

**Reporting Human Rights:
A Study of Broadcast News Representations
and Journalist Practices**

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Abstract

This research examines the connection between human rights and journalism, and the importance that the latter has in the shaping of common understandings of human rights. Based on an analysis of the Portuguese public service television news, this study pays particular attention to the representation of human rights in the news and the production practices that determine human rights reporting.

The research reveals that the financial crisis is powerfully influencing the content of the news, shifting human rights coverage to more social rights-focused reporting. Further, the financial constraints are affecting the professional practices and impeding the dislocation of correspondents to cover human rights issues abroad. This tendency, in its turn, is 1) reinforcing the manifest reliance on news agencies' contents to cover distant human rights situations, and 2) emphasising *proximity* and national interest as decisive news values, generating more nation-focused human rights coverage. Consequently, this proximity to human rights problems *at home* is both empathetic and forced.

The ethnographic study of news production practices demonstrated that news professionals have different and sometimes contradictory understandings on editorial choices regarding reporting. While some argue that the current practices are undermining the possibility of a global understanding of human rights causes, others defend that now is the time to expose sensitive situations nearby, displaying some perseverance in covering recurrent topics about deprivation of social rights, and highlighting the identification with the not so distant *other*. Overall, journalists are conscious of their potential as well as their social responsibility concerning human rights, the implications of their outputs for citizens, and generally demonstrate a disposition for care. Nonetheless, they are also aware of the decisive limitations influencing how human rights are identified, portrayed, ignored or even misrepresented in the news.

Introduction

Although human rights are a recent addition to ethical discourse – it was not until World War II that the term entered common usage – the concept of human rights is itself multifaceted and contested in academic debates. This concept, however, is also under constant (re)definition in everyday practices. Media discourses and practices play a crucial role in this process, either 1) contributing to human rights protection, awareness and debate; 2) ignoring, silencing or misrepresenting human rights issues around the world; or even, 3) in extreme situations, inciting hatred, genocide and crimes against humanity. Often referred to as the Fourth Estate, as an addition to executive, legislative and judiciary powers, the media, namely journalism, are able to provide an ‘early warning system’ (McChesney, 2012) for human rights violations before they grow to crisis proportions, as has often happened in the past. This double-sided potential of media and news journalism to either promote or hinder the course of conflicts and human rights violations demands thoughtful research and analysis of media outcomes, effects and production in this context.

This thesis analyses the connection between human rights and journalism, and the importance that the latter has for providing the tools for an informed citizenry with human rights information and understanding. More precisely, this study focuses on news production processes and in particular the moment where human rights can be brought to light in news. Drawing upon a multidisciplinary theoretical background this study presents various debates and discussions that define the concept of human rights before narrowing down to a media-focused approach to the topic. The literature review aims to establish a connection between three sets of theories and concepts, in order to investigate the possible roles of journalism with regard to human rights issues.

The first set of theories aims to define the concept of human rights, exploring its historical affirmation and legislative construction, and highlighting some of the crucial moments or lines of thought developed across the centuries. More recent contemporary debates in sociology and the political sciences have introduced or developed notions of *cosmopolitanism* and the *global public sphere*, within which the media possibly operate

today. The second set of theories introduces epistemological studies of the media that delve more deeply into this complex relation between journalism and human rights. These theories question the moral responsibility of the media, as well as their potential to promote solutions-oriented dialogue on one hand, or to feed hatred-oriented discourses, on the other hand. Finally, a third set of literature is reviewed and this refers to the prominent contributions of the sociology of journalism which analyses the most relevant factors that influence the news production processes, professional choices, ethical motivations and organisational practices. Such additions mostly emphasise news production processes as key moments where possible human rights approaches to the news are contemplated, decided or even ignored.

Drawn from the above theoretical framework two overarching research questions were defined: *RQ1.1 – How are human rights present in the news?* and *RQ2: Why are journalists covering human rights issues the way they are?* In other words, this study examines the nature of human rights reporting and the characteristics of such news reports. Further, it observes the main influential factors that can determine the presence or absence, the inspiration or the disregard for human rights. The study of such questions allows inquiry into the possible contribution of journalism to a *global moral order* (Silverstone, 2007), or a human rights culture.

Figure 1.1, below illustrates the interconnection between the three sets of theories that establish this thesis's theoretical framework and its articulation with the proposed research questions:

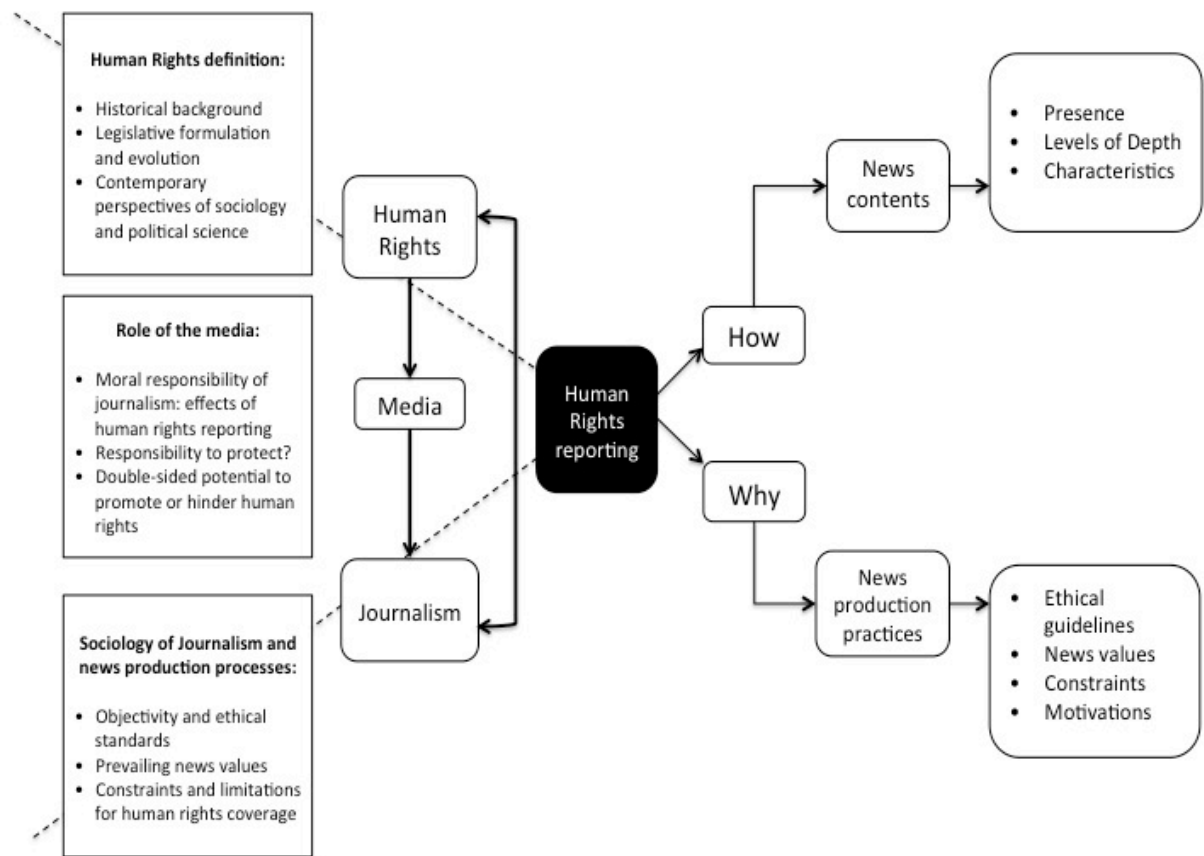


Figure 1.1 - Theoretical framework and its articulation with research questions

Based on this theoretical framework, and in order to answer to the aforementioned research questions, the thesis applies a specific combination of methods that address particularly the content of the news and journalistic professional practices. The empirical research conducted combines a content and framing analysis to describe the overall nature and contents of human rights related news and, additionally, uses ethnographic participant observation and in-depth interviews with news workers to determine the most prevalent influential factors that contribute to the presence or absence of human rights issues in the news. Furthermore, this set of methodological tools also allowed the research to explore the different professional responses and engagement of journalists with human rights issues as well as their motivations and aspirations given their work context.

The research closely examines the Portuguese public service broadcaster (RTP) as an example of news production practices within a mainstream network newsroom, functioning in a democratic country with a free press. Despite the particularities inherent to the national context surrounding this case study, the methodology adopted as well as some of its key findings may be directly replicable to other newsrooms within similar operational conditions.

Overall, this thesis is composed of nine chapters, divided in two sections. The first section, the literature review (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) seeks to explain the theories and key concepts supporting the framework of this research. Chapter 2 delineates a possible definition of human rights based on its philosophical, historical and legislative formulation, and explores its multidisciplinary contemporary approaches, namely current critiques about the social role of the media within an alleged global public sphere. Chapter 3 delves deeper into the discussion about the responsibility of the media, questioning its potential within a global moral space and exploring the suggestion of a 'responsibility to report'; further, this chapter presents the two-faced potential of the media regarding human rights, either seen as a promoter of human rights, or used as a tool to ignite violence and hatred. Chapter 4 bridges the previous theoretical chapters with the second half of the thesis and surveys the elements which interfere with the process of news production and, consequently, determine the coverage of human rights issues which also variously encourage or limit it. This chapter also explains the theoretical background of three suggested principal human rights news frames that exhibit three different levels of depth in human rights coverage.

The second half of this thesis moves on to the empirical study of the Portuguese public service broadcaster. Chapter 5 presents this case study, displays the research questions and sub-questions behind it and clarifies the methodology adopted for the research. Chapter 6 presents the results of the content and framing analysis, showing how human rights are covered in the everyday news, and therefore answering the first research question posed by this research. The chapter examines the various elements of news content that represent the nature of reporting human rights, examining its presence in the news, and the topics under which human rights are covered. This chapter lays out the predominant news sources, production resources utilised, duration and placement within the news rundowns, types of rights covered and finally the geographical

distribution of the news. Derived from the analysis of these categories, the chapter moves on to survey communicative framings for human rights reporting, which suggest different levels of professional engagement. Subsequently, Chapter 7 and 8 draw upon the observation of news production practices, based on empirical evidence from ethnography and in-depth interviews. These two chapters focus on the second research question, and explore the reasons behind the organisational dynamics and professional practices that determine coverage of human rights related issues. Chapter 7 describes the filtering processes and use of resources, discussing also recent editorial changes and the influences of these changes in news production. Further, this chapter focuses on the determinant news values that define human rights reporting, the impact of the newsrooms' financial difficulties on news outputs, ending with a critical analysis of the growing inclination for *proximity* as the main determinant of news coverage. Chapter 8 elaborates on the professionals' own perspectives and suggests a dichotomous understanding of news production choices regarding human rights issues from a managerial and from a non-managerial perspective. The chapter presents different professional views towards human rights in the news and their perceived roles regarding human rights issues. Finally, it explores journalists' ideals for reporting if there were no financial or editorial constraints on their work, teasing out by this means their most desired aspirations and motivations. The concluding Chapter 9 recapitulates the findings that underscore the thesis' contribution to academic research that links journalism and news to human rights problems, and delivers some suggestions for future endeavours in this field.

Chapter 2

Defining Human Rights: concept and contemporary perspectives

This chapter aims to elaborate a possible definition of human rights based on its philosophical formulation and multidisciplinary contemporary approaches. Divided into four sections, the chapter first introduces the historical origins of the three generations of human rights, and moves onto a brief explanation of its legislative evolution and current jurisdictions in the second section. The third section goes beyond the legal framework of human rights and introduces the contemporary contributions of sociology and political sciences, narrowing down their reflective critique about the social role of the media. The final section specifically addresses media studies and how these have introduced the promise of a global public sphere in which ideas about human rights circulate today.

2.1- Origins of human rights

The words of Eleanor Roosevelt on the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 conveyed great optimism for a devastated society coming out of the World War II (Haas, 2008). Her speech proclaimed a comprehensive and indivisible conception of human rights, by announcing a path of hope that would help to overcome the horrors of the preceding years¹. But her words did not anticipate the troubled years that would follow, years of tensions and political fragilities created by the Cold War. Above all, the United Nations (UN) wanted to create a document that would inspire an apparatus of international order and justice, preserving interstate peace and preventing genocide; a document that would be backed by a complex of international organizations. This mechanism would monitor the behaviour of nations, provide a platform for diplomatic resolution of conflicts and, if necessary, make use of military force to uphold its values (Nickel, 1987; Fagan, 2009; Ishay, 2010). The UN believed that codifying the fundamental principles of human rights was critical to the future of humanity.

¹ Eleanor Roosevelt, *Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations General Assembly (Dec. 9, 1948)

The first Human Rights Commission who was asked to identify the common rights for all human beings adopted the UDHR after intense debate. Its members², intended to gather a wide scope of influences in human rights principles, to encompass the rights shared by all individuals regardless of race, religion, creed, nationality, social origin and sex, to assure security and civil liberties, and to support political, social and economic equity. The drafters' goal was to enshrine these rights in a document that translated the inalienability and indivisibility of human rights. Human rights history has been (and it still is being) written by several 'hands' throughout the centuries of human existence. Those 'hands' have been inspired by several religious and philosophical influences, but have also been driven by terrible episodes that determined the history of mankind, such as violence and pain from upheaval, enslavement, conquest, revolution, war, torture and genocide. This section summarises the extent and evolution of human rights as a philosophical and political concept, as well as some inherent problems in its implementation.

2.1.1 - Religious, liberal and socialist contributions to the first and second generation of rights

Modern ethics has been built based on a spectrum of both secular and religious traditions. Yet the idea that religion is a source of current human rights tradition remains contested by some scholars, who regard religious edicts and commandments as the very antithesis of human rights (Donnelly, 2003). No ancient religious or secular belief system regarded all individuals as equal and, in addition, some of the most violent attacks to human rights have been perpetrated in the name of religion. The *religious influence* is one of the most contested debates that encircle the origins and definition of human rights.

² Eleanor Roosevelt, the Chinese Confucian philosopher and diplomat Pen-Chung, the Lebanese existentialist philosopher and rapporteur Charles Malik, and the French legal scholar and later Nobel Prize laureate René Cassin.

However, there is one common element that prevails and stands out, and that is the notion of *responsibility*. There is hence an idea that lies at the basis of every religion, which is the sense of *human responsibility* to others, despite their idiosyncrasies. Therefore, the religious origins of human rights have influenced its basis, both in terms of its philosophy and moral consciousness, but also in the sense that religion itself has provided grounds for conflict and divergence, which foments violence and disrespect for human rights. Although each religion expresses ideals of compassion and justice, what scarified their ideological basis was the institutionalization of their beliefs. The process of secularization, in this sense, endangered religions' intrinsic ethical principles. Religions have contributed, however, with a legacy that eventually made three critical inputs to the evolution of international human rights: i) they established visions of ideals and normative standards about the dignity of all human beings that inspired and sustained those who campaigned for human rights. This is especially evident during times of persecution and suffering, providing hope; ii) they helped to establish the concept of responsibility toward common humankind, by seeking to develop a moral imperative or universal sense of obligation toward all; and, finally, iii) religions provided an inherent start for discussion about rights, developing concepts of duties (Lauren, 2003:9).

