2013; Kaldor, 2012). The result is a "weakened and fragile social fabric" (Duplat

2003, p. 163). The journalists are therefore not detached neutral observers bearing witness to bring home tales of distant suffering (see Cottle 2013), but conversely share the status of victim with their fellow citizens.

A journalist is also a citizen, and commitment explains the process by which journalism embodies an act of citizenship. This citizenship has a dualism, which encapsulates an individual desire for the betterment of society, but also a propensity to understand or assert one's own place in the world. In violently plural societies, solidarity is based on human experience and not just news or information, as was introduced in the previous chapter. In this context, the public sphere might be better considered of as the "civil sphere":

> The premise of the civil sphere is that societies are not governed by power alone and not fueled only by the pursuit of self-interest. Feelings for others matter, and they are structures by the boundaries of solidarity. How solidarity is structures, how far it extends, what it's composed of – these are the critical issue for very social order, and especially for orders that aim at the good life. Solidarity is possible because people are oriented not only to the here an now but to the ideal, to the transcendent, to what they hope will be the everlasting (Alexander 2006, p. 3; see also Cottle 2016a, pp. 96-97).

In the context of alternative social (*dis*)orders, the "everlasting" is peace. A commitment to one's citizenship employed through journalism incorporates the call for change. There are five individual reporters in this study and each of them is engaged in the process of commitment.

Rodolfo is in a period of depression because the threats to his life have constrained his ability to be the journalist he wants to be. Rodolfo is trapped in the *de trop* or *angoisse* stage of commitment. He is willing to commit, but feels unable to do so because of the violence he faces. There are distinct parallels with the situation of Roquentin in *La Nausée*[81]*,* who is consumed by sickness and dread when faced with his own mortality (Sartre 1938).

Jorge began reporting at an early age and says journalism is his life. He has shown determination to uncover corruption and expose illicit networks of organised crime. He believes his journalism can help people and guides his sources through the justice system. He has exercised great risk and has sacrificed many personal aspects of his life. "Journalism is me. It is my choice. It is my existence. Without it, I would be nothing," he says. Sartre believes we are all "condemned" to justify ourselves by the choices we make. It is within these choices that we "invent" morality (Sartre 1948a, p. 352).

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[81] Nausea.

Esteban gave up a career in the dominant media because he says his region "needs" him. Esteban laments a professional national and regional media who turn up only when there are multiple deaths or striking images: "I am the same as those who live here. I understand how people live. And we need to know there is more to life here than murder and extortion. It is my job to show them. My responsibility." Herein lies a key Sartrean concept. By implicitly proposing that others should act in the way that he has acted, he carries on his own shoulders the responsibility of having created a new value. In *Les Mouches*, Oreste is aware he is responsible on a universal level. In defying Jupiter, he takes upon himself the burden of responsibility for the entire population of Argos (Sartre 1943b).

Similarly, before he was murdered, Luis Carlos Cervantes dedicated his life to "giving a voice to the voiceless", as he put it. Luis sided with the victim. For Luis, victims included the perpetrators of violence too. He knew that violence in Colombia has infected all walks of life. Luis also aimed to expose corruption. Public life and institutions had become overrun with "cockroaches", as he put it. Luis gave up a career as a welder to become a journalist. Why? Because welding metals "had no purpose". His town was "falling apart" and "someone had to step up and do something. Short of taking up arms and becoming a vigilante, journalism was my best option. I could be my own boss and create my own agenda, and without getting violent".

Juan Carlos has, in the face of violence, created a strategy to continue reporting topics, which are of value to the community. These are topics, which according to Juan Carlos, can often be forgotten in times of conflict. When the world is full of death and destruction, issues such as flood defences, pollution and hospital facilities can be forgotten, yet these stories are no less important and can in fact restore a sense of "normality" and order in the face of violent chaos. Juan Carlos created this strategy in order to make the world he lives in a better place. Through the act of journalism, Juan Carlos has empowered himself, and seeks to empower others to control and contemplate their surroundings. Action is central to Sartre's conception of man. It is not enough to recognise intellectually that there is a problem. We must do something to counter it. We cannot simply recognise there is a choice and do nothing. We must choose and act. Sarte describes the indifference of Mathieu in *Le Sursis* as a "disease" (1945b, p. 391).

The intent in this section has been twofold: to justify the appropriateness of an existential approach and to exemplify the complexities and intricacies of this philosophy. The attempt is not to formulate a rigid categorisation, but to appreciate

and reflect that commitment is a "dynamic, not static condition" (Stephens 2009, p. 134).

The concept of commitment can also be applied to the perpetrators of (anti-press) violence, the neo-paramilitary BACRIM. This chapter has already argued how the BACRIM might be analysed within the framework of citizenship. Their violence is part of a citizen insurgency (Holston 2008), which because of the violent agency involved (see above), actually "confirms" the dominant violent structures in which they live. The application of Sartre's philosophy provides further nuance to understand this "insurgent" violent agency, as we will see in the next section.

b). The perpetrator and "bad faith"

The neo-paramilitary BACRIM justify their murders as morally right. As Alan Fiske and Tage Rai describe:

> When people hurt or kill someone, they usually do so because they feel they ought to: they feel that it is morally right or even obligatory to be violent (2015, p. xxii).

Violence is therefore "morally motivated by culturally informed variants of universal social-relational models" and is therefore perceived as "virtuous" (2015, p. xxiii). That is to say that the violence is morally justified, even when it comes to inflicting torture and pain. This form of self-justification usually emerges from an order or command to kill, which can be tantamount to legal sanction. Psychological studies will tell us that acting under the orders of others can remove some of the responsibility and therefore guilt and shame that often manifest after the act of killing (Grossman 2014). For Sartre, however, the choice to follow orders and obey is a denial of our freedom. This is what he refers to as inauthenticity, alienation or *mauvaise foi*, "bad faith" (See Sartre 1943 as well as Priest 2001 and Detmer 2013).

Simon Cottle argues that murdering a journalist can also be perceived to be socially right. Stephen Reicher at al. (2008) discern what they call a '5 Step Social Identity Model of Collective Hate': (1) *Identification*. This involves the construction of an 'in-group'; (2) *Exclusion*, which can be described as the definition of targets as external to the in-group; (3) *Threat*, which involves the representation of these targets as endangering the in-group identity; (4) *Virtue*, which requires the championing of the in-group as uniquely good; (5) *Celebration*, which involves embracing the eradication of the outgroup as necessary to the defence of virtue (cited in Cottle 2016b, p. 67). However, the idea of "collective hate" is misleading and reductionist as it suggests a systematic slaughter of journalists, which is simply not the case. The Social Identity Model of Collective Hate might explain violence

against rival groups within the conflict of Colombia, but it over-simplifies anti-press violence and does little to understand violence against journalists as a constituent part of a much larger social issue. Journalists are usually only targeted when they break the culture of silence and pose a direct personal threat to the survival of the "insurgent citizen". Indeed as we saw in both Chapters 4 and 5, this "collective hate" (if we call it that) can co-exist alongside a deep respect of journalists. This contradiction is perhaps part of an insurgent citizen's "alienation" or bad faith. They are asserting their place in the world by ensuring their survival, but through an agency, which "confirms" the "situation" and its dominant social structures of repression and violence. It is a denial of one's responsibility to the world, but also to oneself. In *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*[82], Sarte writes: "Our responsibility is much greater than we might have supposed because it involves all mankind" (1946, p. 26).

Anti-press violence is therefore a private or egotistical act committed in "bad faith". In Sartrean terms, this is a failure to accept our freedom, which dictates we are always confronted with alternatives and therefore our lives have to be understood in terms of the choices we make in relation to the "situation" in which we find ourselves (Sartre 1945a, p. 439; 1946, p. 22). This is an "alienated" act of citizenship or what Willie Thompson (2009) refers to as "obscurantism". He defines this as " a closed mind, impervious to evidence", which will "manufacture reasons for dismissing and ignoring manifest realities" (2009, p. 207).

Sartre distinguishes between *les lâches*, "the cowards" and *les salauds*, "the bastards". Both are in denial or refusing to accept their freedom. The cowards fall into a stagnate state of just "being there". They attach importance to the banality of everyday life such as The Waiter in *L'Être et le Néant*[83], who fulfills his trivial tasks with an air of importance (Sartre 1943). Additionally, the "coward" might perhaps live in the past, identifying themselves with "what has been" as in *Baudelaire*, where the protagonist is consumed by his remorse (Sartre 1947). They perhaps also live according to the image others have made of them like Lucien in *L'Enfance d'un Chef*[84], who refuses to assert himself (Sartre 1939) or "cowards" can also "pretend" to give meaning to their existence through religion or other belief systems. In *Le Sursis*[85], Daniel finds peace and comfort in the Church, for example (Sartre 1945).

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[82] Existentialism is a Humanism.
[83] Being and Nothingness.
[84] The Childhood of a Leader.
[85] The Reprieve.

The "bastards", however, are not only alienated themselves, but they seek to alienate others, robbing them of their freedom and forcing them to conform to their own "petrification" (Masters 1970, p. 31). In this sense, the neo-paramilitary BACRIM might be considered "bastards". They police a culture of silence and prop up "non-formal" or illicit networks of crime and murder (see Chapter 4), but there is another perhaps more insightful interpretation. "Bastards" in Sartre's works are often not physical characters, but instead are omnipresent. The world's dominant structures are often captured in a simple reference: "they". Outcasts like the Black Man or Lizzie in *La Putain Respectueuse*[86] (Sartre 1946b) or Genet in *Saint-Genet* (Sartre 1952), who exist (like the BACRIM) at the margins of society are ostracised by the work of the "bastards". For example, Genet is caught stealing and immediately labeled as "The Thief". He has sinned against the established order and to confirm and sustain that order, he must remain "The Thief" all his life. In short, he is made into an object by those who control the world (Sartre 1952). In this sense, anti-press violence (which is not separable from other forms of violence) is perpetrated either by "bastards" or by those objectified (and marginalised) by "bastards". In either case, the "bastards" are the neo-paramilitary BACRIM, and in both cases the violence is fuelled by bad faith.

As Stephen Priest (2001) has noted, "Sartre's distinction between the moral and the immoral cuts across socially acceptable legal and ethical mores". Genet's stealing is actually "eulogised" by Sartre "as a model of good faith – the real exercise of freedom" (Priest 2001, p. 205). An insurgency of citizenship would therefore also be considered in good faith. The problem with the violent citizen agency of the neo-paramilitaries is that it is immoral in that in involves the oppression of others and is a "confirmation" of the dominant social structures, as we have seen. For Sartre, "the moral is the free and authentic; the immoral is the conformist, the obsequious, the inauthentic" (Priest 2001, p. 205). Anti-press violence is therefore an act in bad faith because it is motivated by a desire to maintain and "confirm" the dominant "situation".

This bad faith is evident in the stories or perhaps "situations" of the BACRIM members involved in this study. In his play, *Les Mouches*[87], Sarte describes how alienation is the result of fear. This is the fear to accept one's responsibility or "nothingness". This fear leads to honesty and is portrayed as part of the process towards commitment: "You must be afraid… This is how one becomes an honest citizen, my son" says Clytemnestra to her son Orestes (Sartre 1943b, p. 8). For Juan, he too laments a lifetime of fear now he has become an informant: "It is odd that I

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[86] The Respectful Prostitute.
[87] The Flies.

never felt fear in the gang. I felt protected. Now, even though I know I am doing the right thing by helping the army, I have never been so afraid".

Yet we also see how fear can be dangerously overcome through one's alienation (or at least that is the perception), especially after one has been as deviant as to commit murder. Clytemnestra also says, "If I have gained anything by damning myself, it is that I no longer have anything to fear" (Sartre 1943b, p. 24). Oscar, who openly admits to having killed over twenty people describes how fear has dissolved into confidence and even perhaps arrogance. He does not accept has done wrong and equates what he perceives as bravery with a justification for his violent crimes.

Manuel also seeks justification for the murders he has committed. He says he has nothing to fear in this world and that only God can judge him. He believes that regular prayer and confession will save him from his guilt. Daniel in *Le Sursis*, is also overwhelmed by guilt because he is gay. As a result, he fears being alone. Manuel expressed similar sentiments - presumably this is when the guilt takes hold. However, it is in these silent moments with his God that Manuel says he finds his greatest strength. As Daniel writes in a letter to his lover to describe the comfort he has found in his faith: "I am, Mathieu, I am. Before God and all men, I am" (Sartre, 1845b, p. 470).

Those who are alienated in Sartre's work are often described as "lost" and "abandoned", but some also express leadership. Lucien in *L'Enfance d'un Chef* believes he finds purpose inbecoming a leader of men. He finds a sense of duty, which in Sartre's eyes exists only in an artificial order manufactured by others. The neo-paramilitary commander in this study also justifies much of his action through leadership. For El Gordo, his crimes became a vehicle to help and support others. But for Sartre, this does not display leadership as it involves the repression of fellow citizens.

These links between the characters of Jean Paul Sartre and the informants involved in this study have been made for analytical purposes and to emphasise the argument being made. As was stated above in the case of the journalists, the aim is not to present these individuals as uniform, consistent or coherent in their subjectivities, but instead to highlight general themes and observations which substantiate the points being made. It must also be acknowledged that existentialism has been the subject of much criticism and it is to this we now turn.

c). A defence of existentialism

Bernard-Henri Lévy (2000) declared that the twentieth century belonged to Sartre. Brendan O'Donohoe et al. similarly maintain that Sartre's work continues to be of great significance in the contemporary period. They point out that his later

works (such as *Cahiers pour une Morale*[88] or *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*[89])
"invite re-interpretation" of his entire *oeuvre* (2009, p. x). They argue that Sartre's
philosophy provokes a rich and diverse analysis that refutes reductionist claims of
nihilism, pessimism or individualism. For O'Donohoe at al. (2009), the disagreement
and debate (and perhaps even controversy) about Sartre's key concepts reflect the
very complex nature of his philosophy.

Existentialism has been applied to journalism before. In his book *The
Existential Journalist*, John Merrill asserts that "in the face of a pessimistic future for
journalism where conformity and de-personalisation is growing and freedom is dying,
the individual journalist must wage continuous and personal war against the
beguiling pressures to conform" (1996, p. 96). For Merrill, existentialism demands a
journalist experiment and try to make a difference in the world. In his later work,
Merrill contends:

> Some of us are born, and in some kind of statistical, materialistic way slip into
> old age and death without any meaningful guiding principles for a meaningful
> life. For such people, existence means a kind of passive being, connected
> only by birthdays, wedding, illnesses and catastrophes. For existentialists, on
> the other hand, existence means a more active and involved immersion in life
> experiences that largely are determined by our willingness to take chances.
> The existentialist refuses to be a robotized citizens who sees life as no more
> that a period of time where the person touches most of the laid-out bases but
> knows little or nothing about what is in the outfield (Merrill 2011, cited in Pratt
> 2012, p. 98).

But Merrill's work has come under heavy criticism (Holt 2012), as has existentialism
more broadly (see for example: Taylor 1992 and Adorno 2002). More specifically, it is
the concept of authenticity, which has been the subject of much scrutiny. Authenticity
is the cornerstone of existential philosophy and has been interpreted in various ways
by proponents of this approach. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger all stress the
importance of "authenticity", yet a discussion about the subtle differences of their
approach is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Our priority is the Sartrean idea of
authenticity. Merril believes that corporate structures of journalism encroach on a
journalist's freedom to determine "what kind of self or journalistic unit to become"
(1989, p. 19). This is based on Sartre's idea that each individual must take
responsibility for how one decides to live life (as we saw above). Authenticity for
Sartre is the realisation that an individual exists only to the extent that the individual
realises that they are nothing more than the sum of their actions. In *Le Sursis*, Sartre

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[88] Notebooks for an Ethics.
[89] Critique of Dialectical Reason.

writes: *je suis condamné à être libre* or "I am condemned to be free" (1945b, p. 419). Indeed for Merrill, he interprets this freedom as an assertion of individuality. For him, existentialism and communitarianism are in direct opposition. It is in other words, "an exaggeration of the personal freedom that human beings can ever hope for" (Holt 2012, p. 12). For Taylor (1992), this leads to focus on personal achievement or self-realisation and is negligent of one's responsibilities to others. For Adorno (2002), this is a self-deception and a false acceptance of inacceptable conditions. In the realm of journalism, this is a rejection of common ethical practice, which could be dangerous because it "encourages journalists to stop following norms and guidelines" (Holt 2012, p. 7). Indeed Holt's criticism reads:

> Merrill's construal of ethically bad journalism and it causes contains detailed elaborations about what sort of choices ate higher (rebellious, independent, challenging, etc) than others (going with the flow, etc). Therefore authenticity, as construed in existential journalism, undermines itself as an ethical guide for journalists, and as remedy for bad journalism (2012, p. 13).