Nonetheless, both religion and human rights have been influenced and determined by an historical continuity of conflicting political traditions and episodes in time. However, each major stride forward in human right is followed by severe setbacks (Van Boven, 1995; Ishay, 2004; May, 2005). This historic continuum brings to light other controversies that often take over the debate: *the prevalence of Western influence* over the concept of universal rights. This is a legacy that comes from the Enlightenment period in Europe, which brought an end to the Middle Ages. Its history is epitomized by the rise of mercantilism, a scientific revolution, the audacity of maritime explorations of the globe, the consolidation of the nation-state and the emergence of a middle class. At this moment in time, the community of nations was European-centred and civilisation was associated with western values, and with the western way of life and technology (Van Boven, 1995). Nonetheless, there was also a growing perception that human rights were all-inclusive, inciting ideas of universalism and equality. Human rights visionaries like Grotius, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Descartes, and others, defended a new secular

language, distant from religious sectarianism. A human rights language would also inspire revolutionary discourses, and the struggles for the reorganization of societies based on human rights principles over the next two centuries in Europe and America, where colonial authority and aristocratic privileges remained. The language of a right to life, freedom of religion and opinion, and property rights was introduced for the first time, and corresponded to, and later enshrined in first generation of rights, or civil and political rights. However, it is accurate to say that the Enlightenment itself was a rather disappointing period - instead of inspiring - regarding human rights. In fact, until the nineteenth century, slavery, colonialism, inequality of women's rights, and the inexistence of children's rights and sexual freedom, were the shortcomings of the era where universalist values were proclaimed (see Conklin, 1998; Blackburn, 1988 and 2011; Tully, 2012; among others).

Equally, the rise of socialism is seen as another influence for human rights philosophy, but this is broadly contested and one of the more controversial arguments. The nineteenth-century industrial revolution and the growth of the labour movement opened the gates for struggles for universal suffrage, social justice and worker's rights. In the beginning of the twentieth century civil liberties lost their monopoly as the only class of fundamental rights acknowledged at a constitutional level (Tomuschat, 2003). The Soviet Constitution of 1917 paved the way to the formulation of a second generation of rights protecting economic, social and cultural rights, and the formulation of the concept of a social state. The latter connection between Marxism and the atrocities committed by communist-inspired regimes like Stalinism or Maoism generated a wave of criticism questioning the socialist contribution to human rights.

2.1.2 – Globalisation and the rise of a third generation of rights

If the Enlightenment was a crucial period to affirm the first generation of rights, both civil and political rights, and the industrial age and socialism strongly contributed to the proclamation of the second generation of rights, economic social and cultural rights, then globalisation brought to light a third generation of rights. This group of rights go beyond civil and social rights, and refer to the broader spectrum known as collective

rights³. The expansion of the global economy and communications and the emergence of developing post-colonial states are behind proclamations of a new set of rights. This new generation of rights is mostly concerned with the developing world and, for this reason, it has intensified antagonism within liberal discourses of human rights. That division is based on the assumption that Western values are mostly associated with individual civil and political rights, whereas people in developing countries emphasize rights related to the welfare of groups consistent with their cultural and religious traditions (Hannum, 1999; Ishay, 2004). This debate opposes universalist and cultural relativist visions of human rights⁴ and goes beyond the scope of this research. It is important, however, to examine the concept of globalisation and the transformations of communicative spaces and social relations that this period has provided. These consequences add a significant contribution to the debate around global understanding of human rights.

The years that preceded the globalisation era, the sixties and seventies, were rife with civil rights movements, with protests against war, totalitarian regimes, nuclear weapons, racism, colonialism, and with demonstrations in favour of national liberation, women's rights and homosexual rights in numerous cities across Western Europe and the United States. The previous human rights campaign that had led to the adoption of several juridical documents, and which was compromised by the threatening instability of the Cold War, was again alive with the onset of a growing youth movement that represented a challenge to power, and whose voices of dissent were increasingly hard to ignore. The Cold War had cynically used the rhetoric of human rights, and the United Nations itself became another battleground between the superpowers' economic and geopolitical interests.

The end of Cold War and the collapse of Soviet communism were signalled by the moment when a crowd celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall, which reunited the German

³ These collective rights encompass the right to self-determination, the right to economic and social development, the right to a healthy environment, the right to natural resources, the right to communicate and communication rights, and the right to participate in cultural heritage and rights to intergenerational equity and sustainability, right to immigration and political asylum.

⁴ Cultural relativism has been a powerful idea in International Relations since the late 1980s. British International Relations theorist Ken Booth explains this as a result of the influence of 'a strange mix of bedfellows comprising postmodernists, liberals trying to adopt culturally sensitive position on human rights, and civilisation *realpolitikers* who argue that the world has slid seamlessly from the Cold War into a 'clash of civilisations' (2004:53). According to Booth, the effect has been a tendency to naturalise or even valorise the relationship between cultural space, ethical communities and values, a debate that could reveal to be conservative and focused on the geography of meaning (*ibidem*).

city and symbolised the liberation of Eastern Europe. At that moment the word *globalisation* was often associated with ideas of change and freedom and celebrated 'as the happy ending of human history' (Ishay, 2010). However, with the pressure of economic globalisation, many societies have experienced political and social crisis sometimes leading to demands for interventions, justified by human rights' concerns (Kaldor, 2006:11). Soon the idea of globalisation was linked to economic disparities between rich and poor countries, and increasing inequalities between them. Signs of human rights resistance to this new economic trend started to become apparent. Soon, a counter-globalisation movement sprouted, and activists targeted and questioned world-leading organisations. In the late 1990s and early 2000s Seattle, Washington and Genoa were some of the most visible stages for protest against the new hegemony and its powerful global entourage. The late eighties were also marked by the explosion of transnational non-governmental organisations (NGOs) disseminating the values of human rights. The development of the Internet and computer technologies became a reality, and human rights websites were being created in order to spread information about human rights violations, rallying popular outrage, and pressuring politicians and governments to act upon human rights transgressions. Global exposure of these offenses was seen as a way to cease them.

For Giddens, globalisation is a consequence of modernity; and its dynamics have radically transformed social relations which have become increasingly distant across time and space. In this sense, globalisation is a 'stretching process' (1990) that represents a network between these social contexts:

'In the modern era, the level of time-space distancing is much higher than in many previous periods, and the relations between local and distance social forms and events become correspondingly 'stretched'. Globalisation refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole. Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa.' (1990:63-64)

This idea of 'intensification of world-wide social relations' and world-wide networked connections is essential to contextualise later debates around the possibility of a *global public sphere*, later explored in section 2.4. Castells (2000, 2007) calls it the *network*

society, where internet, mobile communication and digital media 'have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication that connect local and global in chosen time' (2007:246). Hannerz (1997) refers to this intensification of social relations on a global scale as a *global ecumene*, and means that 'cultural interrelatedness' increasingly reaches across the world. Therefore, the global communications revolution contributed to the enhancement of human rights, though the transgressions perpetrated today are mostly the consequence of the application of globalisation mechanisms in economies. Globalisation brought up cultural and socioeconomic differences that intensified tensions and fragmentation within the human rights community, and in both the developed and developing world created a plethora of ever more specific and conflicting human rights demands (Ishay, 2010).

At the beginning of the new millennium the weight of an economic crisis and outbreaks of nationalism have undermined universal rights aspirations. The aftermath of 9/11 brought to light a blatant discordance between human rights and security policies. Even if these thoughts remained on a speculative level, the picture of the world today presents two possible scenarios regarding human rights: one is pessimistic and gloomier, and the other more optimistic and enlightened. Both scenarios will probably continue to coexist and bring forward controversies and contrasts. On one hand, the economic turmoil, the rise of fundamentalism, and ineffective international governance leads to an erosion of the ideology of human rights. The main argument is that global capitalism disrupts traditions and widens the gaps between rich and the poor, leading many to find an appealing alternative in violent religious fundamentalism. Faced with this situation, the international or governmental mechanisms have revealed to be incapable of redressing human rights violations and prevent war (Ishay, 2010:648). The UN, for example, was not able to avoid crimes against humanity in conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur.

Regarding criticisms about the universality of human rights and the argument that this ideology is an imposition of Western values, it can be argued that much of the codification of human rights has depended on international institutions. This is particularly true of the UN, which in fact does not prove the 'westernization' of human rights, but probably suggests more of an 'institutionalisation' of human rights.

Nonetheless, more importantly than emphasising the territoriality of such values, it must be recognized that there is an 'almost globally accepted standard for the protection of universal human rights'⁵ (Dunne and Wheeler, 2004:ix), and simultaneously a constant denial for those basic rights to millions of people, as states fail to live up to it. Moreover, there are incompatibilities that go beyond this 'geography of meaning' on the debate around human rights. This occurs in the clash between the 'geography of values', such as family, religion, state or ethnic culture (Booth, 2004:52). For those who contest the importance of this debate, a conception of human rights even with its western origins, as some may argue, is better than no formulation at all (Booth, 2004), and the discussion should be focusing instead on how this set of rights could be applied globally.

Despite various setbacks, the consolidation of human rights policies throughout history seems to show some signs of progress. The Goliath-sized challenges for human rights now lie in business and environment issues, as well as dealing with streams of fundamentalism and nationalism. The world is now a global marketplace for goods, ideas and also news. Globalisation is seen as both a curse and a blessing, because it creates precious opportunities to spread and promote values, warrant observance and denounce violations of human rights. However, the dark side is that there are also serious threats to fundamental rights. Globalisation, in this sense also means rising complexity of interactions, interests and perspectives regarding human rights.

2.2 - Human Rights policy evolution: from promotion to protection and to prevention (Responsibility to Protect)

In the year 2000 the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established to act as an independent body to redefine the UN's politics for

⁵ Dunne and Wheeler, in their work *Human Rights in Global Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, and the authors that collaborated in this book often question the foundation of this universal standard. They argue that political communities interpret human rights very differently, and that 'different societies 'sign up' to the idea of universal human rights but disagree over the meaning and priority to be accorded to these rights' (2004:3). These authors claim that this is an inter-societal critique that 'becomes an assault on the question the West's understandings of what counts as human rights' (*ibidem*).

external military interventions with human protection purposes (ICISS, 2001: vii). Military intervention has always been seen as one of the most controversial issues of international relations, both when it happened – Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and when it failed to happen – Rwanda. The twelve commissioners aimed to produce a detailed report that would help to generate a ‘desperately needed’ (*ibidem*, 2001: viii) new international consensus about this issue. This report was entitled *The Responsibility to Protect*, coining a phrase that later would be also known as RtoP or R2P. This document affirms the core principle of state sovereignty and its role regarding the protection of human rights, and it clarifies that the RtoP embraces three specific responsibilities: *responsibility to prevent, responsibility to react, and responsibility to rebuild* (to provide full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation).

The document both inspired and was the basis of the UN World Summit Outcome in 2005, which adopted the concept of RtoP unanimously by heads of state and government. The principle of RtoP rests on three equally weighted and non-sequential pillars: (1) the primary responsibility of states to protect their own populations from the four crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, as well as from their incitement; (2) the international community’s responsibility to assist a state to fulfil its RtoP; and (3) the international community’s responsibility to take timely and decisive action, in accordance with the UN Charter, in cases where the state has manifestly failed to protect its population from one or more of the four crimes (Bellamy, 2010: 143). The ground-breaking principle of RtoP differs from the older concept of intervention, by underlining that the international community should primarily assist states in protecting their own population. Military intervention is justified only as a last resort, ‘when every non-military option for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the crisis has been explored, with reasonable grounds for believing lesser measures would not have succeeded’ (ICISS, 2001: xii). The RtoP concept has made its way onto the international diplomatic agenda and the UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki-Moon is at the forefront of defending the norms and challenging the UN members to uphold their commitments.

However, as with every new measure adopted in international affairs and human rights policies, there has been criticism. This has mostly involved debates around national sovereignty, and how RtoP could represent a threat to sovereignty or, on the other hand, accusing RtoP of being merely and excessively rhetorical. In fact, the process

of implementing RtoP was prolonged and was resisted despite the commitment of state members at the World Summit. The debates that followed helped to identify a broader consensus, but also exposed some concerns. One of these concerns was the perennial question of 'the potential for RtoP to legitimize coercive interference and the lack of clarity about the triggers for armed intervention' (Bellamy, 2010: 148).

RtoP has been applied inconsistently since 2005, and all of the different cases have helped to clarify the principle's scope⁶. Whilst there were successful cases, the mechanism of implementation is often portrayed as slow and insufficient to protect vulnerable populations. The idea of RtoP as a catalyst for action is principally based on what is called a 'structural prevention' of conflict⁷, which focuses mainly on the measures that address the 'root causes' of a deadly conflict. This type of prevention presents a host of political, economic, humanitarian and military measures that are to be applied. However, the practice of the 'single most important dimension' of RtoP – prevention - may contribute to weakening the principle itself (Stamnes, 2009: 75) due to the long time that it takes to implement preventive measures.

RtoP is often mentioned as being limited in its capacity to act as a response to human rights violations. Still, over the past few years it has become a key part of the language that frames responses to humanitarian emergencies. Yet, RtoP is a reminder of political commitments to prevent genocide and crimes against humanity and therefore reshape the policy agenda. On the other hand, Stamnes refers to the intention behind the principle which is to generate a speech act that emphasises prevention, as 'an important part of the move away from the 'humanitarian intervention' debate of the 1990s' (2009:72). This shift on human rights policies also represents a shift of focus towards state responsibilities and away from their rights – more profoundly it has raised a

⁶ Two cases tested the boundaries of RtoP and the types of situations to which it applies (the case of Georgia and Myanmar/Cyclone Nargis, where there was no evidence of RtoP crimes). There were another two cases where the application of the principle was relatively uncontroversial (the case of Darfur and Kenya), and one case (Somalia) where the state has manifestly failed to protect its population from three of the four crimes but where RtoP 'has nevertheless not been part of the surrounding diplomatic discourse' (*ibidem* 2010:150). See Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect – Five Years On*, *Ethics and International Affairs*, 24, no.2 (2010), pp 143-169, for further details and analysis of these cases.

⁷ The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict distinguishes 'structural prevention' from 'operational prevention', being the latter referred to the measures utilised when a crisis is eminent. For further reading see their *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report* (1997).

debate around the redefinition of state sovereignty, which has now changed from a guarantee against interference, to synonym of responsibility.

For the purposes of this research it is pertinent to explore this concept, but not in its normative and political principles and applicability. Instead, the focus is on its 'speech act building' capacity and its possibility to work as a catalyst for action. The concept of RtoP can be conveyed as the latest trajectory of human rights policies, and can also be thought in terms of establishing its principles through journalism practice when reporting human rights.

In his study of the media's role during the Rwanda genocide, Thompson suggests a 'responsibility to report' for journalists (2007). Although this author does not link this idea to the international policy perspective, this research draws on its normative concept as a basis of a moral responsibility for journalism regarding human rights. This idea is further elaborated in the following chapter, which questions journalism's role as a social actor regarding human rights.