Yet all of these approaches are an over-simplification of Sarte's philosophy. First, they do not recognise that for Sarte, an individual act is potentially an act for the collective good. It is only in his later work that Sartre began to acknowledge that individual relations, which he had assumed were "grounded in competition and conflict" might be mediated "by consensual norms and a free commitment to a common good" (O'Donohoe 2005), which is perhaps why this aspect is often underestimated in his work. Indeed Thompson points towards the "dialectic relationship" between the individual and the collective in Sartre's approach (2009, p. 210). As Deborah Evans argues, "the morality of existentialism is that in choosing for himself, man chooses for the whole human race" (2009, p. 82). Indeed Sartre criticises what he calls "individual acts", which are concerned only with the person who does them (Masters 1970, p. 54). At stake, is the interpretation of "humanism". For Sartre, "existence precedes essence […] man is free, man is freedom" (1946a, pp. 36-37). In other words, "human beings have no pre-established purpose or nature, nor anything we have to or ought to be" (Warburton 1996). While Sartre therefore rejects the notion of Mankind (where this implies universal values or a pre-determined human nature), he remains a humanist to the extent that the only world that matters is the human world (Masters, 1970, pp. 66-67). In short, we are what we do. And by acting, we create and invent values:

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Commitment demands that one should take action which involves the fate of men, and especially the fate of one's contemporaries. The well-being of men living *now* should be the object of any committed to the definition of justification of life on this Earth. Action such as this involves sinking one's own personalities completely into the task of creating Man; it demands more of one than any existing code of honour or moral catechism could possibly demand (Masters 1970, p. 55).

Sartre's philosophy is profoundly optimistic. His emphasis is on the future and a conviction that we can live by giving meaning to our actions. In *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, he writes: "there is no philosophy more optimistic than that which places the future of man within himself" (1946a, p. 62). Commitment is therefore comprised of an individual act, which cannot be separated from the "situation" in which one finds oneself and by implication such action has the potential to improve the world for everyone.

Authenticity is therefore achieved through radical political action that questions one's own "situation" (Sartre, 1948a). For the journalists involved in this study, commitment is just that. In alternative social (*dis*)orders to sit idly by is to contribute to the "democratisation" and acceptance of violence and its structures. "Going with the flow" in Sartrean terms would be to alienate one's freedom to act. Commitment is therefore achieved in this context by peace-seeking advocacy and participation:

How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid you are to soil your hands! All right, stay pure! What good will it do? Why did you join us? Purity is an idea for a yogi or a monk. You intellectuals and bourgeois anarchists use it as a pretext for doing nothing. To do nothing, to remain motionless, arms at your sides, wearing kid gloves. Well, I have dirty hands. Right up to the elbows. I've plunged them in filth and blood. But what do you hope? Do you think you can govern innocently? (Sartre 1948b, p. 198).

This depiction of authenticity also casts further light on the notion of journalism as resistance. The reporters of the Llano Verde have taken to the pen to get "dirty". Their journalism is a call for their audience to "plunge" in with them. Therefore, the argument is that in response to war cries hailing "the end of journalism" (Charles and Stewart 2011; Deuze 2007), the notion of commitment can serve to resuscitate concepts of both citizenship and journalism. It builds on the work of Stuart Allan (2013) and Clemencia Rodríguez (2011) to break down the false dichotomies of amateur/professional and dominant/alternative. There is an urgent need to

acknowledge and develop our understanding of contemporary divergent news ecologies, which constitute this "post-professional" or "post-industrialist" world (Bell et al. 2014). If "we're all journalists now" (Gant 2007), then we are all citizens too. The notion of commitment highlights the power of agency and the freedom embodied by the individual to act, participate and even resist; to expand one's citizenship from liberal to more inclusive models. For the journalist-citizens who are urged to take great risk, not for fun or for money, but to ascertain a better understanding of the world in which they live and challenge the dominant structures of which this world is comprised, journalism constitutes both an expression of citizenship and also an assertion of one's own place in the world. It is an act of resistance.

6.5 Review of findings

Chapter 4 defined the alternative social (*dis*)order of Colombia's "after war" and described a multifaceted violence through the eyes of those who perpetrate it. The chapter also examined why journalists in one particular region of Colombia (referred to as the Llano Verde) are killed and threatened. It showed that neo-paramilitary groups perpetrate violence to avoid capture and disruption of their non-formal networks (Nordstrom 2004). Chapter 6 has argued that this anti-press violence is a direct result of the perpetrator's "insurgent citizenship" (Holston 2008). Anti-press violence is therefore a constituent part of the structural, cultural and symbolic violence (Galtung 1969, 1990), which underpins the alternative social (*dis*)order of "after war".

Chapter 5 outlined what this thesis has referred to as "the divergent news ecology" of the Llano Verde. The aim was to give an empirical overview of how the five journalists involved in this study respond to what this thesis has defined as the alternative social (*dis*)order in which they live. This is a world in which they are not neutrally detached observers, "parachuted" in from a position of privilege, but instead are partial, attached participants, who like their audience, are also victims of a multifaceted violence, which has become "democratised" or "privatised" (Koonings and Kruijt 1999, 2004; Sánchez 2001; Defort 2013). Current dominant frameworks of analysis, which place their emphasis on the binaries of amateur/professional and dominant/alternative were exposed as inadequate for the divergent news ecology of the particular region concerned. This divergence is characterised by a journalism, which advocates for social change and peace in an attempt to highlight and even overhaul the current dominant structures. It is presented as a journalism of resistance.

Finally, this chapter attempted to draw conclusions by problematising the victim/perpetrator dichotomy. This was achieved through the application of a framework of citizenship, using the scholarship of Mouffe (1992), Rodríguez (2011), Allan (2013) and especially Holston (1999, 2008). The aim was to understand the structures and motivations, which underpin anti-press violence. The conclusion has also proposed the notion of commitment or *engagement*. Commitment explains why journalists and citizens can engage in sustained periods of reporting where considerable risk is involved. If we accept that a journalist is also a citizen, commitment explains the process by which journalism can embody an act of citizenship or "witness-resistance". This resistance is comprised of a dualism, which encapsulates an individual desire for the betterment of society, but also a propensity to understand or assert one's own place in the world. In contrast, the violent acts of perpetrators were presented as alienated acts of citizenship or acts of citizenship carried out in bad faith. The concepts of commitment and alienation are based on interpretations of the existential philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre and Hannah Arendt. Finally, commitment is not intended as an absolute theory, but as a variable and dynamic concept that can account for individual agency where the individual is acting in both self- and communitarian interest. Before I reflect on the overall research process, I first consider the validity and limitations of this study.

6.6 The validity and limitations of this research

Chapter 3 investigates the methodology of this research in some detail. In this concluding, chapter, however, I set out to remind the reader why this research is valid, while also acknowledging its limitations. Ethnography comes from a humanistic standpoint, where the priority is the individual and their emotions. It is important to recognise that ethnography involves "real life situations" and is "unstructured, flexible and open ended" (Burgess 1982, p. 15). As I have stressed throughout this thesis, my preoccupation has been a group of individual reporters and neo-paramilitaries from one region of Colombia and their specific response to the particular violent circumstances in which they live and work. I do not attempt to suggest that the common themes I have deduced will be found elsewhere in Colombia or indeed in the world. This is because ethnography provides an in-depth analysis of a particular context.

Critics argue it is difficult to produce generalisations from ethnographic studies (Norris 1997). These critiques are largely positivist, however, and ignore the importance of the lived experience. I have suggested that the notion of commitment could go some way to breaking down the dominant frameworks in current journalism

scholarship, but I do not present it as a theory that could be applied in all contexts. It is simply a fluid notion that can account for both individual and collective acts of citizenship.

This section has presented a brief overview of both the validity and the limitations of this study. I will now outline some potential avenues for further research, before I reflect on the research process as a whole.

6.7 Directions for future research

Colombia has arrived at a crossroads in its history with the end to more than fifty years of conflict with the FARC guerrilla. However, the country is divided both politically and socially. At the same time, formal negotiations with the guerrilla group, the ELN have begun in Quito, Ecuador. Despite being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos is the country's most unpopular leader in its history. He has a popularity rating of 14% (*RCN*, 2017). It seems that peace is on the horizon for Colombia, but the challenges that lie ahead are immense. As this thesis has illustrated, violence is so entrenched in parts of Colombian society that to eradicate it completely will require much more than a formal peace deal. Judging the country on the failure of the demobilisation of the paramilitaries (which was explored in Chapter 1), I question the extent to which the Colombian government, its institutions and indeed its people, are really prepared for the hurdles of a "post-conflict" world or what this thesis has called the "after war". It is not just politicians and other social leaders who need to help Colombia on its path to peace. Academics also share this responsibility, both inside and outside Colombia.