This literature review draws upon this jurisdictional component of human rights policies to bring to light how these concepts can be applied (if they possibly can) to relate human rights policies and journalism. If there is a consciousness for *prevention* then the goal here is also to test it within journalism and its everyday routines. This investigation pays particular attention to decisions and editorial stands, and internal or external constraints that facilitate or complicate the social role of media regarding human rights. This research does not aim to discuss the accuracy of the normative aspects of human rights law; it represents an effort to contribute to a social sciences' study about the role of media as a social actor and a stakeholder for human rights.

The next section will analyse some recent ideas of contemporary sociology and political sciences to ground this research on a solid foundation. The thesis then moves on to advance an overview of the theoretical studies that have been conducted in the academic field of communication.

2.3 - Contemporary perspectives on human rights: contributions of sociology and political science

The field of human rights has been the object of inquiry in International Relations and Law, addressing its normative evolution. Despite these areas' historical commitment to studying human rights, the disciplines within the social sciences are suitable to analyse a series of case studies and reach key conclusions that can also contribute to this aim.

Based on previous debates about the possibility of including social sciences' tools in the study of human rights (MacIntyre, 1971, McCamant, 1981, Freeman, 2001), Landman suggests a *social science of human rights*, which would 'expand our knowledge about the social, economic, and political conditions within which the promotion and protection of human rights is made possible and over which significant struggles for human rights are fought' (2006:1). For this author, there are observable and unobservable human rights practices, as well as an infinite variety of events, actors, interests, structures, social features and outcomes that may have direct or indirect impacts on the promotion and protection of human rights, and both are equally subjectable to social scientific analysis.

Since the adoption of the UDHR, human rights have been enshrined in various documents and have been internationally adopted and ratified. These texts have inspired numerous constitutions of democratic countries, as well as the creation of international instances and courts to promote human rights and prevent violations. Nonetheless, although many institutions and writers seem content to 'do human rights' from a purely legal perspective, the field of human rights is an inherently multidisciplinary subject area. According to Meckled-Garcia and Çali, 'the extra-legal bases, sources of interpretation, sociological pre-requisites, and consequences of human rights aims are an inherent aspect of our understanding of the development of the implementation of that ideal in social relations' (2006:ix). This thesis aims to be part of this multidisciplinary approach to human rights, exploring those extra-legal bases and roles that social actors such as journalists have to offer to a broader comprehension of human rights. Human rights laws are 'mediated through different cultural

understandings and structural contexts, all of which are susceptible to systematic social science analysis' (Landman, 2006:140). The 'mediation', this research supports, can also be achieved through the media, and here lies the possibility for media studies to add valuable insights to the understanding of human rights. In this sense, one may argue that the media are one of the vehicles of human rights ideas and values, by operating through different cultural understandings on one hand, and by contributing for the prevalence of these same cultural understandings, on the other hand.

Considering the above, many of the ideas that have been debated by contemporary theorists provide fundamental contributions to a focused discussion about the role of media and journalism with regard to human rights. In a wider scope these theories address the aforementioned debate surrounding international policy on human rights. They treat notions of 'social responsibility' towards human rights, the transformations of the notion of national sovereignty and the construction of a 'cosmopolitan society', to mention some examples. From contemporary sociology, this thesis borrows concepts and theories that would help to sustain a solid reflection over modernity. Political sciences, in addition, provide valuable grounding on human rights policy. From here, the thesis narrows down to key ideas that concern the media and its role regarding society and consequently its contribution regarding human rights.

Among innumerable writings, Zygmunt Bauman, Polish sociologist and ideologist, has sought to answer questions concerning the 'human consequences' of social development. Bauman explores the transformation of modernity and its repercussions on human life, and more relevant for this research, he theorises about ethics and morality. Bauman understands morality as an individually or a personally felt responsibility based on an inherent and pre-societal moral impulse (1993). In this sense morality cannot be legislated under universal and all-encompassing principles (Jacobsen and Poder, 2008:9). Instead, he challengingly affirmed morality as a matter of personal choice and personal sacrifice in contingent circumstances. It seems that Bauman distances his theory from the principles that justify the legal protection of human rights,

and somehow approximates the Kantian moral philosophy of a *categorical imperative*⁸ and moral sacrifice. What is important to underline here is how Bauman links morality with the idea of responsibility, which international human rights law has been trying to consolidate. Despite this, there has been an apparent shift in Bauman's work in recent years, which has led to a support for global cosmopolitan law and politics (Crone, 2008). In the last 40 to 50 years, society has moved from what Bauman refers to as the solid *stage of modernity* to the *liquid stage of modernity* (2000, 2007). The metaphor is used to highlight that a liquid is a substance that cannot keep its shape for long. This has meant a revolutionary change in society, the consequences of which are not yet fully known – they still lie in the future. For the first time in history, he believes, we are confronted with change as a permanent condition of human life.

Bauman explores the idea of 'emancipation' (the ability to reflect by having our own thoughts) and personal responsibility (to take the responsibility for the consequences of our reflection of our choices) as essential precepts of 'liquid modernity'. Living in a 'liquid' modern world, he suggests, implies three conditions: uncertainty; continuous risk which we try to calculate but which in principle is not fully calculable, as there are always surprises; and the need to act under the conditions of shifting trust (2000, 2007).

Bauman's thoughts on globalisation may also contribute to a wider debate on human rights and the media, which is relevant to the theoretical writings that underpin this research. In his social analysis, Bauman mentions the role of the media in portraying the bright side of globalisation, and ignoring its devastating consequences. This fact contributes to the prevalence of a false optimism produced by the powerful stockholders of globalisation. Bauman refers to a state of 'social blindness' to the harsh reality of an uncertain and restless life that is characterized by 'progressive spatial segregation, separation and exclusion' (*ibidem*). Bauman relates globalisation with his wider theoretical model of 'liquid modernity' and underlines the prevalence of fear and insecurity at both the macro and micro-levels of 'liquid life' (Davis, 2008).

⁸ Central in the Kantian formulation of moral philosophy, the categorical imperative was first introduced in his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

Coupled with Bauman's assertions about modernity, Beck coined the term *risk society*, which characterises modernity based on the feeling of uncertainty and living under continuous risk, and provides his own conception of a *world risk society* (1992). Although neither author specifically addresses human rights, their conceptions of modernity affirms the notion of *cosmopolitanism*, which is more pertinent from a human rights perspective. According to Beck, being at *global risk* is the human condition at the beginning of the 21st century (*ibidem*). He describes modern society as a *risk society*, which is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it has produced. This is an inescapable structural condition of advanced industrialization (*ibidem*) with consequences for the environment and for conflict-surrounded societies.

For Beck, risk presupposes human decisions, which are partly positive and partly negative consequences of earlier human decisions and interventions. This raises the question of social responsibility and accountability. Again, the idea of social responsibility and the innovative suggestion of accountability address the essential ideas behind the conception of human rights. Moreover, his ideas around cosmopolitanism are pertinently connected to the affirmation of a human rights culture. Beck argues that modern societies have their foundations shaken by the global anticipation of global catastrophes. The exact consequences or timing of the risk are often unknown, and the people who live under the constant threat of these uncertainties rely on matters of control and security. Given these conditions, Beck claims that we are now living a *cosmopolitan moment* (2006, 2008), and the anticipated state of emergency is no longer national but cosmopolitan. Political action is taken on behalf of endangered humanity and becomes a resource for consensus and legitimation, nationally and internationally. The permanent threat of risk creates a '*global community of fate*', that changes the conception of the traditional idea of the 'nation-state'. Beck calls it an involuntary *enforced enlightenment/enforced cosmopolitanisation*: we are all trapped in a shared global space of threats. Global risks open up a moral and political space that gives rise to a civil culture of responsibility that transcends borders and conflicts. The term 'responsibility' here is taken as something that is necessarily enforced, as an inevitable condition of human existence, where only in the unavoidable context of risk and uncertainty are individuals seen as responsible within a community.

From a human rights perspective this is a rather pessimistic conception of community and social responsibility. The great effort of international human rights law

throughout the years has been to conceive of human rights as a set of rights intrinsically based on all human beings as equal, independent from the conditions and contexts that surround them. However, through this sociological point of view Beck describes society and community as being united by risk and threat, but the threat is global, and extrapolates the notions of borders or national conflicts. Even though the sense of community and responsibility means, according to Beck's writings, the burden of the permanent threat, the terms are also all-encompassing, global, the product of human decisions and affecting all humans.

In the context of this research and its focus on journalism and human rights it is essential to approach Beck's formulations about the increased prominence of media in society today. More recently, Beck has addressed the potential of the mass media to aggravate hysteria and a politics of fear, but also lends the underprivileged, the marginalized and minorities a voice through representations of danger. This enforced enlightenment, for the German sociologist, is a 'sign of new beginnings' (Beck, 2008) – 'the greater the mass media projected omnipresence of the threat, the greater the boundary-breaching political force of risk perception' (*ibidem*). However, the power of risk perception works only for a short time because everything depends on media perception, Beck argues, as the legitimisation of global political activity in the light of global risks goes only as far as mass media awareness.

A more incisive argument about the role of the media within the rise of a cosmopolitan society, is presented by political scientist and philosopher Seyla Benhabib who argues that media have the ability to promote public argument and deliberation, along with legislative, judiciary and executive bodies (2007:31). This role is part of what she believes to be a transformation of citizenship, which is now becoming *cosmopolitan* through the development of human rights, especially within Europe (2007, 2009). For her, human rights are no longer just moral norms; they are *developing into positive binding laws* on states. She suggests that the *democratic iterations* of cosmopolitan norms of human rights within democratic societies are altering national law in conformity with universal principles of international human rights. A *democratic iteration* involves complex processes of public argument and deliberation, and exchanges through which universalist rights claims and principles are contested and contextualized (Benhabib, 2009:698). Furthermore, she argues that these iterations can

take place in 'strong' public bodies of legislatures, the judiciary and the executive, as well as in the informal and 'weak' publics of civil society associations and the media (2007: 31). According to Benhabib, through their articulation in state and civil society, democratic iterations of human rights create a *cosmopolitan political community* which finds itself to be 'not only the *subject* but also the *author of the laws*' (2007: 32).

The broader explanations of today's modernity, and the transformations of citizenship and justice, all point to more developed notions of community and deliberation. From here, the next section will extend this debate, exploring the theoretical suggestion of a global public sphere in which the media operate today. The next section will therefore explore the media's deliberative potential in this context.

2.4 - Human rights as a social ethic: the role(s) of media in a global context

The 'time-space distancing', as outlined in section 2.2, is a key aspect of sociological understanding of globalisation (Giddens, 1990, Harvey, 1990, Beck, 1992). The argument is that the relationship between time and space has been radically altered by globalisation. Time has been shortened to a level of instantaneity and much of social life can now be conducted at the speed of the electronic signal (Davis, 2008:138); on the other hand space has shrunk and people from different parts of the world are able to share common experiences of global events.

Such conditions have altered and intensified worldwide social-relations (Giddens, 1990) and also have repercussions for public sphere theories, which have been debated and reformulated in media studies scholarship. The memorable Habermasian characterisation of the public sphere has been reviewed and is now variously deemed obsolete or at least inadequate. Global changes have come to rearrange the relations between individuals and nations in such ways that the Westphalian model of a public sphere, as Jürgen Habermas formulated it in 1962, where communication flows within a nation or a state is no longer accurate. From this perspective Nancy Fraser proposes a revision of the theory of the public sphere in light of a new global context. She outlines the *transnational character of the public sphere* (2005, 2005b, 2007), which is a result of

globalisation, and which increasingly makes discursive arenas overflow from the boundaries of both nation and states. For Fraser, the existence of a transnational public sphere allows the reconstruction of democratic theory in the current post-national constellation. Today, she argues, that the Habermasian model is not operational, because the global reality shows that it is not only within the states that the issues of injustice are addressed. It is necessary to rethink the public sphere which is now running, ideally, across national borders.

Nevertheless, Fraser writes, this idea raises a theoretical problem that implies not only the potential of the public sphere to understand empirical communication flows, but also concerns the extent to which the term contributes to a normative political theory of democracy. According to Fraser,

‘(...) a public sphere is supposed to be a vehicle for mobilizing public opinion as a political force. It should empower the citizenry vis-à-vis private powers and permit it to exercise influence over the state. Thus, a public-sphere is supposed to correlate with a sovereign power, to which its communications are ultimately addressed. Together, these two ideas –the validity of public opinion and citizen empowerment vis-à-vis the state–are essential to the concept of the public sphere in democratic theory. Without them, the concept loses its critical force and its political point.’ (2005:1)

It is arguable then, as Fraser points out, that these two features are less likely to be associated with the discursive arenas of a *transnational public sphere*. However, the term should not be jettisoned for these reasons. Instead, the critical theory of the public sphere should be reformulated to emphasise the ‘emancipatory possibilities’ of the present ‘post-national constellation’. The reformulation of the traditional public sphere also involves re-thinking sovereignty, and questioning the territorially defined nation-state.

Regarding the media, Fraser describes a scenario where a profusion of niche media is simultaneously subnational and transnational and needs to be considered. At the same time, there is the growth in the concentration of media ownership by transnational corporations, ‘which despite their tremendous reach, are by no means focused on checking transnational power’ (2005:5). On the other hand, the most developed electronic means, broadband and satellite information technologies, have reconfigured this transnational scenario for communication, and signal the ‘denationalization of the communicative infrastructure’ (*ibidem*). However, as the author clarifies, this

transnational set could result in antagonisms, such as the disaggregation and increasing complexity of communicative flows.

When trying to reframe justice in a globalised world, Fraser suggests the '*all affected principle*' (2005b: 82) where we should be pushing towards the institutionalization of a transnational sphere to which people might appeal. This proposition is obviously interesting from a human rights perspective. It is basically a formulation that promotes transnational ethics, so that each individual may formulate political criticism, interventions and movements beyond national considerations. Habermas' theoretical formulation of the public sphere is based on a territorial political imaginary, and the framework for a political community is limited by the nation state which is tacitly assumed. The idea of a post-Westphalian framework of the public sphere, associated with globalisation, allows us to reconsider the critical theory of public sphere to show the emancipatory possibilities of the current constellation.

In an effort to consider the relationship between journalism and human rights, this research assumes the possibility of a global arena for communications, even though the efficiency or the implementation of such global public sphere remains questionable. This research is also interested in testing the role of media in contributing to this global sphere, and their ability to create a global public with a sense of social responsibility in relation to the 'other' and to human rights.

The chance for a global public sphere is, to a large extent, possible thanks to a new media infrastructure which allows an 'eyewitness view of events taking place in worldwide locations' (Volkmer, 2003), and therefore is informed about issues of global, regional and local relevance. For Volkmer, the potential and effects of technological paraphernalia, global processes that are becoming increasingly autonomous from nation-states, are beginning to shape a 'politically relevant global public sphere'. In her work, Volkmer outlines the role of transnational media organizations as the starting point for a new concept of 'foreign' political news in the context of a new idea of 'global' communication (1999, 2003). Today's transnational news flow enters directly the 'life-world' arena, via a globalized satellite system and increased cable bandwidth of cable and other access technologies. Consequently, Volkmer argues, that this allows the

presence of *dialectical spaces* that increasingly impact on public participation, notions of political identity and ‘citizenship’, and the agenda of political journalism as well as the formatting of ‘news’ within the global public sphere.

The debate around the global potential of news will be further developed in chapter 4 and tested in the empirical chapters of this thesis. Nonetheless, assuming the idea that new dialectical spaces for public participation are created, the step further would be to consider the limitations of global representation, i.e. as Shaw⁹ puts it, ‘the conditions under which the voices of the most oppressed, struggling and victimised sections of human society are able to be heard in global politics’ (1999:214). A global theory of society, increasingly popular in International Relations literature, refers not only to the limitations of representation, but also to the development of civil society and the global state to allow more voices to be heard and to be effective. Here lies an opportunity for the media to consider their own role in civil society, and how far they enable people’s voices to be represented, since they are central institutions of contemporary society in general, and of its global forms in particular (*Ibidem*).

The media’s role in society is equally connected to processes of social learning. The promise of human rights is intrinsic in this social learning that, in turn, contributes to the foundations of a social ethic, a ‘global social ethic’, or a ‘human rights ethic’, built historically (Peterson, 2009). Peterson focuses his writing on the role of social movements in forging new identities and reciprocities along with normative claims proper to a global public sphere. In this sense, the media could also be seen as agents that contribute to this social learning continuous process. For Peterson, and drawing on the Hegelian idea of history as a learning process, social movements are political experiences that inform past and future interpretations of the events (2009:253-254). This idea outlines a historical dimension of human rights understood as a social ethic.

What the present research stands for, and based on the ideas expressed across this chapter, is that the media may endow and contribute to this social ethic. Therefore, the

⁹ Martin Shaw refers here to the Gramscian perspective of civil society, which defines it not as ‘society minus the state’ in the classical sense of Smith, Hegel or Marx, centred in economic relations, but as a sphere of association between economy and state.

ways that the media may do so need to be scrutinized, since this could lead to different responses to human rights. Furthermore, if human rights depend, as Peterson argues, on a process of social learning, this same process should focus 'not only on avoiding violence but on finding alternatives that are rooted in reconstructions of the social relations presently constituted in part by violence' (2009:261). Following this suggestion, this thesis explores possible alternatives, and particularly the ones that could be engrained in media practices while covering human rights issues.

2.5 - Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the intricacies and multidisciplinary complexity surrounding the concept of human rights, and introduced the possible connection and role of the media in reporting it. The first section presented the historical origins of the three generations of human rights, and the philosophical controversies that hide behind the enshrinement and application of a universal law. The second section explored how international law evolved towards the policy of prevention of human rights violations, and the creation of the principle of RtoP. From here the section advanced how this principle could be the relational basis of a responsibility to report for journalists. The third section of this chapter addressed contributions of contemporary sociology and political sciences, which introduced the concept of *cosmopolitanism* and its possible implications for the social role of journalism regarding human rights issues. Finally, the fourth section links these previously presented theories to the field of media studies, revising how technology and globalisation brought to light discourses of a global public sphere, and the promise of a global social ethic for human rights.

The following chapter delves deeper into the concepts advanced so far, narrowing them down and applying them specifically to the media and focusing on the relationship between journalism and human rights.

Chapter 3

Human Rights and Journalism: the high road or the road to nowhere

Chapter 2 presented the origins of human rights within its historical and legal debates, adding the epistemological contributions of contemporary sociology and political sciences. This multidisciplinary approach is essential for the definition of the concept of human rights, as well as to establish a connection to the debates around the role of the media with regards to human rights. In this chapter this connection is further discussed and the responsibility regarding human rights and the media is debated. This chapter is divided into three parts. Drawing upon previous studies about the media coverage of suffering, the first section questions the potential of the media to inspire the existence of a global moral space. The second section elaborates on the theoretical suggestion that there is a 'responsibility to report' human rights violations due to the failures in the past. Finally, the third section explores how journalism can be seen as both a promoter of human rights or used as a tool to incite violence and hatred. It also demonstrates how the rise of the Internet boosts both 'good' and 'bad' journalism.

3.1 - Moral responsibility of journalism

As argued in the previous chapter, this research aims to explore the relationship between human rights and journalism. This relationship should be examined by accepting the possibility of a global arena for communication that is mostly facilitated by a new array of media technology. However, the efficiency of a 'global public sphere' or a 'global public' remains unanswered. Regardless, the debate leads to discussion about the role of the media in contributing to this new global reality, and from a human rights perspective, to what extent the media are able to raise awareness and stimulate a sense of social relationship towards the 'other'. Contributing to the debate over the media's capacity to construct a moral order, Roger Silverstone, in his book *Media and Morality* (2007), coined the phrase *mediapolis* when referring to the social, civic and moral space provided by the media. Detaching his work from a media-centric perspective Silverstone regarded the media as the primary framework for people's understanding of the world,

which is intertwined with everyday life. In this sense, the media construct different understandings of the world, and contribute to the construction of morality, by providing the frameworks for the appearance and the perception of the other. For him, this is the space where the others appeal to the audience, and at the same time, invite, claim or constrain the audience's moral response as citizens (2007:7). Moreover, the world's media are an increasingly significant site for the construction of a moral order corresponding at a scale of global interdependence, insofar as they provide the symbolic connection with the other, who is a 'distant other'. This distance, he argues, is geographical, historical, and sociological, and is shortened by the media, which are now contributing to the consolidation of the idea of the 'global citizen' (2007:8).

This theoretical perspective stands out as relevant for reflecting on the media and its role with regard to human rights. If the media reduces the distance between 'us' and the 'distant others' it works to increase the awareness of the fundamental rights of 'ours' or of 'theirs'. Drawing on the aforementioned notion of *cosmopolitanism* by Beck, which sees individuals as rooted in *one* cosmos but in different territories, ethnicities, hierarchies, nations, and religions (2003:12), Silverstone also underlines the importance of the media in this context. This *mediapolis* is seen as both an empirical and normative term in which relations between the self and others are conducted in a global public sphere (2007:22). In this sense, and drawing upon Silverstone's *mediapolis*, this thesis addresses the possibility for an appearance of human rights principles not only within media's content, but to be considered within news workers' professional conduct, practices and choices. If, as Silverstone argues, visibility raises awareness, consequently, considering these issues may bring up a sense of responsibility that human rights can use for its benefit (2007:26).

Notwithstanding this 'space of appearance' at a *mediapolis*, the line between seeing and taking action is not necessarily clear. This mediation of the world (and the mediation of human rights) requires participation and engagement, and requires 'us' (audiences and journalists) to take responsibility for one's part in the process. The space of appearance allows not only reciprocity towards the other, but also a duty of care and understanding, within a *proper distance* that preserves the difference, but also creates a shared identity (2007:47). The construction of such relationships in contemporary culture is intensely dependent on the media who, many of the times fail in this respect. Therefore, Silverstone's *mediapolis* is both a reality and an ambition, whose members

will need to learn, live with and understand each other rather more responsibly, which is unlikely to happen without communication (2007:186).

Scholars have been interested on the effects of the media in the establishment of a connection between the 'distant' other and the audiences, or spectators. Two opposing standpoints claim that the media either engage the audiences in a *global compassion* or, on the contrary, provoke a spectator's *compassion fatigue*. On one hand, some claim that the media expose pictures of distant victims of civil wars, genocide, massacres and other violence against civilian populations, and play a basic role in publicizing human suffering, which the audience is expected to respond to as good citizens with compassion and rational commitment (Hoijer, 2004:513). These dynamics developed and extended a 'global discourse of compassion' that frames the understandings of violence and world conflicts. This global compassion is considered to be morally correct in the striving for a cosmopolitan democracy, and where crimes against humanity and human rights violations are condemned by the international community (*ibidem*). Through the media, and especially through the moving images of television, people have become aware of the suffering of remote others and are challenged to include strangers in their moral consciousness. In this sense, compassion is dependent on visuals, on ideal victims' images¹⁰ (Moeller, 1999; Hoijer, 2004), as 'through extensive media coverage, images of distant suffering have become part of ordinary citizens' perceptions of conflicts and crises in the world' (Hoijer, 2004:514). On more empirical grounds the media studies coined the 'CNN effect', and argued that transmitting tormenting scenes of human suffering may trigger changes in the foreign policy, prompting humanitarian and military intervention (see Shaw, 1999; Robinson, 2000, 2002). The CNN effect possibly descends from the suggestion of a 'Vietnam War syndrome' (Cottle, 2009), which claimed that the contact with scenes of carnage shattered public opinion, pressuring the government to end the war. This was later refuted as being a myth (Hallin, 1986), and the 'CNN effect' has also been contested (Jacobsen, 2000; Hawkins, 2002).

¹⁰ According to Hoijer, the audiences accept the dominant victim code of the media and regard children, woman and the elderly as 'ideal victims deserving compassion'. A child, she adds, is the most ideal victim in the perspective of compassion: 'When a child shows his/her feelings by crying or looking sad, we may feel pity both through our own memory of being open and vulnerable to the treachery of adulthood, and in terms of our adult identity – our desire to protect the child. When the child stares into the photographer's camera she or he may be perceived as looking directly at you as an audience, reminding you of her or his vulnerability and innocence' (2004:522).

Using the media as an intermediary between audiences and human suffering has also inspired more pessimistic theories concerning the ethical role of mediation. Moeller developed the concept of *compassion fatigue* (1999), by drawing on her findings about the coverage of famine in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, as well as atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda, and its effects on the American public. She claims that this fatigue is an unacknowledged cause of much of the failure of international reporting today, causing the public's short attention span and boredom with international news (1999:2). This is driven by news editors' need to appeal to audiences; Moeller argues that such media narratives provoke an overload of images, normalizing of suffering and numbing the audience. Compassion fatigue means getting used to bad news and developing a reluctance or inability to respond to demands for help (Cohen, 2001:191). Similarly, Tester refers to the *anaesthetic effect* of the media (1994) created by overwhelming war coverage, which jeopardises international news and provokes the public's apathy. Rather than compassion fatigue, Cohen suggests a *media fatigue*, especially under a humanitarian workers' perspective, suggesting that the problem lies in the media's framework of reporting, rather the public's capacity to keep absorbing (2001:193).

Whether it is compassion or media fatigue, the heterogeneity among the people with different social and cultural experiences, interests and social backgrounds reminds communication theory that different audiences need to be addressed. In his later writings Tester recognized that compassion fatigue is not about the spectator's individualism or indifference, but may be directly connected to the ways in which news messages portray distant suffering (2001:47). In turn, Hoijer advances some empirical research that 'opposes or strongly modulates the thesis about a pronounced compassion fatigue among people in general' (2004:528). She comes to the conclusion that compassion fatigue is only one side of the coin, and different types of compassion can be determined by variants such as gender. This reveals that a female audience, for example, is generally more sensitive to news about violence against people (2004:528-529). Therefore the audience should not be idealized, as Hoijer argues, believing that compassion and engagement depend only on people's exposure to humanitarian disasters; neither should we believe that the unavoidable consequence of such exposure is cynicism and compassion fatigue. The media, she argues, 'are not good Samaritans

wanting to help the world, nor are they totally corrupted cynical and commercial agents who exploit and sell human suffering' (*ibidem*).

The same weighted reflection should be applied when considering the media's role when covering human suffering, and involve contemplating different media systems, different news policies and different news journalists. From this perspective of changeable coverage of human suffering this research explores the elements that could contribute to these differences. As previously discussed, although this thesis does not focus on different audience's reactions and responses, studies regarding audience's reactions are explored in order to better understand how the public's reactions could influence journalists' decisions to cover something in a certain way. This research is indeed concerned in observing the production stage of the news, as well as journalists' choices and motivations, in order to address how human rights are or are not considered in and within the news.

For this purpose, Chouliaraki's *Spectatorship of Suffering* (2006) provides an essential empirical study to better understand the framing device of *proper distance*. This implies that media literacy for understanding, care and responsibility is verified by how different reporting leads to different audience's responses. Her work is an important step forward in the problematisation of 'the choices made when creating the news text concerning how the sufferer is portrayed on screen and how the scene of suffering is narrated' (2006:3). She questions the relationship between those who suffer daily violations of their fundamental rights and viewers from very different backgrounds whose only means of awareness are images of suffering broadcast by television. Chouliaraki raises the issue of media ethics in public life arguing that little is known about the role of media in shaping the ethical sensitivity of viewers that extends beyond their own neighbourhoods. The author points out the exceptional case of the 2004 tsunami in Asia, where the response of the international community towards the suffering was unprecedented. The global news coverage enabled the world to watch human tragedy, and produced feelings of suffering and loss. The victims of the tsunami came from forty different nations, many from Western countries. This response, says Chouliaraki, revealed something important about the spectacle of suffering in the media. Witnessing this tragic event and the resulting devastation evoked the emotion and a sense of responsibility and concern for the distant sufferer. The tsunami, as well as 9/11,

allowed the West not only to observe, but also to experience suffering, and bridged the gap between viewers and sufferers. This study presents a concern about uncovering what the conditions are for the media to establish an ideal identity for the viewer as a citizen of the world, a condition imposed by global cosmopolitanism.

Drawing on Luc Boltanski's (1999) exploration of Hannah Arendt's concept of *politics of pity*, and applying it in a journalistic context, Chouliaraki reflects on the media's capacity to establish a disposition of care for, and engage with the far away *Other*, or the 'distant sufferer'. Boltanski examined the possibilities and difficulties of establishing a commitment to distant suffering and argued that when confronted with suffering, ethics demands individuals to converge on a moral imperative for action. However, this leads to the question: what kinds of commitment to action do those that are confronted with distant suffering have whilst sitting comfortably watching television? Boltanski suggests that each one can commit through the act of speech, by adopting a position or opinion, and possibly forwarding a view formulated from the information seen on television. The spectator, through this act of speech ends up transmitting not only what they have seen, but also what affected them personally. Departing from this speculative debate, Chouliaraki engaged an approach that demonstrates the complexity of news media and its particularities. Through different types of news, particularly television news, the author established a distinction between the three degrees of pity that news provokes. The first type, *adventure news*, mostly refers to a descriptive and factual narrative about one image, signalling where the event took place: the management of visibility involves the use of maps with dots on the relevant sites. Chouliaraki call it 'dots-on-maps' news (2006:101) which represents suffering in geographical terms, casting it in the abstract and decontextualised mode of cartography. These can also be graphics or satellite images of a tragedy. There is also a lack of agency that dehumanizes sufferers and suppresses the possibility of action in the scene of suffering (2006:98). These involve no living context of the suffering, no people, no action and no emotions. The absences of such elements correspond to choices (not intentional but institutional and routine choices) over where, when, and with whom the suffering is shown to occur. At the same time these are choices of a disposition to action: in this case, do nothing, care not. The geographical distance is coupled onto another kind of distance, an emotional and moral distance between 'us' and those distant sufferers (2006:97-117). In such news, even if there is some visualisation of the scene of suffering

involved (like the satellite image of a flood), the long shot creates an aesthetic distance from the lived reality. The minimal narration of suffering turns the image into a scenario that could be anytime and anywhere, not inviting any engagement, rather a distant contemplation of the spectacle of suffering. In the second type of news, *emergency news*, representations of suffering produce pity; they radically re-articulate the multimodality, space-time and agency of mediation and, in so doing, offer the option for action on distant suffering that adventure news denies to the spectator. The management of visibility is organized around a series of images of people (starving children, illegal immigrants, refugees, etc.), suffering, crying, or lying in hospital beds, for example. According to Chouliaraki, there is agency and a sense of humanness in the visibility of these sufferers: they raise a significant appellative force that invites the spectator to 'do something' and the sense that 'more needs to be done' (2006:118-156). The third and last type of news, *ecstatic news*, is news with reflexivity, identification and politics. These news reports on events that 'are so extraordinary that they cannot be contained in an ordinary news broadcast' (2006:157). The most evident example of this kind of news is 9/11: images like those represent exceptional stories which include a rich verbal and visual narrative and aesthetically complex presentations. The engagement with the sufferer is active and sustained. Chouliaraki calls it *ecstatic news*, since this type of news breaks with our ordinary conception of time, presenting us with historical moments, where a minute lasts a lifetime. In terms of news conventions this means a move from broadcast to live footage, an uninterrupted flow of images and stories with various degrees of emotional power, constant updates, threads following debates, opinions and reactions, all with the sense of the 'here and now' (2006:157-181). The spectators 'reflexively share with the sufferers the same humanity, the same threat and, potentially, the same destiny' (2006:181).