From a journalism studies perspective, the foundations have been laid for further study into Colombia's vibrant "alternative" or independent journalism. The country's rich tradition of community media has emerged in the vacuum created by national news organisations and their apparent preference for sensationalism and close ties to business and political elites. In the context of "after war" such studies might assess the potential for journalism's specific contribution to peace building on local, regional and national levels. Such studies may also highlight potential models for newsgathering and reporting in violent contexts, which could serve to further develop the notion of journalism as resistance.

Further studies could also apply the notion of commitment and its constituent witness-resistance to alternative social (*dis*)orders and divergent journalistic ecologies in other parts of the world. More generally, witness-resistance has been presented as an alternative newsgathering concept to the more dominant form of "bearing witness". Future studies could therefore assess the implications of witness-

resistance for larger, more international and "parachute" ecologies. Such analysis could be used to develop Hanitzsch's (2007, 2011) "universal theory of journalism cultures". Before this thesis concludes, I reflect on the research process of the PhD as a whole.

6.8 Reflections

The importance of critical self-reflection within the research process is outlined in some detail in Chapter 3. This is where I also outline the particular challenges I faced within the framework of my chosen methodology. In this section, I intend to reflect on the overall research process and the difficulties I encountered of a personal and private nature, which will have undoubtedly impacted this study.

In all honesty, it would probably be easier to omit from this thesis much of what I am about to write. However, complex emotions encountered in the field should not be neglected. They contribute to the messy nature of the ethnographic research process, which can sometimes leave out the "fusions of thinking and feeling" in favour of a neatly presented narrative. Such research "is often too cognitive and does not take account of the emotional contours and diversity of a setting" (Gubrium & Holstein 1997, p. 68). Indeed ethnography can constitute an "existential shock for the ethnographer" (Civico 2016, p. 19; Nordstrom 1995, p. 13) and the participant observer. The research process is therefore one, which has taught me a lot about myself. It has shaped my knowledge of who I am, of what I do and perhaps more importantly, why I do it.

The difficulties explored below have not been included in previous chapters to avoid the intrusion of my personal experiences in ways, which would have polluted the research. To have included the stories below would have detracted from the experiences of my informants, who remain as the focus of this study. Nonetheless, it is important to reflect on these events in an attempt to be honest about my relationship with the informants and my place within the overall research process.

During my fieldwork I would be confronted with murder, death and violence in ways I could not have imagined at the outset. Not only did this raise ethical challenges, but it also had very personal consequences. Ethically, I would be confronted with the possibility of betraying the confidence of my informants by reporting them to the authorities[90]. Personally, I would feel fear, anger and grief.

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[90] The UK's Social Research Association guidelines (http://the-sra.org.uk/research-ethics/ethics-consultancy-forum/ethics-cases/) outline a researcher's legal responsibility to inform the authorities if they have knowledge of a crime. However, they also outline there may some circumstances in which the reporting to authorities may not be in the best interests of the informant. They place the responsibility for such a decision firmly with the researcher.

Chapter 4 includes interviews with perpetrators of violence. These are young men who have raped, murdered and tortured. One of them would be murdered in front of me by a masked assailant. His murderer, also an informant in this study, would confess to me. Another would reveal to me how he killed journalist Dorance Herrera, a colleague I had known, but not one who had chosen to participate directly in this research (see Chapter 4). These confessions are an ultimate expression of trust and confidence in me, but they also symbolised a concealed cry for help.

Although I am haunted by seeing someone I had come to know shot in the head, it is not the "seeing" or the "hearing" that horrifies me, but the "telling". It is not the blood, the lifeless gaze or the deafening gunshots, which stay with me most, but instead the words, the tears and the confessions that came afterwards. It is the realisation that life is seemingly worthless. It is the ease with which these young men can pull the trigger, but most of all, it is their apparent lack of remorse.

I was in no doubt that confessing to me was cathartic for the killers. There may not have been remorse (at least openly), but there was a hidden regret at being "forced" into this violence. Their justification was easy and matter-of-fact: kill or be killed. The desire to protect themselves and their families was strong. Murder becomes survival. It can also become revenge, as we saw in Chapter 4. While there was no admission that killing was "wrong", there was a desire to stop.

In these "violently plural" societies, the divide between victim and perpetrator becomes blurred, as we have seen in Chapter 4 and in previous sections of this chapter. As a participant observer, confronting the violence committed by others is not the challenge. It is "the possibility of violence, which lingers within oneself; within all of us" (Civico 2016, p. 19) that becomes uncomfortable to contemplate, emerging in my case as a deep sense of empathy with those who have committed violent crimes.

I do sense a recent change in how I respond to the news of the violence against and the murder of journalists. Now my first thoughts are about the perpetrator of the crime, rather than the victim or those left behind. I am obviously not condoning such actions, but simply acknowledging that anti-press violence is symbolic and symptomatic of a much larger dynamic. As this thesis has shown, anti-press violence in the Llano Verde exposes violent structures, which run much deeper than what might be perceived as a "collective hatred" of reporters (Reicher et al., 2008; Cottle

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They encourage an assessment of the "balance of harm", even though this offers no legal protection for the researcher. It is worth pointing out that there are no such guidelines in Colombia and ethics are largely the responsibility of individual universities. This research project adheres to the ethical code of practice outlined by both Bournemouth and Cardiff universities, as Chapter 3 explained. See also BSA (2004).

2016b, p. 67).

There is no denying that the fear and grief I experienced in the field, along with the anger and resentment, have become part of this research, but the episodes described above do not bring into question the validity of my findings. In fact, I would argue that self-reflection and honesty conversely add credibility. Indeed as journalist Peter Beaumont writes:

> I sample, filter and mix as I watch, effecting my own subtle, and not so subtle, alterations. I realise too that not only is it impossible to separate myself from the stories I collect but that it is necessary to channel those experiences through my own to try to render them in emotions and sensations that have meaning for me. Corrupting the data even as I download it, I become a tainted witness. The challenge becomes to be as honest as I can (2009, p.10).

6.9 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the impact of violence and journalism's role within "confirming" or "disconfirming" (Haugaard 2003) the social, cultural and symbolic structures (Galtung 1969, 1990), which underpin it. The aim was to understand how and why journalists working on the margins of Colombian society become targets of direct violence, and why in the face of great risk, they continue to report. Through "thick description" (Geertz 1973), this thesis has argued that indigenous reporters have been largely ignored in the journalism scholarship on "war" reporting. Existing dominant frameworks, which reinforce the binaries of amateur/professional and dominant/alternative do not adequately take into account the diverse nature of contemporary news ecologies, especially those which might emerge within alternative social (dis)orders or what this dissertation has defined as Colombia's "after war", more specifically. These "violently plural" societies, where violence is "privatised" and "democratised" (Koonings and Kruijt 1999, 2004; Sánchez 2001; Defort 2013) also problematise the over-simplified dichotomies of war/peace and victim/perpetrator. Through the theoretical framework of citizenship, the importance of citizen agency and an individual's ability to "act otherwise" (Oosterom 2016, p 9. See also Giddens 1984) has been exposed. In this context, journalism is unveiled as an act of "witness-resistance".

This thesis therefore concludes that individuals who engage in sustained journalistic practice in an environment of plural violence are exerting their citizenship and resisting against the dominant structures in which they both live and work. This

involves the communitarian desire to better society through a peace-oriented practice, but also incorporates a direct individual assertion of one's own place in the world. Journalism becomes "a weapon to wage peace" and resist against the occupying structures of repression and violence. In so doing, it challenges the structural, cultural and symbolic violence (Galtung 1969, 1990), which might otherwise be obscured. This refined understanding of both journalism and violence helps identify more specific challenges for Colombia as it continues on its fragile path to peace after more than half a century of internal conflict.

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Appendix I

Media Ownership and Popularity in Colombia

The top three largest media proprietors in Colombia are Carlos Ardila Lülle, Luis Carlos Sarmineto Árgulo and Alejandro Santo Domingo (see Chapter 1 and see Table 1 below).

Carlos Ardila Lülle is the 3rd richest man in Colombia, according to the Forbes Rich List. His business empire includes the soft drinks giant *Postobon* and the Medellín football club, *Atlético Nacional*. He owns Colombia's second biggest TV channel, *RCN* (MOM 2016) as well as many other media organisations (see Table 4 below).