Chouliaraki's differentiation of news is a useful departing point for this research's data analysis, which builds upon these categories in order to distinguish types of news. However, it is taken from a human rights perspective to help to understand the news texts that reach our living rooms. This research is interested in elaborating a distinctive approach, and draws attention to the news production stage of the news, looking at both media institutions and journalism professionals. This aim involves close observation of journalism practices and routines and engages with the debate around ethics and sociology of journalism, and will be further elaborated in Chapter 4.

Before advancing to that discussion, the next section will discuss the media 'responsibility' towards human rights, building upon the theories explored in the previous chapter, which examined recent human rights law discussion and tendencies, namely the notion and the affirmation of a 'responsibility' towards the 'other', with the media as an arena for morality.

3.2 - A Responsibility to Report?

The previous chapter discussed how atrocities in the past impelled the international community to rethink human rights policies oriented towards a tendency of prevention. *Responsibility to protect* (RtoP) is a set of norms for international law adopted in 2005 that sets each individual state as the holder of the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and determines the circumstances in which international the community should intervene in case of a state's failure. International law (including RtoP) has been, however, vague about the specific role of the media and its potential to prevent human rights violations. Nevertheless, it may be argued that it is necessary to isolate this aspect and acknowledge that media's interpretive representations of violent events have a powerful impact, as the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict's final report¹¹ recognizes. This report, written more than fifteen years ago, addresses a whole set of recommendations to the media. Since the international view of conflicts has come to depend on the media, the report recognises that the media can stimulate new ideas and approaches to problems by involving independent experts in their presentations who can also help ensure accurate reporting. Among its recommendations, the report suggests that 'major networks should develop ways to expose publics to the circumstances and issues that could give rise to mass violence through regular public service programming that focuses on individual hot spots', as well as reporting 'possibilities for conflict resolution, and on the willingness and capacity of the international community to help' (1997:xxxix).

¹¹ Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1997), *Preventing Deadly Conflict*, Carnegie Corporation of New York, pp xxxix and pp 105-127

Mostly inspired by the 'abysmal media failure' in Rwanda, Allan Thompson, scholar and former journalist suggests that there is a *responsibility to report* (2007:434) for journalists. Inspired by his experiences as a reporter during the Rwandan genocide, Thompson argues that this responsibility to report should be in line with the international community's adoption of safeguards for the protection of genocide and mass atrocities. He outlines that the document that defined the contours of a new perspective for human rights policy established a responsibility to protect but remained 'virtually silent on the role of the news media' (*ibidem*). The 'responsibility to report' would represent a 'new paradigm for journalists', as Thompson suggests, regarding individual journalists' behaviours. A useful exercise, he suggests, would be 'to design programmes to improve media standards, conduct media training and develop codes of conduct for journalists – behavioural rather than structural solutions' (2007:435). Thompson believes that there were few lessons that the media drew from the debacle of Rwanda. Instead, he argues, history continues to repeat itself, and stories like Rwanda continue to be downplayed as the international news media devote less and less attention to foreign affairs (2007:436).

The media failure in Rwanda has been strongly debated and affirmed in academic debates. This example has been mirrored in the media coverage in Darfur, a situation blatantly similar to the Rwandan situation a decade earlier. However, research also shows that it is not just the media who should be blamed. Sidahmed, Soderlund and Briggs question the media's capacity to compel international intervention. The fundamental question in their research is if the outcome would have been different had the media mounted a more concerted campaign for immediate international action (2010:108). For them, the answer to this question is 'no': 'media messages can and do result in public pressure on governments, but governments are not slaves to such pressure either' (*ibidem*). The authors analysed major U.S. broadcast and newspaper coverage of the Darfur crisis uncovering whether or not there was a direct connection between the media coverage and the international community's response, and RtoP doctrine to what has been called 'the first genocide of the 21st century'. The authors argue that the virtual connection between the two is important, not only in the case of Darfur, but also to future similar situations. The analysis concluded that the coverage of Darfur was scarce and slow to develop; furthermore, the RtoP doctrine was never specifically mentioned in television news or in the analysed print media (2010:102). For

the authors, 'data from neither television nor newspaper treatment of the Darfur horror story provide solid evidence that the media can be held responsible for the slow and tentative response of the international community' (2010:102).

Considering these conclusions, although the RtoP concept filled the international community's agendas regarding Darfur, the debate on its application (and the reactions on the decision of non-intervention) was not visible or inspired media coverage. This fact brings to light the possibility of this legal concept to be too abstract or technical, and therefore only appealing to politicians, diplomats or human rights activists. However, for this research, more pertinent than questioning the achievability of the set of norms¹² is to inquire about whether the background philosophy of 'responsibility' is somehow inspiring or influencing journalists' perspectives and news decisions towards human rights topics.

In other words, as human rights policy, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is now claiming and asserting the idea of 'responsibility' towards the other, for the purposes of this research it is important to also reflect upon the possibility to 'export' this idea to a 'responsibility to report'. Before the formalisation of the RtoP doctrine and its probable inspiration for media's roles regarding human rights, the discipline of Law also predicts the concept of *legitimate expectation*¹³, which refers to the applications of the principles of fairness and reasonableness to the situation where a person has an expectation or interest in a public body retaining a long-standing practice or keeping a promise. In other words, this is a procedural term in law, but it stands that people develop 'legitimate expectations' regarding public institutions, which is based on the institution's durable procedure or principles that it defends. Regarding journalism and its profession's codes of conduct and editorial values displays an understanding that citizens nurture an expectation that the media will show them 'what's wrong' and somehow expose violations and the perpetrators. In this sense the public presupposes an ethic for the media based on the principles of universal rights; and this expectation is

¹² Yet, the coverage of human rights policy and debate was taken into account in design of the coding structure of the news sample explored in Chapter 6, as well as in the in-depth interviews conducted for this thesis.

¹³ In English law the concept of 'legitimate expectation' arises from administrative law, a branch of public law.

intrinsically engrained on public perceptions of the role of the media, despite arguments about disappointment and distrust in the media (see, for example, McChesney, 1999; Olesen, 2005; Golding, Sousa and Van Zoonen, 2012).

Notwithstanding the so-called media failure in Rwanda and Darfur, different types of events provoke different reactions in the media. Research shows that on certain occasions the sense of 'responsibility' towards the other is intensified through media outputs, which increases and boosts the appeal for awareness and help. A popular example of this is the coverage of the tsunami in South East Asia in 2004, which generated more column inches in six weeks than the world's top ten 'forgotten' emergencies combined over the previous year (IFRC 2005, in Thompson, 2007). Even though, in light of international law, natural disasters such as the tsunami are not considered to be an object for the RtoP principles, despite attempts to invoke them¹⁴, the sense of responsibility and urgency to act seems to become more evident to media coverage, and the media may act as humanitarian actors. For Thompson, the reasons for a media reaction like during the tsunami coverage lies in the 'simplicity' of an event such as a disaster. This does not invoke the intricate political background of a conflict or war; yet natural disasters, even when they take place in a remote area of the world can easily affect citizens from the West, bringing to light the 'proximity' criteria for the news. This affirmation brings up the need to discuss how different news values inspire different reporting, as will be further developed in Chapter 4, as well as in the second part of this thesis when presenting the empirical findings of the case study.

The proposal of a 'responsibility to report' in this research as a new journalism paradigm is considered as a possible normative grounding for the role of the media regarding human rights. However, this hypothesis leads to another question: as in international law, where RtoP is often undermined by its own rules, and results in a slow process of decision making when decisions are seen as urgent, and where many voices need to reach a consensus, so the 'responsibility to report' can suffer from the same symptoms and constraints. Decisions often need to happen in reduced timeframes when

¹⁴ When cyclone Nargis ravaged Myanmar in 2008, France and some NGO advocates invoked the RtoP principle. Such claims were rejected by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, UK, UN officials, arguing that RtoP does not apply to natural disasters (Bellamy, 2010:151).

covering sensitive topics, and the more sensitive and urgent they are the more they need to be debated in order to reach an editorial consensus. Coverage may also be determined by the availability of production resources, as well as other elements. This research aims therefore to question the news as a whole process, as well as journalists' behaviours according to different factors whether they are external or internal, as will be explored in section 3.4 and the following chapter.

3.3 - The good, the bad and the internet: journalism's different potentials regarding human rights

Journalism is an important tool to promote and protect human rights, but it can also trigger the exact opposite use. This section of the literature review aims to explore both sides and how different journalism praxis is able to lead to antagonistic results for human rights and for conflict resolution and prevention of human rights violations.

3.3.1 - The dark side of the media

Firstly, journalism is itself a human right. If this fact at first glance appears as an obvious assumption, annually updated data reveals that there are several countries (or a worrying majority) where no press freedom exists, or where there are noticeable problems with censorship. Only a few countries enjoy full conditions for free journalism practice¹⁵. Article 19 of the UDHR protects freedom of expression and the press¹⁶; yet, this is one of the most discussed fields of international human rights law. In fact, freedom of the press and media is a significant area of international regulatory activity, commonly thought of as central to the facilitation of human rights, universally recognized as forming the basis for the contestation and safeguarding of other rights

¹⁵ According *Reporters Without Borders'* press freedom index for 2013, Finland, Netherlands, and Norway, head the list of countries that gather good conditions for journalism practice, whereas the worst countries in the world for journalism practice are Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea. This data is available online (<http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html>)

¹⁶ Transcribed: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless frontiers" (Art.19 UDHR).

(Ignatieff, 2001; Joyce, 2010). This right is said to constitute 'one of the essential foundations of a democratic society, one of the basic conditions for its progress and for development'¹⁷, and encompasses two aspects: the right to express oneself and the right to seek and receive information. However, the reality, as previously mentioned, is quite different¹⁸, leading to a deeper questions and debate about democracy and public sphere.

On the other hand, there is no point in examining the media's potential to promote human rights values if the reverse potential of the media is not taken into account. Conventional media are two-faced with regards to human rights: if, on one side of the mask they can perform a crucial role as a social actor for human rights promotion and protection, on the reversed side, and perhaps even more efficiently, they are able to influence vulnerable societies inciting them to genocide, racism and violent acts. Therefore it is essential to consider the extreme opposite potential for instigating violence and hatred, and not only to focus on the largely optimistic account of the media's ability to promote human rights.

There are many documented cases of media being manipulated as a tool to inflame grievances and accelerate the escalation towards violent conflict. In the light of historical evidence, state radio and television are powerful weapons in the context of political crisis and instability, which is usually decided through unconventional means. The most vivid memories of hate media come from Rwanda, where *Radio Télévision Libre Des Milles Collines* was used to lay the groundwork for genocide; from Serbia, where television was used by former Yugoslav president Milosevic to stir ethnic tensions and reinforce his power; and from the former Soviet republic of Georgia, where territorial disputes were exacerbated by spreading nationalist mythology in the media. These cases happened in the 1990s, but more recently, hate media has been used as a tool to spread homophobic hatred in Uganda¹⁹ and the Ivory Coast²⁰, for example. This is the darker

¹⁷ This phrasing is commonly used in juridical language of EHRR (European Human Rights Reports) or ECHR's (European Court of Human Rights) resolutions, decisions and judgements that refer to cases involving freedom of the press.

¹⁸ According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 1003 journalists have been killed since 1992 because of their activities as journalists, and according to Reporters Without Borders, 182 journalists were imprisoned (numbers up to August 2013).

¹⁹ In 2010, Ugandan newspaper *Rolling Stone* published a list of photos, names and addresses of allegedly homosexual people, with the headline "Hang them". This provoked several violent acts, including the death of gay rights activist David Kato.

side of the media, and here the international legal efforts work to restrain its negative potential, seeing it as typically a tool of propaganda²¹. Currently, international law is unclear about the mechanisms to take action upon hate media and in human rights studies, media/information intervention is a relatively novel concept (Thompson and Price, 2002; Erni, 2009).

From an international relations strategy perspective, assuring and protecting free media during a conflict could be as effective as any other diplomatic channel. In diplomatic nomenclature the existence of 'open media' is considered as another principal indicator of the potential for effective political communication. Open media is seen as a variable when predicting conflict, and states where open media exists are less likely to initiate international conflicts with each other (Choi and James, 2007:41). Although there are a few studies in conflict-solving and strategy that have tested the possibility of the pacifying effect of media (*Ibidem*), theories of alternative forms journalism have been suggested in the field of political sciences and communication studies. These proposals will be explored in the following section of this review.

3.3.2 - Peace journalism and other alternatives: the high road is hard to find

Johan Galtung headed the emergence of a proposal for peace journalism, which highlighted the media's 'perverse fascination with war and violence', and suggested 'some fascination with peace' instead (1993: xi). For this Norwegian mathematician and sociologist, war journalism is comparable to sports journalism where what matters is 'who wins'. Instead, with peace journalism, he means to establish a parallel with health journalism, which enhances science and medicine's new findings and technologies, and also explores the possible contributing causes of diseases, in a way to find preventive measures and predict endemic outbreaks. However, differently from health journalism

²⁰ In 2004, national television and radio, under orders of President Gbagbo broadcasted fervent messages inciting anti-white violence. This was acknowledged by the UN, that demanded the authorities stopped the 'hate media' immediately.

²¹ Concepts of incitement and 'hate speech' reflect an attempt to link expression with its consequence (violent, and in extreme cases genocide). Conceptually, then, for international legal theory, incitement falls under the broader category of the abuse of rights (Joyce, 2010).

while covering war and conflict, the 'disease' perspective is revealed to be dominant. Galtung also defends peace as the 'high road', whereas journalism traditionally insists to walk the 'low road' portraying conflict as an antagonism of sides and valorising the final 'result':

'The *low road*, dominant in the media, sees a conflict as a battle, as a sports arena or gladiator circus. The parties, usually reduced to two, are combatants in a struggle to impose their goals. The reporting model is that of a military command: who advances, who capitulates short of their goals; losses are counted in terms of numbers killed or wounded and material damage. (...) The *high road*, the road of peace journalism, would focus on conflict transformation. (...) In conflict there is also a clear opportunity for human progress, using the conflict to find new ways, transforming the conflict creatively so that the opportunities take the upper hand – without violence' (Galtung, 1998).

For Galtung, this attempt to transform conflict creatively, focusing on non-violent outcomes and showing empathy with all parties would be more productive and most likely to bring peace (1998). Traditionally, mainstream journalism, he argues, values the antagonism 'us' versus 'them', usually referring 'them' as the threat, the problem, dehumanizing and exposing 'their' 'untruths'. It is a reactive journalism that waits for violence before reporting and focuses only on the visible effects of violence (the killed, wounded and material damage). Therefore, it is propaganda and elite oriented, interested in 'our' suffering and giving the names of the evildoers. For this traditional war journalism, peace exists when victory comes with a ceasefire. Opposed to this vision, peace journalism seeks for transparency in conflicts, giving a voice to all parties and therefore generating empathy and understanding. According to its defenders, peace journalism promotes humanization of all sides and prefers a proactive posture towards conflict, promoting prevention before any violence or war occurs. It focuses on the invisible effects of violence, such as trauma, and damage to structures or culture. Peace journalism's demand is to expose untruths on all sides, preferring a people-oriented approach, exposing the suffering, giving a voice to the voiceless, and making all evildoers accountable. Instead of focusing on victory, peace journalism cares for solutions and peaceful means. Finding non-violent solutions while using creativity and highlighting peace initiatives, is also presented as a way to prevent more war, making sure to observe the period of resolution and reconciliation in the aftermath of war (Galtung, in McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000).

For human rights' benefit, peace journalism could be considered a pertinent theoretical basis for shaping journalistic practices towards promoting human rights, but also acknowledging that media are only one of the stakeholders when it comes to human rights. A central argument here is that journalism holds a relevant role regarding human rights, but this should not mean that conflict resolution relies upon it. Far from ambitiously centralizing and trusting every conflict solution to the media, peace journalism advocates admit these contingencies and that, as Cottle claims, the suggestion is not 'based on hopelessly idealistic hopes for a conflict-free future. It recognizes the endemic and structural nature of many conflicts in the world but nonetheless seeks to identify and promote constructive responses: 'conflict+creativity', not 'conflict+violence' (2006:101).

Promoting constructive responses would imply, believes Galtung, the search for the truth, and a change in the discourse of violence, perpetuated by war journalism. The concept of 'truth', as it is here conceived, involves monitoring all sides, but it is questionable in the sense that 'truth', related to a conflict, is probably one of the most variable and subjective aspirations to be reached. There is an epistemological assumption that 'truth' is something that, once reported will be accepted as such (truthful) by every party involved. If, on the one hand, the idea of seeking to report the 'truth' is presented by peace journalism as something that should be accepted as dogma, a higher goal to be pursued, on the other hand, this same concept is relegated to a second plan, when it comes to realising that the real victim of war is peace (Galtung, 1998).

Peace is then the ultimate ambition for peace journalism, and this could be considered as a more favourable demand from a human rights perspective. In fact, reporting the 'truth' in human rights news would be dependent on several surrounding aspects: human rights, as with law in general, is always subject to contest, and generates a clash of rights that most of the times need a much more intricate trial than the one offered by the media as judge. The word 'peace' is therefore more encompassing and adjustable from a human rights perspective. Here lies one of the strengths of the peace journalism proposal. When it regards human rights peace journalism is a 'journalism of attachment' (Galtung, 1998) to all actual and potential victims, while war journalism attaches only to 'our' side. Here, peace journalism has a humanitarian component that is

also embedded in human rights philosophy: everybody is seen as equal. Therefore peace journalism, in essence, may orient journalists towards a human rights perspective while covering war and conflict. Nonetheless, according to Galtung, embracing peace journalism must not be mistaken for peace advocacy (*ibidem*).

In theory, reporting human rights would benefit from peace journalism's guidelines, since both seem to speak the same language. However, the theory is questionable in the sense that media (particularly the everyday journalism routines) work under several elements and contingencies that peace journalism seems to forget. As Cottle puts it, 'normative critique has to be augmented (...) by studies and analysis of actual media performance and their complex interactions and dynamics and how these often impact processes of peace building, conflict resolution and reconciliation.' (2006:103)

Empirical research on the coverage of peace processes and negotiations has been contributing to a normative critique that peace journalism theory tends to neglect. This research has shown that the media can play a central role in the promotion of peace, but also serve as destructive agents in the process (Spencer, 2004, 2005; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Wolfsfeld (2004) stated that coverage of peace processes is shaped by news values of *immediacy*, *drama*, *simplicity* and *ethnocentrism*. Furthermore, mediated peace processes can in fact vary over time and circumstances, and mostly depend on 'the nature of political and media environments in which the media are operating' (2004:44). This conclusion is by all means inspiring for the present research since it raises the question whether political and media environments interfere with journalistic responses and media coverage of human rights. For this scholar, this is the key to understanding such variations. These findings also contribute to a change in the established ideas that spin or marketing are the key to control the media's attention. Nonetheless, this empirical research is a step forward in testing the peace theory for journalism, examining journalism's responses covering events that *a priori* are not as exciting as war coverage, according to mainstream media news values as devised by Galtung²². Yet, Wolfsfeld's positioning towards journalism is not distant from the stands of peace journalism's advocates:

²² See Johan Galtung's table that establishes the differences between Peace/Conflict Journalism and War/Violence Journalism (in McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000:29)

'Journalists have an ethical obligation to encourage reconciliation among hostile populations. While there is no reason to expect journalists to support any particular peace initiative, they are obliged to do what they can to lower the risk of violence and war. At the very least (...) journalists should do no harm: they should refrain from carrying out any practices that could exacerbate a conflict.' (2004:228)

Peace journalism's attempt to challenge the established routines has also raised questions about implications linked to *objectivity*. Peace journalism scholar Manhoff admits that many journalists believe that the very idea of media-based preventive action violates the norm of objectivity - whose corollary, disinterestedness with respect to the events being reported, is an essential element of the professional creed (1998). For those who object that peace journalism is based on the possibility of disrespecting the rules of objectivity, Manhoff answers that objectivity can imply moral weakness:

'Objectivity is both necessary and impossible. It is a 'vital illusion' – and perhaps even a tragic one. Objectivity is unobtainable, but the effort to achieve it is much of what gives the practice of journalism its social utility and undoubted nobility. Despite this nobility, objective journalism may be faulted on the grounds that its epistemological strength as a truth-seeking technique is also the source of a fundamental moral weakness.' (1998)

For this scholar, taken together, the diverse media technologies, institutions, professionals, norms and practices constitute some of the most powerful forces shaping the lives of individuals and the fates of peoples and nations. Therefore, the media constitute a major human resource whose potential to help to prevent and moderate social violence needs to be discussed, evaluated and, when appropriate, mobilised.

Peace journalism, as with other types of alternative journalisms, 'deliberately define and position themselves in opposition to established traditional forms of journalism, challenging foundational news values, dominant agendas, privilege elite access and so called 'professional' journalistic practices' (Cottle, 2006:100). Less restricted by the impracticability of peace journalism, other forms of journalism rose over the last few decades as a response to the limitations of the mainstream media. Some scholars highlighting the commercial imperatives of the mainstream media (Rodriguez, 2001; McChesney, 2003; Hamilton, 2004), believe that the structures that govern contemporary dominant forms of journalism will never allow an effective, truthful,

mobilising type of rich journalism to emerge (Forde, 2011). In the words of McChesney, 'a political economic analysis stresses that the reasons for lousy journalism stem not from morally bankrupt or untalented journalists, but from *a structure that makes such journalism the rational result of its operations*' (2003:324). Alternative journalism claims a dissatisfaction not only with mainstream media coverage of certain issues and topics, but also with the epistemology of news, criticising its content, practice and values (Atton and Hamilton, 2008). Some argue that alternative journalism is more efficient in providing context to news, and also in favouring stories about the unrepresented or the voiceless (Forde, 2011). Such efforts encourage the participative response from audiences, to take part in democracy and in civic society (*ibidem*). Alternative journalism that is stronger since the rise of the Internet and digital technologies prioritises local news, and aims to work within its own communities, reinforcing them (Deuze, 2006; Forde, 2011).

As a normative response to traditional media, alternative journalism, as argued by Curran (2005) epitomises the growth of a more adversarial media, which has the potential to make the media more representative. Furthermore, alternative media suggests that journalists, more than fulfilling the classic 'fourth estate' role, are actually *watching the watchers* by monitoring and critiquing mainstream media power (Couldry and Curran, 2003:3).

Likewise, among those forms of alternative journalism, community and development journalism represent a different normative understanding of journalism. The term 'development' journalism has a remit close to that of the UN debates promoted in the 1970s, which pointed out the inequalities of information around the world (MacBride, 1980), in a time where terms such as 'development policies' and 'underdeveloped societies' were trending (Servaes *et al.*, 1996). Today, the term is connected to the dominant state discourses promoting economic 'development', but it continues to highlight the need for 'grassroots participation in decentralized and non-hierarchical media' (Cottle, 2006). Development journalism is guided by endogenous ideas from each society and community, ecology and sustainable development and strictly connected to suggestions of participatory democracy (Servaes *et al.*, 1996). This alternative is impelled by a critique of cultural imperialism and aims to promote grassroots and civil society empowerment and involvement. In this sense, and from a developing world perspective, it is an attempt toward integration in the global flow of

information looking after the 'developing world's' needs. These media, as well as other forms of community media, remain marginal to mainstream media, and work as non-profit media organisations.

This is detached from the particularity of targeting the 'developing world', and the more all-encompassing term of 'community media' became more popular in the early 2000s. Its aim is to promote a more intimate, caring and personal journalism practice (Lowrey *et al.*, 2008:276) and to provide 'a running story about the community told in the community's voice' (Ibargüen, 2006). It aspires to promote civic engagement and participation in the democratic system by 'revitalising citizenship' (Barney, 1996:140). Community newsrooms, most of them non-profit oriented, aim to listen to their constituent communities, feature community-interest themes and voices, and help to solve local problems by debating solutions. They operate 'far away from the high-pressure, profit-margin-obsessed world of corporate journalism' (Cass, 2005, in Lowrey *et al.*, 2008). However, this concept may also be problematic. The fact that such journalism concerns a community makes this practice exclusively *a priori*. Furthermore, because it is based mostly on normative values and critique, 'this increases the tendency towards superficial, often media-centric arguments' that may fail to deal with the complexities and determinants involved (Cottle, 2006:117).

The endeavours of peace journalism and other forms of 'corrective' alternative journalisms over the last few decades are laudable and valuable from a human rights perspective. Their conceptual weaknesses need to be acknowledged and explored, however, before accepting them as a theoretical framework for human rights-oriented media.

3.3.3 – The rise of the internet and implications for human rights

The previous chapter addressed the possibility of a 'global public sphere' in which the media operate today. This is a viable hypothesis for academic debate mostly due to the rise and affirmation of internet use in the daily practices of communication. The arrival of the internet, the development of media technologies and the affirmation of social

media have all intensified the debate over media regulation and its central role in society. Far from aspiring to discuss the meanders of regulatory activity for internet and the treatment of data and information, it is however essential to refer to this 'brave new world' both as a promoter and persecutor of human rights. New media carries the tension between 'good media' and 'bad media', since both 'good' and 'bad' are able to appropriate its potential to strengthen their power and scope. The Internet is used by NGOs to promote their causes, gather support, and raise awareness of human rights violations and abuses; at the other end of the spectrum, terrorist organizations, extreme-right movements and other groups use this platform to pass on their messages and to spread fear and hatred (Joyce, 2010). On the other hand, the internet and social media have triggered the rise of citizen journalism, which has brought advantages and changes to the news gathering processes²³.

From a human rights perspective the media possess a 'systematic significance' (Joyce, 2010) by increasingly contributing to the translation of international law for global audiences, and changing the character of the discipline. Focusing on the media as communication rather than merely as its form or content²⁴, Joyce highlights that international lawyers are coming to recognize the role and significance of global media, especially in the sphere of human rights (*Ibidem*). He refers to the 'mediatisation of human rights' as being closely linked to the increasing role and changing form of international institutions and NGOs, and to their relationships with and reliance on the media. This mediatisation contributes to the spread of human rights discourses, which points out the media as a civil society actor, and a role that, in turn, is not often analysed in depth in international legal scholarship. The rise of the Internet was crucial for the consolidation of transnational advocacy networks (TAN) and the growth of international civil society and the increased ease of the dissemination of information. International institutions such as courts, tribunals and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) also embarked this mediatisation, increasing the institutional significance of public relations strategies. However, even if NGOs are taking up the role of specialist media, access to

²³ Citizen journalism and its interference in the mainstream media news gathering processes will be further developed in Chapter 4.

²⁴ Using J. B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (1995)

media is resource-dependent, depending on the structure of such organisations (Fenton, 2010).

Furthermore, while the internet has given NGOs more opportunity to spread their claims, they are now being trained to deliver exactly what mainstream media are 'crying out for – news that conforms to established news criteria and provides journalistic copy at little or no cost' (Fenton, 2010:166). In this sense, the differences between professional public relations and NGO campaigning are more blurred. On the other hand, there are grassroots pressure groups that reject any relationship wholesale or refuse to communicate with mainstream media on the grounds that the media will distort and misrepresent their views, and turn to new media to disseminate alternative news and views that openly conflict with the mainstream media (*ibidem*).

For Clapham (2000), NGOs use the media in their interactions with UN human rights bodies, suggesting that when the press is present there is greater pressure on members of NGOs to ask tough questions. However, as Joyce (2010) mentions, in some cases the presence of the media operates in tension with the use of confidentiality in human rights complaints procedures. This aspect can further 'militate against the strategic use of media in such *fora* is the concern for victims and their right to privacy and need for confidentiality, especially if exposure may involve dangers of further persecution' (2010:518). As previously mentioned, new media have the capacity to promote antagonistic views regarding human rights, and open up both discourses of protection and words of hatred. In this sense the media will never provide easy solutions, but it does have an important and under-appreciated role to play (Joyce, 2010).

Despite its subversive potential, scholarship remains optimistic about the potential for new media, underlining the possibilities for witnessing, connecting, and reviving the public sphere and enable democratic discourse (Gillmor, 2004; Coleman, 2005; Benkler, 2006; Carrol and Hackett, 2006; Joyce, 2010). Notwithstanding the powerful promise of participation, this research is interested in exploring the big question that remains over claims of an existing international or global public sphere that is enabled by such technological advances and new media environments.

3.4 - Conclusion

By reviewing a collection of literature that questions the responsibility of the media in a global moral space, this chapter has presented useful analytical background to support the upcoming chapters regarding the empirical findings of the considered case study. It is argued that different media coverage can contribute to different responses of audiences regarding human rights issues. Either triggering 'global compassion' or provoking 'compassion fatigue', as argued in previous studies, the media are capable of raising awareness of human rights violations. On the other hand, distinct reporting trends lead to different engagement to the distant sufferer, or the distant other (Chouliaraki, 2006).

Looking at the examples of past failures, some scholars highlight journalists' alleged responsibility to report human rights violations. Still, by drawing upon examples throughout history, it may be argued that different events (or human rights issues) inspire different journalistic attention. These premises are useful grounding for the empirical research conducted, which aims to examine the motivations and constraints behind news production processes.