Luis Carlos Sarmiento Árgulo is Colombia's richest man, according to the Forbes Rich List. He bought the country's biggest daily from the family of current President Santos in 2007. His reported fortune of $11.1 billion (US) makes him the 85th wealthiest person in the world (MOM 2016). He owns 17 media organisations.

Alejandro Santo Domingo inherited his father's fortune when he died in 2011. He owns Colombia's biggest TV channel *Caracol*, and lives in New York (MOM 2016). He owns 6 media companies.

Table 4. Concentration of Media Ownership in Colombia 2016

Source: RSF 2016b/The Media Ownership Monitor project.

Owner (Company)	Carlos Ardila Lülle (*Organización Ardila Lülle*)	Luis Carlos Sarmiento Árgulo (*Casa Editorial El Tiempo*)	Alejandro Santo Domingo (*Valorem*)
Number of media outlets owned	18	17	6

Table 5. The 10 Most Popular Newspapers in Colombia

Source: EGM (Estudio General de Medios 2014)[91] and The Media Ownership Monitor project (MOM 2016).

Newspaper	Media Group	Owner	Readers (%)
Q'hubo (Regional taboid)	*Grupo Nacional de Medios*	Gómez and Hernández families	38
ADN (Regional free)	*Casa Editorial El Tiempo*	Luis Carlos Sarmiento Ángulo	24
La Semana (Weekly investigative)	*Publicaciones Semana*	Felipe López Caballero	16
El Tiempo (National Daily)	*Casa Editorial El Tiempo*	Luis Carlos Sarmiento Ángulo	16
Al Dia (Regional tabloid)	*El Heraldo Ltd*	Manotas, Pumarejo and Fernández families	10
Publimetro (Regional free)	*Metro International*		6
El Espectador (National daily)	*Caracol / El Espectador*	Alejandro Santo Domingo	4
Extra (Regional tabloid)	*Grupo Editorial El Periódico*	Hernando Suárez Burgos	4
El Colombiano (Regional daily)	*El Colombiano Ltd*	Gómez and Hernández families	4
El País (Regional daily)	*El País Ltd*	Lloreda family	2

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[91] Official data on media consumption is not publically available in Colombia. It is collected by the ACM agency (http://www.acimcolombia.com/quienes-somos/) and provided privately to subscribers. 2014 are the latest statistics in the public domain.

Table 6. The 10 Most Popular Television Channels in Colombia

Source: EGM (Estudio General de Medios 2014) and The Media Ownership Monitor project (MOM 2016).

Channel	Media Group	Owner (Company)	Viewers (%)
Caracol	*Caracol / El Espectador*	Alejandro Santo Domingo (*Valorem*)	72
RCN	Radio Cadena Nacional Ltd	Carlos Ardila Lülle (*Organización Ardila Lülle*)	60
City TV	*Casa Editorial El Tiempo*	Luis Carlos Sarmiento Ángulo (*Casa Editorial El Tiempo*)	13
Canal Uno	RTVC (State-owned, with advertising)		4
Teleantioquia	Departament of Antioquia (Government owned)		4
Telepacifico	*Sociedad de Televisión del Pacifico*		3
Señal Colombia	RTVC (State-owned with advertising)		3
Telecaribe	*Canal Regional de Televisión del Caribe*		3
Cable Noticias	*Espectáculos Andinos Ltd*		2

Table 7. The 10 Most Popular Radio Stations in Colombia

Source: EGM (Estudio General de Medios 2014) and The Media Ownership Monitor project (MOM 2016).

Station	Media Group	Owner	Listeners (%)
Olímpica Stereo	*Organización Radial Olímpica*	Char family	21
Caracol Radio	*Grupo Prisa | Caracol Primera Cadena Radial Colombiana*	Polanco family	13
W Radio	*Grupo Prisa | Caracol Primera Cadena Radial Colombiana*	Polanco family	9
LA F.M.	*RCN | Radio Cadena Nacional*	Carlos Ardila Lülle	8
Blu Radio	*Caracol TV/El Espectador*	Alejandro Santo Domingo	6
La Radio (RCN)	*RCN | Radio Cadena Nacional*	Carlos Ardila Lülle	6
La Cariñosa	*RCN | Radio Cadena Nacional*	Carlos Ardila Lülle	5
Radio Policia Nacional	Ministry of Defence		4
La Reina	*Organización Radial Olímpica*	Char family	2
Fantástica	*RCN | Radio Cadena Nacional*	Carlos Ardila Lülle	2

Table 8. The 11 Most Popular News Websites in Colombia

Source: EGM (Estudio General de Medios 2014) and Alexa.com[92]

Website	Media Group	Owner	Ranking on Alexa.com database[93]
El Tiempo	*Casa Editorial El Tiempo*	Luis Carlos Sarmiento Ángulo	12
Minuto 30	*Minuto 30 Ltd*	Luis Adolfo Caro	14
El Espectador	*Caracol / El Espectador*	Alejandro Santo Domingo	18
La Semana	*Publicaciones Semana*	Felipe López Caballo	30
Noticias RCN	*Radio Cadena Nacional*	Carlos Ardila Lülle	35
El Colombiano	*El Colombiano Ltd*	Gómez and Hernández families	42
Las 2 Orillas	*Fundación Dos Orillas*		49
El País.com.co	*El País Ltd*	Lloreda family	55
Pulzo	*R360*		77
Kien y Ke	*Kieneskien Editorial*		208
La Silla Vacía	*Blogosfera Productions*	Juanita Léon	306

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[92] Alexa.com is a database, which provides commercial web traffic data and analytics. It is a subsidiary if Amazon.com and is available at: https://www.alexa.com.
[93] The lower the number, the higher the ranking meaning more user traffic, etc.

A brief history of the Colombian conflict[94]

Violence has indeed long co-existed with democracy in Latin America and Colombia is no exception. Indeed the persistent nature of this violence, which continues to plague large swathes of South and Central America has been the subject of much academic debate in recent decades. This has been described as the "crisis" of the Latin American nation state (Mann 2002). Colombia is no exception. However, the nature of the violence now played out across the country has altered significantly in recent years, as have the aims and motivations of those who perpetrate it. As a result, it has become difficult to define or theorise the conflict in Colombia. Raul Vargas and Juan Caruso refer to Colombia as "an exceptional laboratory for researchers interested in crime, conflict and more generally, in violence" (2014, p. 1). The historian Gonzalo G. Sánchez (1999, 2001, 2002) paints a picture of Colombia as a country of permanet war. In the 19th Century after 14 years of Independence wars, Colombia experienced eight major civil wars, 14 local civil wars, many smaller revolts, two wars with Ecuador and 3 coups d'état (Simons 2004). The violence of the 20th century can be traced back to 1948.

1948 The assassination of popular Liberal Party presidential candidate, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, leads to a period known as the *Bogotazo* – widespread urban violence. The Bogotazo transforms into a bloody civil war: *la Violencia*, which engulfs mostly rural communities. An estimated 300,00 people are killed. It was during this period that Conservative political chiefs recruited hitmen known as *pájaros* or "birds" (Guzmán Campos, Borda and Luna 1962, p. 184; Roldán 2002, p. 109; Civico 2016, p. 36. See also Karl 2017.).

1953-1957 General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla leads a peaceful coup d'état in an attempt to restore peace and established what many regard as a populist dictatorship. He is eventually ousted after large protests in the capital. A military junta takes charge until the two main political parties launch the National Front (Simons 2014; Karl 2017).

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[94] It is important to stress that the aim of this appendix is not to offer a detailed account of the long and bloody history of Colombia. Instead, it offers an overview of how the nature of violence has changed in the country. The intention is to provide a brief overview of the historical context to illustrate the multiplicity armed actors involved.

1958 -1978 The National Front is formed by bitter enemies from *la Violencia*: the Liberal and the Conservative Parties. This is a power-sharing agreement that involves all government departments, including the Presidency, which rotates between the two parties every four years. All other political parties are officially banned, but former General Rojas Pinilla forms the National Popular Alliance (ANAPO). The National Front is successful in eradicating what had become an irrational polarisation enhanced by the *Bogotazo* and *La Violencia*. (Pardo Rueda 2015).

1964-1966 The FARC (Las *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) emerge out of the bipartisan political violence. The FARC incorporate Marxist, Maoist and Trotskyist ideologies and by **2003** has more than sixteen thousand combatants (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003. See also Brittain 2010, Leech 2011 and Pardo Rueda 2015).