Furthermore, this chapter analysed how different journalism praxis lead to antagonistic results, on the one hand for human rights awareness or, on the other hand, for the spreading of hatred and human rights violations. Moreover, this chapter introduced the problematic nature of the internet's potential to contribute to both of these antagonistic outcomes regarding media coverage of human rights.

The following chapter interconnects these revised theories and delves deeper into exploring the various factors that interfere with news production processes, situating the present study within research on sociology of journalism. Additionally, the next chapter introduces some of the constraints or limitations which may interfere with journalistic attention on human rights, and focuses on the production of news which is at the centre of the empirical research.

Chapter 4

News Production Processes and human rights reporting

The influence of sociology and anthropology in journalism and media research became particularly prominent in the 1970s, and was accompanied by the inclusion of cultural issues as determinant factors in the news processes. This shift occurred alongside with the introduction of qualitative techniques such as ethnography and discourse analysis within research (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009). The sociology of journalism argues that the news media are shaped by social, political, economic and technological elements, as in traditional sociology of work. Numerous ethnographic studies (Breed, 1955, Tuchman, 1972; Epstein, 1974; among others) provided evidence to the comprehension of news production as a process that is influenced by several elements.

This chapter aims to bridge the previous theoretical chapters with the second part of the thesis, which explores the methodology of the research as well as its empirical findings. Divided into three main sections and a conclusion the chapter starts by introducing the ideology of objectivity and ethical standards as one key justification for different understandings and professional performance regarding human rights issues. The second section examines the most relevant news values, constraints and limitations for human rights reporting. The third section explains the procedural difficulties in addressing human rights in the news from a research perspective, summarises similar existing research and presents a theoretical background for the division of three human rights frames within the news.

4.1 – Objectivity and ethical standards

The ideal of ‘objectivity’ grew in the aftermath of the First World War in Europe. It was an attempt to accredit journalism and distance it from the popular disillusionment with state propaganda, press agents and publicity expertise. Journalists championed the ideal of ‘neutral’ reporting, and gradually linked it to the sake of the ‘public interest’ (Allan, 1999). Impartiality became part of the journalistic canon, and established a clear distinction between information news and biased expression of opinion. In other words,

the quality criteria demanded journalists distinguished 'facts' from 'values' or opinion, provided balanced information, and validated statements by reference to authoritative sources (McNair, 1998). For Schudson (1978), objectivity was the turning point that separated reporting from partisanship and the subjectivity of perception, and an ideal that legitimised the journalistic profession. In her ethnographic study of the newsroom Tuchman (1972) formulated objectivity as a strategic ritual, which would protect the reporters from criticism and libel while processing 'facts about social reality'. For her, the notion of objectivity was applied in three ways: in the form of the news, in the inter-organisational relationships, and in the news content itself. Objectivity manifested, for example, in concern with providing evidence and in the use of quotation marks when quoting sources' opinions. Objectivity would also be referred to as part of the 'professionalism' that is intrinsic to journalistic professional norms (Soloski, 1989), as a normative endpoint, goal or 'best practice' (Kaplan, 2002), or as journalistic role definition (Sigelman, 1973). However, the debate around objectivity and impartiality soon acknowledged the complexity entwined with such notions. In his ethnographic study, Sigelman (1973) referred to it as an 'instrumental myth', and collected professionals' accounts which suggested that professionals are aware that there is no truly objective story, and that objectivity is a reassuring guide to do 'an honest job'. The extensive critique around the notion of objectivity leads professionals to acknowledge their limitations, but argues that they strive to be accurate and they 'try to get the story right' (Lule, 2001:190). As Schudson's later work suggests, objective reporting is now seen as a set of defensive strategies rooted 'in the disappointment of the modern gaze' (Schudson and Anderson, 2009: 93).

It is worth taking into account the debate around objectivity when considering coverage of human rights issues. This will be evidenced in chapter 8, where journalists often evoke standards of objectivity to position their work regarding human rights causes. This responsibility, they argue, is clearly explicit in journalists' codes of ethics and deontology²⁵.

²⁵ In Philosophy, *Deontology* refers to the normative theory of morality, which indicates a duty-based ethics or, the duty to behave according to moral laws. Ethics, differently, highlights the intent of the moral agent who is not necessarily bound by absolute laws (Source: Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).

The codes that guide journalism as a profession in democratic states are now institutionally and normatively sympathetic to human rights, and to preserving and enhancing the core of personal rights enshrined in states' constitutions. While the various existing codes differ, most share the same journalistic standards and canons that include principles of ethics and good practice, such as truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability²⁶. These principles include the limiting harm, which refers to respecting the privacy of those who are covered, especially children; protecting sources; ignoring facts immaterial to the story that could harm reputations; showing good taste; respecting the diversity of audiences; withholding hate messages and content which can provoke violence and strife; being sensitive when interviewing those affected by tragedy and grief; and treating those accused of a crime as innocent until proven guilty²⁷. The journalistic code of ethics in some European countries includes concern over discriminatory references in news based on race, sexual orientation, religion, and physical or mental disabilities²⁸. From another standpoint, journalism as an activity is itself profoundly guided by the right to freedom of speech and subsequently freedom of press. As explored in the previous chapter, these two rights are enshrined in most democratic countries' constitutions.

In their own work journalists are therefore guided by high ethical standards, which although not collected in a single document, are nonetheless clearly oriented by the principles enshrined by the UDHR to protect rights to privacy, dignity, and freedom of speech. Furthermore, many of them believe that the news media represent a *fourth estate*, holding the responsibility to express a complex spectrum of information sources, and to ensure that the members of the public are able to draw upon a 'diverse marketplace of ideas' (Allan, 1999:49). This is embodied as a democratic function, which facilitates the formation of public opinion and an informed civil society, but also invigilates the activities of the ruling authorities as a *watchdog*. This notion of the civic

²⁶ See, for example, the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, adopted in 1996, or the International Federation of Journalists' Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, adopted in 1954 and amended in 1986.

²⁷ See, for example, guidelines for *Every Human Has Rights - Media Awards - Good Journalism* (<http://media-awards.everyhumanhasrights.org/en/content/good-journalism>).

²⁸ See for example *La Carta dei Doveri*, by the *Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana* (Italy); the *Código Deontológico de la profesión periodística de la Federación de Asociaciones de Periodistas Españoles* (Spain); the *Código Deontológico dos Jornalistas Portugueses*, by the *Sindicato dos Jornalistas de Portugal*.

and democratic function of journalism was often raised by the journalists interviewed for this research, as will be further explored later in this thesis.

4.2 – News values, constraints and limitations for human rights reporting

As reviewed in the previous chapter, several examples of media studies research have examined the coverage of conflict and war journalism and its effects on audiences (Tester, 1994; Moeller, 1999; Hoijer, 2004), or how its content or news texts narrate suffering and establish a disposition of care (Chouliaraki, 2006). Nonetheless, these studies ignore journalists' perspectives, possible explanations on news framing and representations of human rights or their marginal portrayal within the news, as well as the practical barriers that determine their professional selection and inflection. This research, as will be broadly developed in the following chapters, draws upon a methodology designed to discuss journalists' understandings of human rights, and to explore their perceptions about the role they play, or are expected to play, with regard to human rights.

As grounds for solid and informed research, a sociological approach to journalism studies demands a close look into the criteria that determines and limits the news filtering processes. This section explores the most relevant news values and obstacles which may skew contemporary coverage of human rights issues.

4.2.1 – Time and deadline pressure, immediacy and competition

Time is a fundamental element in news reporting. It is a crucial concern in determining whether a news item shall be broadcast or not. Time interferes in the editorial choices both in the sense of capacity, as in airtime in news bulletins' rundowns, and in the sense of timeliness, or the transmission of information as soon as possible after learned. Observing the newsmaking process in the press, Roshco (1975) conceived three aspects with regard to *timeliness*: to be timely, the item must possess: 1) *recency* (recent disclosure); 2) *immediacy* (publication with minimum delay); 3) *currency* (relevance to present concerns). Formulated in such terms this conception encompasses the existence

and interaction between a news source, a medium and an audience. Although written in the 1970s this idea is still prevalent in contemporary news making, and is directly applicable to broadcast news, and in particular to daily news production. Indeed, broadcast journalism is closely regulated by the clock. For Schlesinger (1978), television news workers nurture an obsession with the passage of time, and therefore the stopwatch and the deadline are crucial features of work. Furthermore, any rigorous time scheduling may be interrupted at any time if a big story breaks. At that time resources must be mobilised and original plans abandoned.

For the focus of this research, which aims to address the stages of television news production, time is warily considered as an important element that determines the presence and the mode in which human rights issues are covered. Time interferes with the duration of the news items, their placement in the rundowns, and the aforementioned recency and currency of news topics. Time is also a relevant element in the context of the fast changing pace of 24/7 news production and one of the decisive aspects that determine which news actually becomes news. As depicted in later chapters, throughout the ethnographic observation and interviews, time is highlighted as one of the key conditions of news production processes by defining 'what's new' and thus will be on air. The 'new' in this sense means not only what is unusual or unheard, or the *novelty* of the news item, but also to the cluster of notions derived from and related to 'immediacy', which suggest upheaval, suddenness, unpredictability (Schlesinger, 1978). The process of revising and updating a news story is hence a continual process. *Recency, immediacy* and *currency* are strictly intertwined and correlative to the notions that contribute to the definition of 'what is new' and therefore highly likely to make it into the news. According to Roshco:

'Immediacy links recent events and the media that report them; currency links these events to segments of the public. Recency makes an item of information into an item of news; currency, which is based on audience interest, gives that news item its news value.' (1975)

Given the above, the news value given to 'what's new' is the crux of daily news production, and news stories are ranked according to assessments of their news value. Everyday news consists of a number of clearly demarcated time-slots which, in turn, are 'products of intra-organisational bargaining' (Schlesinger, 1978). These time-slots are

themselves a constraint, in the sense that they limit the duration and broadcasting of the news, when producers have too much news on hand. Often editors are confronted with hard but urgent decisions regarding what stays in and what will be left out. This judgment is often quickly and occurs throughout the day or even when the news is already on air. Additionally, competition for public attention makes immediacy significant to the media, interferes with the speed which coverage can be framed (Roshco, 1975, Schlesinger, 1978), and in turn determines how news production resources are utilised. There is an implication that through sophisticated technical means of communication the audience can actually be present at the event, especially when there is live broadcasting (Schlesinger, 1978). In that case, and if a certain event is considered relevant enough, news slots can actually be extended and time is re-negotiated.

This urge for immediacy has become more evident within journalists' competitive ethos with the rise of online news in the 1990s and 24-hour rolling television news in the late 1980s (Cushion, 2010). The cycle of news has become radically shortened, and immediacy is prioritised over more traditional forms of reflection (Lewis and Cushion, 2009). One of the hazards of immediacy is, therefore the potential conflict with accuracy of information, since the increasing importance of 'breaking news' impoverishes the quality of journalism (*ibidem*).

This sub-section explained the importance of time within the news production culture. Time sets the deadlines and dictates the fast-paced rhythm of news production; it also decides on the relevance of the issues to be covered, regarding their currency and timeliness. The need for speed, which has increased with the rise of online journalism and 24-hour news channels, is superseding accuracy and quality of the news. The following sections will elucidate how other factors are constraining current journalistic practice and, consequently, influencing coverage of human rights topics.

4.2.2 – Financial resources

Scholars inspired by peace journalism principles, as explored in Chapter 3, argue that it is journalists' ethical obligation to encourage peace and promote human rights values.

This view assumes that the vast majority of people want to prevent violence and war, and suggests a set of measures to be applied in newsrooms and in the field that could make a difference (Galtung, 1998; Manhoff, 1998; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Among these measures peace journalism suggests a set of other structural changes in the newsrooms. These include: setting up a crisis team of journalists to increase the level of interaction among journalists working in different news media; hiring journalists from opposing viewpoints in an effort to provide their audience with an alternative perspective; creating special sections dedicated to peace issues (not with the aim of replacing conflict journalism but of adding some elements of peace in order to provide more balance); and finally, beginning a dialogue about these issues among policy makers, journalists, researchers and peace activists (Wolfsfeld, 2004:230-231). These recommendations also insist that journalists should be nearby, through the presence of foreign correspondents for example (Thompson, 2007).

However, and once again, the normative approaches of peace journalism seem not to respond to the growing financial difficulties within the newsrooms, even as their set of suggestions remains positioned to inspire the theoretical envisioning of journalism. This is particularly true for foreign correspondents. Newsrooms have reduced the number of allocated journalists and foreign bureaus; in some cases the coverage barely exists any longer (McChesney, 2012). Waldman and the Working Group on Information Needs of Communities, in their 2011 report on American media, concluded that coverage of international news by most traditional media appears to have declined. Managers reported cutting resources devoted to foreign coverage, and admitted allotting less space to foreign news (Waldman, 2011). The reason behind such decisions is the high cost of fielding a single foreign correspondent, especially in security-sensitive war zones. These costs, the report shows, can equal the price of five hometown newsroom reporters. Still further, only a few interviewed editors in this report considered foreign coverage as 'very essential' to their audience. In order to supplant staffing cuts some broadcasters prefer now to hire MOJOs (mobile journalists), who are positioned in an area when news breaks (*ibidem*).

Reduced to such limited resources, the major news media are now utterly dependant on international news agencies in their coverage of international affairs (Paterson, 2011). Furthermore, by relying on the agencies' material, newsrooms now

have limited means to convey deeper investigative journalism. The future of investigative journalism is under threat and to continue, some argue, will have to rely on massive public subsidies (McChesney, 2012). This would release investigative journalism from the grip of business and market-driven media. But this is not the direction journalism is taking, since the financial constraints have been affecting most of the public service media broadcasters.

This financial scenario extends to news media throughout Europe, including the Portuguese public service broadcaster, which is hereby explored as a case study. Its consequences, as will be further developed in the second part of this thesis, confirm a manifest scarcity of physical presence in foreign countries and therefore in the coverage of distant human rights issues. Unlike the majority of other European countries' public service broadcasters who rely on a licence fee budget, the Portuguese counterpart, as neighbour Spain, has abolished fees (Mendel, 2000), and is mostly financed by state provision. As in some other countries, the Portuguese public broadcaster shows a lower degree of public intervention, a low level of public funding and considerably less public support for public service broadcasting (Moe and Syvertsen, 2009:399). The revenue generated by advertising, other commercial income and the audio-visual contribution²⁹ together accumulate to lower values than the state provision (Carvalho, 2009). In 2011 the state budget for RTP was approximately 100 M€; in 2013, the Government decided to cut 42% of the public service broadcaster's state provision³⁰, and further announced that income will cease altogether from 2014 onwards.

Financial cuts on newsrooms are therefore included in the scope of constraints to the news production processes. The effects of such limitations on the news content and resources therefore need to be addressed in order to understand to what extent they shape the nature of human rights coverage.

²⁹ In Portugal, the audio-visual contribution is a tax charged monthly within the energy bill (*Diário da República, Decreto-Lei n.o 230/2007*), referring to a symbolic amount of 2,39€ (aprox. 1,99£), and generating an expected annual budget of 140 million Euros in 2013.