1964 The ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* or the National Liberation Army) and the EPL (*Ejército Popular de Liberación* or Popular Liberation Army) emerge from radicalised peasant movements formed to resist land expropriation. One of the main claims of these two groups made to the Colombian state, and maintained for decades, is the need for agrarian reform. The EPL is never able to recruit more than a thousand combatants and in **1991** agrees to demobilise, though small dissident pockets remain. In **2003** the ELN has five thousand combatants (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003) and remains operational.

In the early 1980s, guerrilla organisations, emboldened by their increasing numbers and strength, shift goals. Before this time, the guerrilla's aim was to disseminate leftist ideologies in poor farming communities, but at the start of the 1980s, guerrilla organisations begin to prioritise military and financial ambitions. The FARC and ELN attempt to extend their military power throughout their regions of influence to gain control over alternative sources of income, including illicit drug economies, kidnapping and "safety taxes", known in Colombia as *vacunas* or "vaccines". The guerrillas devise new forms of demonstration known as the *paro armado* or armed strike, whereby the FARC and ELN order people to stay home, thus stopping all local and social and economic activities, paralysing local economies (this is a method the neo-paramilitary-BACRIM will also adopt in later years). In order to finance their military infrastructure, the FARC and ELN begin taxing not only large hacienda owners, but also small farmers, shop owners and even market vendors (González,

Bolívar and Vásquez 2003; Brittain, 2010; Leech 2011; Rodríguez 2011; Pardo Rueda 2015).

As the 1980s progress, the guerrilla movements become more involved with Colombia's illicit drugs trade. Today, according to the Colombian army, The FARC now control more than sixty percent of the country's drug trade, including the cultivation of coca and the production and trafficking of cocaine (Reuters 2013). This is something the rebel group has always denied, however. Instead, they admit to sourcing income through *gramaje*, which is a system of taxes imposed on those involved in the illicit drugs trade[95]. According to one estimate, this amounts to an annual total of around $1million. In 2017 after the pace deal, some estimates value the FARC's assets at $580million (McDermott 2017). The dependence of FARC and ELN on the cocaine trade makes it increasingly difficult to define the guerrillas as a group driven by ideology rather than by profit. Indeed Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín refers to the "de-ideologisation" of the guerrillas (2006, p. 145).

1965 Presidential decree 3398 is an open call to arms during the "state of siege" that is declared by President Léon Valencia calling on all Colombian citizens to do whatever is necessary to protect the state. This decree was eventually overturned in 1989 (though it had already technically been enshrined into law through permanent legislation – see below). A state of siege allows for the broad transfer of powers to the military with no civilian oversight (HRW 1996, p. 13).

Scholars draw attention to the use of (or perhaps a more accurate term would be the *manipulation* of) the "state of siege" or "state of exception" (Ramírez, 2010). This emergency power can be used by governments to impose military law in times of foreign invasion or "internal commotion" (HRW 1996; Yepes 2007). This supposed "provisional and exceptional measure" has become "a technique of government" (Agamben 2005, p. 2) or "a government mechanism to legitimise military actions against civilians" in order to achieve "long-term institutional stability" (Ramírez 2010, p. 84).

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[95] This is essentially a system of taxes imposed on the different links of the drug chain in their areas of control, and includes:
A tax on the growers (the cocaleros),which usually does not exceed $50 per kilo of coca base; a tax on the buyers (up to $200 on a kilo of coca base); a tax on production in laboratories in their areas of control (up to $100 for every kilo of cocaine produced); a tax on airstrips and flights that leave from their territory (again another $100 per kilo). This means the rebels admit to earning up to $450 from each kilo of drugs produced and moving through their territory (see Leech 2011).

Up until the current Colombian constitution was introduced in 1991 (which makes it harder for a President to impose these emergency laws and gives the Constitutional Court and Congress powers to overturn the President's decision) Colombia was under a "state of exception" for 35 of 42 years (Yepes, 2007; Agamben, 2005). However, the amount of time spent by Colombians in states of emergency fell from 80% in the 1980s to less then 20% after the introduction of this judicial review (Yepes, 2007). For example, between 1992 and 2002 some 12 "states of exception" were declared. Of these, only five were fully ratified by the Constitutional Court. Four were partially ratified and three were annulled (Yepes, 2007). This legal mechanism has not been enough to satisfy international human rights monitors, however, who document that because of this "militarism and clandestine repression" (Ramírez, 2010: 85), Colombia "presents the worst human rights and humanitarian crisis in the Western hemisphere" (HRW, 2007).

1968 Law 64 enshrines decree 3398 into permanent legislation, which allows for the creation of civil defence groups at the President's command and gives permission to the Ministry of Defence to arm these groups when necessary. The military has since used Law 64 as the legal foundation for the paramilitary groups that would emerge in later decades (Richani 2013).

1970 M-19 is founded largely by disgruntled members of General Rojas Pinilla's ANAPO. They allege fraud during the presidential election and create a guerrilla movement in an attempt to force institutional changes. M-19, supported by radical students and young professionals is the only guerrilla group with a strong presence in urban centres (Gutiérrez Sanín 2006; Pardo Rueda 2015).

1970s Colombia's drugs trade evolves and really takes hold at the start of the **1980s**.

The increasing popularity and consumption of marijuana and cocaine in the USA provided a lucrative market and with $1million worth of coca crop yielding a $5million profit (Simons 2004, p. 61), the illicit industry soon flourished.

Until 1974, Chile had been the biggest supplier of cocaine to the USA, but General Pinochet, grateful for US assistance in his attempt to restore democracy to Chile, acceded to American pressure to combat illicit drug production. Leading producers and traffickers were imprisoned or extradited to the USA. Those who escaped capture fled to Colombia, where they continued their work.

In **1981** coca and marijuana plantations covered 62,000 acres; by **1998** coca, marijuana and poppy plantations covered 272,000 acres (Tokatlián 2000, p. 37). In the two decades from **1980** to **2000**, the illicit drug economy brought 40 billion dollars into Colombia (Rodríguez 2011, p. 14). By the early **1990s**, Colombian cartels were producing and exporting between 500 and 800 tonnes of cocaine a year, and by **2008** cocaine had become the second most trafficked drug in the world (UNODC 2009, p. 81). An estimated 25 % of intentional homicides between **1994** and **2008** were drug-related (Mejía 2016).

What started as a small cocaine smuggling business blossomed into an enormous multinational empire. Large and very organised cartels emerged and began to compete for their share of the trade. The largest and most infamous of these groups were the Medellin cartel, led by Pablo Escobar, and the Cali cartel led by the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers. These two cartels dominated the illegal drugs trade in the 1980s and early 1990s. They were the first generation drug trafficking organisations (DTOs). These cartels were vertically integrated, hierarchical organisations with a clearly marked command structure that was able to manage, in a centralised manner, all the different links in the drug chain, from drug crops to distribution in the United States (McDermott 2014a).

A long, bloody but concerted effort by American security forces in partnership with the Colombian army eventually led to the dismantling of both the Medellin and Cali cartels. This did not, however, bring an end to the production and transportation of cocaine. The second generation of DTOs is made up of federations, comprised of "baby" cartels. These baby cartels tend to specialise in certain links in the drug chain and have no one clear boss. By 2012 it is estimated there are approximately 300 of these groups in operation (Newsweek 1995; Lawrence 2012; McDemott 2014a). These baby cartels have clear links with the neo-paramilitary BACRIM (see chapter 1).

The cartels became violent actors in the pursuit of their business interests, but also become substitutes for a weakened state (Sullivan 2012b, 2014). Corruption permeates state institutions on such a level that illicit networks "capture" control of the state. This permanently re-shapes state structures to the extent it becomes a permanent feature of government and governance (Garay Salamanca and Salcedo Albarán 2012). The Cali cartel begins social cleansing, killing *desechables* or 'discardables' including the homeless, homosexuals and prostitutes (Castells 2010, p. 206). Social cleansing would later become a modus operandi of the paramilitaries and the neo-paramilitary BACRIM (see chapter 4).

1982 The Medellín drugs cartel joins forces with parts of the Colombian military and other wealthy parties to create MAS – *Muerte a Secuestradores* or Death to Kidnappers. The group defends land and business interests against guerrilla attack (Brittain 2010).

1985 M-19 storm the country's Palace of Justice on November 6 and hold the 25 Supreme Court justices and hundreds of others hostage. 40 rebels are killed, as are 11 of the court's 25 justices. Scores of others are also killed or "disappeared" (Pardo Rueda 2015).

1989 M-19 demobilises and becomes a political party. Today, several former M-19 leaders remain dynamic political figures in Colombia's Congress (Pardo Rueda 2015).

1990 The assassination of three presidential candidates by the drug cartels, including Liberal Party frontrunner, Luis Carlos Galán.

1993 Pablo Escobar, leader of the Medellín cartel, is killed. *Los Pepes – Perseguidos por Pablo Escobar* or People Persecuted by Pablo Escobar - dismantle the Medellín cartel by capturing and killing its members. *Los Pepes* is formed of the opposing Cali Cartel, US special forces and Colombian paramilitary groups (Bowden 2001).

Between **1990** and **2000** the paramilitary were responsible for 4,757 violent actions against civilians (35% of the nation's total), while they only engaged in 176 combat actions against other armed groups (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003, p. 102). Guerrilla organisations followed the lead of the paramilitary groups, with ELN and FARC each being responsible for 22% of attacks against all civilians between **1990** and **2000** (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003, p. 103). During the same year, the Colombian armed forces were responsible for 13% of all attacks against civilians (González, Bolívar and Vásquez 2003, p. 103).

1994 CONVIVIR an acronym for *Servicios Especiales de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada* or Special Vigilance and Private Security Services is a law passed in the Colombia congress, which allows for the creation of local groups to protect private land and property. It is highly controversial as it is interpreted to be a revival of Law 48 of 1968 (see above). The key difference is that CONVIVIR is a national programme, which quickly takes hold. The then Governor of Antioquia (Alvaro Uribe

Velez), who would later become President and whose father had been killed by the FARC in a kidnap attempt in 1983, openly supports and promotes CONVIVIR. Increased levels of violence directed at Colombia's guerrilla leads to CONVIVIR groups being formally disbanded by **1997**, but many continue to operate informally as part of paramilitary organisations. The CONVIVIR programme enables local groups to form close ties with the military and security forces (see Simons 2004, pp. 310-311 and 316. See also Ronderos 2014 and Duncan 2015).

1995 The "Clinton List" is created when US President signs an executive order approving economic sanctions against suspected drug traffickers. The move is targeted largely at the Cali cartel, including its leaders, the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers. Combined with a series of arrests of key figures and major seizures of cocaine, the demise of the Cali cartel continued until **1998**. Remaining sanctions were lifted in **2014** (Rubenfeld 2014).

1997 Formation of the AUC, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, which is a paramilitary umbrella group led by Carlos Castaño (until he is murdered in **2004**) (see Ronderos 2014 and Duncan 2015).

2000 *Plan Colombia* is launched. This is a controversial United States military and diplomatic aid initiative aimed at combating Colombian drug cartels and left-wing insurgent groups in Colombian territory. The plan was originally conceived between 1998 and 1999 by the administrations of Colombian President Andrés Pastrana Arango and US President Bill Clinton as an anti-cocaine strategy. After the terror attacks of September 11th 2001, the plan was expanded under the presidencies of George W. Bush and Alvaro Uribe to include counter-insurgency initiatives against the FARC and other guerrilla movements (Simons 2004, pp. 229-246 and Rojas 2015).

2002 The election of President Alvaro Uribe Velez ends Colombia's two-party electoral system.

2003-2006 The paramilitaries demobilise under the Presidency of Alvaro Uribe.

2004 President Uribe launches *Plan Patriota*. This is an increased military effort against the guerrilla insurgency.

2005 Controversial Justice and Peace Law (*la Ley de Justicia y Paz*) is established. This is a legal framework to allow for a demobilisation of the country's armed actors. It is widely criticised as too lenient.

2007 The *parapolitica* scandal exposes connections between paramilitaries and high profile politicians. In 2007, Senator Jorge Enrique Robledo suggested the scandal be renamed *parauribismo* as those politicians involved were mainly allies of the former President, Alvaro Uribe.

2008 The False Positives (*Falsos Positivos*) scandal comes to light. Members of the Colombian armed forces have murdered innocent people and presented them as members of the guerrilla in an effort to show "successful" operations against the insurgency. More than 3,000 cases are reported by **2012** (Kraul 2012). It leads to the resignation of the commander of the army, General Mario Montoya (Kraul 2012). In one case, it is revealed that 19 young men are kidnapped from a poor neighbourhood in Soacha on the outskirts of Bogotá and murdered. Their bodies are eventually found in mass graves near the border with Venezuela (La Semana 2017b). Defence Minister, Juan Manuel Santos, denies knowledge and fires 27 officers. In 2017, 21 army officers are convicted (La Semana 2017b).

2010 Juan Manuel Santos, the former defence minister is elected President.

2012 Peace talks with FARC begin in Havana Cuba.

2014 President Santos wins a second term in office.

2016 The government and FARC sign peace accords, but the deal is narrowly rejected in a September referendum. Former President Uribe leads the 'No' campaign. Amid unprecedented protests in favour of the deal, Santos vows to continue the peace process and is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Revised peace accords are signed and approved by Congress in November.

2017 FARC formally demobilises and ceases to be an armed group in June. More than 7,000 weapons are handed over to the UN (Fajardo 2017). In September, it launches a political party: The Revolutionary Alternative Force for the Common People, maintaining the FARC acronym in Spanish (*Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Comun*) (BBC 2017a). In February, the government and the ELN

enter peace negotiations (BBC 2017b; La Semana 2017a). In September, a ceasefire is agreed between the two to begin in October – the first bilateral ceasefire in the history of the ELN (BBC 2017c). During the Pope's visit in the same month, the leader of the *Urabeños* - also known as the *Clan del Golfo* and the *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* (see chapter 1) - says he is willing to surrender. President Santos declares he will not negotiate with the neo-paramilitary group because they are "criminals" and "not political actors" within the country's armed conflict (Reuters 2017). Also in September, and there are concerns about the length of time it is taking to pass the required legislation to approve all the aspects of the peace accords (El Colombiano 2017). The Colombian Congress estimates that 400 dissident FARC rebels remain operational and the military says that since the demobilisation 13 dissident commanders have been killed or captured (El Colombiano 2017. See also Bargent 2017a).

The UNP

What is it?

The *Unidad Nacional de Protección* or National Protection Unit[96] provides security for Colombian citizens who are considered to be at risk. It is an agency of the Interior Ministry. It is responsible for providing and implementing security measures for politicians, union members, journalists and other individuals whose human rights may be in danger.

The UNP is the oldest organisation of its kind and is often considered to be a model for similar schemes in Latin America. The Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) found that the UNP "offers an important example for the countries in the region of a program that has protected the lives and integrity of dozens of journalists and communicators throughout the country" (Botero Marino 2013, p.67).

The UNP dates back to 2000 when the Special Programme for the Protection of Journalists and Social Communicators was established as part of the Human Rights Directorate of the Colombian Interior Ministry. The recognition of the dangers posed to journalists came three years later than that of other groups considered to be at risk, which were under the administration of another programme. In 2012 the UNP was created as part of an internal re-organisation. 16 groups are eligible for protection (Higuera 2015).

How does it work?

The UNP Works with three other agencies: the Technical Body for the Collection and Analysis of Information (CTRAI) and the Preliminary Evaluation Group (GVP). The former gathers data in the field by speaking to the person considered to be at risk as well as other representatives from the local authorities such as the police. The latter assesses the risk based on the information provided and makes a judgment to a third committee, the CERREM. This is the Risk Assessment and Measure Recommendation Committee. This committee analyses all the data and decides on what measures should be put in place. This committee is made up of representatives from the security forces, journalism organisations and the state

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[96] http://www.unp.gov.co

prosecutor. Journalism organisations do not have voting rights. In 2017, the Colombian Foundation for Press Freedom withdrew from the CERREM citing it had become too political and claimed decisions were being made on the basis of finance and not risk (FLIP 2017).

The 2014 corruption scandal

In September of 2014 the UNP revealed a budget deficit of over 70,000 million Colombian pesos or more than £17million, despite severe cost-cutting measures throughout the year imposed by the Interior Ministry (RCN 2014). The head of the organisation, Andrés Villamizar, said the UNP could not afford to pay its staff or other contractual agreements. He eventually resigned over social media after the UNP was forced to immediately withdraw security measures of 100 people including ex-ministers, judges and union members (La Semana 2014). It emerged that leaks over the course of the year had alerted the Transparency Bureau (part of the President's office charged with fighting corruption) to financial irregularities. The UNP's General Secretary, Julian Marulanda Calero, has since been charged along with four other senior members of staff with financial misconduct over the allocation and administration of contracts. Marulanda Calero fled Colombia before he could be charged (El Tiempo 2014c).

The lack of funds and subsequent budget cuts had serious implications for those receiving protection from the UNP. As Table 11 below shows, there was a significant reduction in the number of people receiving security between 2013 and 2014 as the organisation tried to balance its books and withdrew protection, including from journalists.

One journalist, Yesid Toro, in the city of Cali created false death threats against himself and his colleagues in September of 2014. He had been scared that his bodyguard and transport would be withdrawn (BBC 2015). This came a month after the murder of reporter Luis Cervantes, who was killed a week after his security measures were removed by the UNP (see Chapter 4).

Since 2013 there has been a reduction of bodyguards employed by the UNP. As Table 13 illustrates, there has also been a decrease in the number of armoured vehicles, mobile telephones and bulletproof vests made available. In contrast, Table 11 shows how the number of Colombian citizens requesting protection has increased. Between 2015 and 2016, this number increased by 126%. In 2015, the UNP's total annual budget was $490.781 million COP and in 2016 it was $491.241 million COP (approx. £124 million each year).

Lack of trust: the cases of Javier Osuna and Claudia Duque

A number of scandals have damaged the UNP's credibility since it was established. Journalists and journalist organisations have called for the organisation to do more to combat corruption within its ranks and have also questioned its links to the state security apparatus (Bock 2014; Duque 2016a).

Javier Osuna is an investigative journalist and author. In August 2014 assailants broke into his apartment in Bogotá and burned 18 months of his research. He had been investigating how paramilitaries used furnaces to dispose of bodies in the department of Norte de Santander (RSF 2014). Determined and resolute, Osuna published his book, *Me hablaras del fuego* a few months later. As a result of his work and the attack on his home, Osuna was allocated a team of bodyguards by the UNP, but in 2016, it emerged that one of his security detail had been monitoring and passing information on his movements to an unknown third party (El Espectador 2016).

Similarly, journalist Claudia Duque discovered that her bodyguards had been spying on her. Although her security detail was switched several times at her request, the spying continued. In 2008, Duque decided to accept the armoured car offered by the UNP, but refused the armed guards and instead drives herself (Duque 2016a).

Duque had been investigating the 1999 murder of a much loved journalist and comedian, Jaime Garzón. She was kidnapped and subjected to various violent threats after her 2001 article, which alleged state involvement in Garzón's murder and an apparent cover-up (Duque 2016a). Duque was also one of the 16 renowned journalists who, it was revealed, had been targets of email and telephone interception by the DAS during the presidency of Alvaro Uribe (El Espectador 2009; Duque 2016a).

Several former members of the DAS have been convicted of the psychological torture of Duque and her family in a landmark case, but at the time of writing, the investigation and court case continue with many of those apparently responsible still at large. Furthermore, in August 2016, Duque discovered that the panic button devices issued by the UNP to hundreds of citizens as a security measure could actually be used as an eavesdropping device (Duque 2016b).

The UNP in numbers[97]

Table 9. Number of annual requests for UNP protection 2012-2016.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
12,757	14,956	*	20,203	45,563

*These numbers were not available at the time of publication.

Table 10. Number of journalists with UNP protection 2012-2016.

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
112	94	87	132	147

Table 11. Number of citizens with UNP protection and risk levels 2012-2016.

Level of risk	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Extreme	26	14	22	21	40
Extraordinary	4156	8094	3842	1912	7830
Ordinary	5529	4444	1973	6790	2699
Total	9711	12,552	5837	8723**	10,569

**Yet the annual report says there are 11,888 people with security measures.

Table 12. Annual number of cases assessed and accepted by the UNP CERRAM committee 2014-2016.

	2014	2015	2016
Cases assessed by CERRAM committee	6384	8723	10569
Cases accepted***	N/A	7315	9264

***These numbers do not correspond with the total number of people receiving protection above.

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[97] This information is taken from the UNP annual reports, which are available online: http://www.unp.gov.co/planes-y-programas. However, on close examination these reports contain statistical inconsistencies. I have tried to correct these where possible and have highlighted discrepancies in the tables.

Table 13. Details of UNP security measures provided in 2013 and 2015.

Security measures	2013	2015
Armoured car	1863	28
Armed guards	2900	79
Communications (mobile phone)	8955	173
Bullet-proof vest	838	202

"A Code of Ethics for Covering the Colombian Conflict"

This code of ethics, which applies exclusively to the coverage of the armed conflict in Colombia, was published in 2003 by journalist Eduardo Márquez González. It is non-binding and was established after an eruption of violence in the same year forced the vast majority of the journalists in the department of Arauca to flee and seek refuge in Bogotá. They had become direct targets for both the guerrilla and the paramilitaries. The code was established after more than 20 workshops with journalists around Colombia. However, as Chapter 2 points out, the code of ethics was widely seen as a "political act of communication" on behalf of journalists, rather than an attempt to install ethical practice (Serrano 2014, p. 166). It was an attempt to educate Colombia's armed actors about how reporters see their social responsibilities. The code of ethics has since been adopted by FECOLPER – The Federation for Colombian Journalists (FECOLPER 2003; Márquez González 2003).

The first part of the code states three considerations on which it is based:

1. The right to information and the political commitment of journalists to society and to the truth from an ethical point of view.
2. Covering the armed conflict supposes that any message provided by an armed group, legal (the military) or illegal (paramilitary and guerrilla groups), may be propaganda, which seeks to favour the particular interests of the group.
3. Journalists are citizens whose mission is to inform other citizens by working towards the common good. For journalists information is a social good. They condemn violence as a method of conflict resolution. They recognise that their duty is to cover war, without obscuring or exaggerating its causes, consequences and context.

The second part lists nine principles to which journalists should adhere:

1. We will keep a strictly professional relationship with our sources, maintaining a reflexive and critical attitude. We reject discrimination, coercion, intimidation or any privilege, which could compromise our independence.

2. We will make an effort to provide different points of view. We will compare and verify the information provided in interviews, press releases or press conferences. When we have not been witness to the facts and are reliant on single sources, we will explain that the report is based on only one version.

3. Under no circumstances will journalists assume the functions of the judiciary or any legal state institution or an illegal centre of intelligence or any humanitarian organisation. As journalists, we are communicators and not informants. We cannot replace others just as they cannot replace us or our work.

4. We will not reveal the identity or location of our sources if requested or when this may endanger life or pose a risk to an individual's security or that of their associates. Anonymity is as much about the safety of sources as it is the safety of journalists, as well as the free flow of information.

5. We will respect the privacy of citizens involved in or affected by the armed conflict, provided that this silence will not compromise the public interest. In all instances we will respect the grief of victims.

6. We will use an adequate lexicon, which avoids qualifying expressions and adjectives used by the groups in conflict. We will respect the right to the presumption of innocence and refer to a person suspected of having committed a crime as a "suspect" until the issuing of a conviction. Under no circumstances should a journalist be an instrument of war.

7. We will fulfil our duties (…) within the framework of journalism ethics, which requires truthful information and sets aside any economic interest (…). In order to ensure our independence, we need sufficient and adequate salaries and also a means of transport, which is not owned by the actors within the conflict.

8. We are not responsible for the final news outcome because professional practice determines that journalists are only responsible for the coverage and writing of news. The titling, editing and broadcasting or publication of a news report are the responsibility of media owners and managers.

9. We will enrich media coverage of the war by allowing any citizen to express their opinion and peace proposals. We believe that peace is the most important outcome.

"Agreement for Discretion"

Editors from 35 of Colombia's biggest news organisations signed an agreement on the 4th November 1999, which aimed to improve both the "quality" and "responsibility" in coverage of violence. The agreement encouraged signatories to formulate a code of ethics within their individual news organisations based on the principles detailed below. This "Agreement for Discretion" was devised and signed and at the *Universidad de la Sabana* in Bogotá (Velásquez and Gutiérrez 2001, p.92). It reads:

Conscious of our social responsibility, we commit to this agreement because we want to contribute to the achievement of peace, the respect of life and the search for the common good.

1. Coverage of violent events – attacks against towns, massacres, kidnappings and combats between gangs – will be truthful, responsible and balanced. To accomplish this purpose, each media will define rules of professional conduct that foment quality journalism and benefit the audience.

2. We will not present rumour as fact. Accuracy, which requires contextualisation, must come before speed.

3. We will establish clear criteria with regards to live transmissions to improve the quality of coverage and avoid the media being manipulated by violent actors.

4. For ethical and social responsibility reasons, we will not publish the identities of victims' families.

5. We will establish criteria for the broadcast and publication of images that may be disturbing and in bad taste or that may incite further violence and even indifference.

6. We will respect and foment political pluralism. We will use language that contributes to the co-existence of all Colombians. We prefer to lose a story

than a life.