³⁰ These are approximate numbers provided by media attention to this state decision. The exact numbers, however, are difficult to track, since the official governmental figures and documents include other services within this budget, such as the provision for the national news agency *Lusa*.

4.2.3 – Editorial choices: an emphasis on *proximity*

As previously mentioned, the current news production culture is deeply influenced by the importance of reporting ‘what is new’, and as quickly as possible. This shortened news cycle puts the quality of the news at stake despite a journalistic ethical commitment to accuracy. In addition, suffering from budget cuts and reduced to limited financial resources, several news media are utterly dependent on international news agencies for their coverage of international affairs. These are significant elements that interfere with contemporary television news production processes, as confirmed by the empirical research conducted in this thesis. However, other news values also interfere with the filtering and newsgathering processes, and they play a noteworthy part in the coverage of human rights issues.

There is broad literature concerned with news values, most of which elaborates upon Galtung and Ruge’s 1965 ground-breaking study about the structure of foreign news (see, for example, Epstein, 1973; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Dayan and Katz, 1992; Zelizer, 1992, among many others). These criteria, as well as the newsgathering routines, are constantly challenged and adapted to the circumstances and particularities of the news media (Allan, 1999). In a context of financial limitation and reduced allocation of personnel to foreign countries, it is only natural that certain newsworthiness criteria override others. A central argument presented here is that the financial constraints experienced by the newsrooms increase the weight of *proximity* as a news value at the time of making news choices.

Drawing upon Galtung and Ruge’s formulations, Golding and Elliott (1979) first introduced the notion of *proximity* as another news value to be added to the list. This criterion partly derives from the idea that journalists take into account audiences’ considerations, and prefer to report on what is familiar to their audiences. The term also refers to the cultural and geographical proximity, which is highly dependent on where correspondents are based. As Harcup and O’Neill put it, ‘as a rule of thumb, nearby events take precedence over similar events at a distance’ (2009:166).

From a human rights perspective it is highly pertinent to question how proximity has inevitably been over-valued as a news criterion, which has resulted in a lack of resources for the coverage of human rights issues abroad. With this point, it is not implied that human rights issues exist only abroad, but it is relevant to inquire whether domestic human rights issues have consequently been pushed to the spotlight. Furthermore, it is important to explore whether newsrooms such as RTP are appropriating foreign issues with a more national perspective, in order to overcome the obstacles of a limited representation abroad. At this point, the discussion advances to the debates around the domestication of news and the global reach of human rights problems, and therefore how the geographic and emotional localisation of news events is sited.

A wide array of media scholarship delves into the debate about how national news values or interests are built into the processes and dynamics of news production, by 'domesticating' the localisation of global news events (Gurevitch et al., 1991; Clausen, 2004; Lee et al., 2005). International law and policies strive for a global mediation, and news production tends to 'domesticate' them (Clausen, 2004). In other words, as Clausen argues, news 'domestication' is a universal phenomenon and global and international news is presented 'within frames of interpretation of local audiences in each nation, which makes global news particular to each country' (2004:27).

Controversies and criticisms about global communications centre on the monopolisation of international communication by the Western news media. This included both the control of distribution technology and also the emphasis on Western definitions and portrayal of the developing world (Picard, 1991). Thussu (2003) called it 'CNNization' of television news, by arguing that leading Western networks are setting the agenda of the global news. Rather than contributing to the affirmation of a 'global public sphere', this scholar argues that this phenomenon is fixing a homogenisation of news contents and structures.

However, the 'domestication' of foreign news situates the debate in a wider scope, and goes beyond the opposition between Western and non-Western news values. Domesticating the news, in this sense, refers to the media's appeal to domestic audiences. In this sense, news maintains both global and cultural orientations and thereby 'constructing the meanings of these events in ways that are compatible with the culture and the dominant ideology of societies they serve' (Gurevitch et al., 1991: 206).

This tendency challenges the theories of global news distribution and its consequential global homogenisation of the world cognition (Clausen, 2004). Plus, this recurrent editorial perspective and practice tends to assert itself steadily due to newsrooms' limited resources and financial cuts. The increasing dependence on international news agencies, as claimed, contributes to this trend. As Paterson questions, 'with our television pictures of distant events coming from just two fairly similar organisations, is it conceivable that for each of the five billion of us who have access to a television, our view of the world (literally and metaphorically) is essentially identical?' (2011:10).

As the theories of a global public sphere are therefore contested and debated, there are certain news topics that potentially emerge as global issues. Mostly regarding the framing of global business and the environment, some scholars defend the epistemological global approach to news, integrating these in a 'global news style' (Berglez, 2008), which does not necessarily discharge the incorporation of 'domestic' elements to the content of news. Global journalism, argues Berglez (2008, 2013), basically consists of a journalist's representation of complex relations between peoples, places and practices, in everyday news production. Moreover, unlike traditional foreign news journalism, global journalism builds its news stories on what occurs in particular spatial, political or cultural contexts. In his words, 'while foreign reporting primarily breaks apart social reality into separate events and processes, global journalism reconnects these events and processes' (Berglez, 2008:147). The practice of global journalism, argues Bergelez, would not imply expensive airline tickets and foreign offices, technical apparatus or large multimedia news desks but rather

'a new mode of *interpreting*' social reality in regular news reporting (...) including various transnational journalistic methods, such as the expansion of international journalistic networks for the identification of contextual information and sources and new global hyperlinking routines on the Web for the presentation of globalising news.' (2013:126)

Once more, and from a human rights news viewpoint, this research examines how this global news style is present in the daily broadcast news. The central argument, based on this research's empirical findings, is that the global news proposition is pertinent but still scarce or almost non-existent in daily news routines. The aforementioned global news style does not exclude the inclusion of domestic or national aspects within a news

item. Furthermore, one may argue that the coverage of human rights issues would largely benefit from the implementation of global news habits within daily news practices. However, the existing structure of news production choices and journalistic routines seem to demonstrate the prevalence of the separation logic of 'either'/'or' national/domestic or international/foreign news, as will be shown evidence in chapter 6.

4.2.4 - The silences

As discussed in chapter 2, contemporary international law attempts to promote a language and practice of a moral universalism, expressed above all in a shared human rights culture. There is a common understanding that the international community must not remain silent over systematic abuses and violations of human rights. Nevertheless, most of these same abuses remain invisible, hidden behind curtains of ignorance, indifference or even cruelty. This fabricated human rights culture stands for a collective understanding of human rights as part of a shared responsibility, inspiring the legal and constitutional frames of democratic countries, and relying on institutions to promote and protect human rights values. Because the media are potentially influential players in this process, as argued across previous chapters, media outputs contribute to both awareness and debate, playing a crucial role in informing citizens about the world they live in.

So far, this chapter has surveyed the complexity of constraints and limitations that possibly shape media output. Empirically, this can more reliably be explained by observing news production stages, decisions and choices. Examining the production phase of the news helps to clarify how human rights are actually considered, identified, ignored or misrepresented in the news. In this sense, and by no means less important, this examination provides the opportunity to analyse what remains unsaid, considering that marginalized topics about human rights are equally relevant – if not more revealing – than the topics which make it into the media. As argued by Sonwalkar, rather than analysing the impact of media coverage research should pay more attention to the 'nether world of absence of news' (2004:207), and the consequences of when media downplay or ignore a story. This author draws attention to conflicts consistently

disregarded by the media, arguing that only a small share of the worlds' conflicts are considered newsworthy. The previous sub-section mentioned the prevailing importance of proximity as a criterion when deciding which events are to be reported. For coverage of world conflicts, tight budgets, proximity, and the national audiences' interest are key deciders. For Sonwalkar, a conflict is likely to receive coverage only if journalists see it as affecting what they perceive to be the *us* or *we* of news narrative, while the conflict revolving around 'them' may be routinely ignored or accorded to ad hoc coverage. In this sense, dominant socio-cultural values promote the marginalisation of certain conflicts within news texts, and Western media routinely ignore wars and conflicts in the developing world, even if they involve shocking scenarios of violence and terrorism. In Sonwalkars' words:

'Selectivity is built into the processes and dynamics of news production. (...). Violence and terrorism have long been privileged as key news values, but they remain hostage to the defining news value of cultural proximity. Wars and conflicts are not intrinsically newsworthy; they need to be culturally proximate enough to become news.' (2004:207)

When war is in the offing and breaks out, journalists tend to produce saturated coverage and live round-the-clock reportage (Tumber and Webster, 2006). However, there is a moment where news editors decide to withdraw reporters from the war scene, especially during long-lasting conflicts. Reporting often disappears after a period of overwhelming exposure to a conflict. Due to over-reporting in the moments evaluated by news editors as decisive or, as advocates of peace journalism argue, the cooling or silencing of war coverage in the news, resolutions or the aftermath of conflicts is often underrepresented (Galtung, 2000).

Several human rights issues, consequently, and not just the ones that spring from conflicts and wars, remain unreported, ignored or marginalised, whereas other human rights issues are closer, or even at the end of the street. The in-depth interviews conducted for this research demonstrated that proximity prevails both as a preferred but also forced news criterion. Again, this is linked to a situation of financial constraints in the newsrooms, as editors operate often as budget managers and deal with the heavier weight of the production costs while deciding the news coverage of (among others) human rights related issues, as it will be further explored in chapters 6 to 8.

The International Council on Human Rights Policy published a report in 2002 that concluded that the media devote a great deal of attention to information on issues that involve human rights. But:

‘despite all the attention given, the media fail to report much that ought to be known, at least in the estimation of those who are the victims. (...) Added coverage is due partially to the fact that governments and political leaders refer to human rights more often than they did (...) both in their formal statements of policy and political rhetoric.’ (ICHRP, 2002:5-6)

These conclusions seem to be in line with the broad range of studies regarding news sourcing that relies on authoritative and institutional sources (Sigal, 1973; Hall et al, 1978; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994, among others). The ICHRP report also states the lack of consensus on what constitutes human rights reporting among readers and journalists, and some interviewees said that ‘the media do not report human rights enough, others that they report in the wrong way or focus on the wrong subjects.’ (ICHRP, 2002:6)

Among studies of war reporting, there are many which describe restrictions on news reporting and control over the news agenda with the intention of getting public support for predetermined political agendas³¹. Other research shows that reporting can also be limited by tight budgets, geography limited access, and the demands of news values architecture. A perfect example of these factors combining is Darfur, where there were (and are) only a few groups of journalists covering the conflict. Amongst the reasons for scant coverage was news focus on the war in Iraq in the early 2000s and the presumed lack of audience interest in Africa (Richiardi, 2005). Advocates of alternative and citizen journalism claim that they may represent the counterforce to the problems of mainstream journalism (Atton, 2009). This may provide alternative news content and access to audiences. Yet, and as this thesis’ empirical research shows, mainstream journalists are reluctant in using these as sources (namely citizens generated contents), distrusting the fragile reliability of its provenance.

³¹ See for example the 1991 report on governmental restrictions in the US after the Second Gulf War that concluded that ‘information was restricted or manipulated not for nation security purposes, but for political purposes’ (Center for Public Integrity, *Under Fire: US Military Restrictions on Media from Grenada to the Persian Gulf*, Washington D.C., quoted by the ICHUP Report, 2002:11).

The media are one of the domains in which human rights are constructed as meaningful across different interrelated institutional settings, and hold cultural authority to define human rights – along with judiciary, government and social movement organizations (Nash, 2009:24). Journalists and editors, therefore, have their own stake in competitions over the authority to define human rights in the mediated public. They make issues visible, and certify that human rights violations are of public concern. On the other hand, human rights organizations use the media to create pressure in governmental and juridical spheres, or to intervene in conflicts that are already public in order to try to influence outcomes (Nash, 2009:49). Some of these organizations ‘rely heavily upon the media to highlight the shameful record of human rights violations’ (ICHUP, 2002:9).

Journalism’s capacity to create dialectical spaces for civic engagement and common understandings of human rights is a necessary question to explore within communication research. This capacity increasingly impacts and ultimately influences public participation, political identity and citizenship, within the context of a global public sphere. The media are commonly seen as central institutions of contemporary society, and therefore their messages are affected by, circulate in, and contribute to the alleged globalised public sphere. Ultimately this potential may also be used towards a more inclusive and egalitarian global social ethic.

4.3 - Researching human rights within the news: procedural difficulties

This section acknowledges that the present research departs from a procedural problem of analysing what exactly covering human rights means within the daily news. It summarises existing similar research studies and suggests that the methodologies previously used are somehow insufficient, from the perspective of a sociology of journalism. It argues that news outputs depend strongly on a set of various elements interfering with news production processes and are linked to a wider communicative architecture. This section also explains the theoretical frame that illuminates the methodology designed for this research, namely content and framing analysis, which in turn informed the observational period and in-depth interviews conducted.

4.3.1 – The problematic nature of the term ‘human rights’ in the news: existing research

From previous studies, I tried to identify a strong model for conducting my own research, drawing on its strengths and acknowledging its limitations, and also recognizing the difficulties in operationalising an identification of human rights topics in the news.

Hanson and Miller (1987) addressed what they have called a ‘moral dilemma of reporting human rights’, and conducted a study where they observed the U.S. television coverage of Central America from 1977 to 1980. They identified the news under the keywords *torture*, *assassination*, *violence*, *disappearances*, and *repression* and *oppression* as substitutes for human rights violations. This approach is strongly centred on the consideration of civil rights, excluding other types of rights. Additionally, it excludes human rights topics that are not violations, such as peace negotiation, intervention, humanitarianism and aid, among others. For the purposes of this thesis, the identification needs to be more inclusive, and therefore engage with a wider collection of words and themes. However, Hanson and Miller’s main conclusion – that the number of human-rights-related stories did increase during the course of the Carter administration, mostly focused on events in Nicaragua and El Salvador. This suggests that human rights coverage depends on the surrounding context and events during certain periods. This conforms with the previously debated idea that news are highly influenced by media and political environments (Wolfsfeld, 2004) and contemporary contexts. Following this same lexical approach, Geyer and Shapiro (1988), searching for the expressions ‘freedom and human rights’, ‘torture’, ‘political prisoners’, and ‘Amnesty international’ in news headings, noticed similarly a momentary human rights coverage boost, followed by a decline after 1977, which led the authors to question the media’s and the public’s commitment to human rights. Like these two studies, this research is lexical-driven, and limited to the browsing of newspaper headlines. While this method may permit the analysis of a wide period of time, it excludes the potentially rich content of news articles. From an international relations’ perspective, and relying on Geyer and Shapiro’s findings, Pritchard conducted research exploring the connection between the surge of interest for human rights and its relationship with the public opinion (1991:123-142). She argued that the increase of human rights violations coverage is at

least partially responsible for an increased public awareness of and support for human rights (1991:138).

The work of Jay S. Ovsiovitch (1993, 1996) is a systematic attempt to improve these previous studies, by not only looking at the amount of coverage, but looking at the content of human rights stories. Based on an analysis of newspaper, magazines and television texts in a ten years' period, Ovsiovitch developed categories for identifying human rights topics. These are based on the division of rights gradually implemented throughout history – first, second and third generation of human rights. This gradual elaboration of human rights law was clarified previously in Chapter 1 of the literature review and will also be integrated in the content analysis conducted in Chapter 6. However, unlike Ovsiovitch, the choice of the sample for this research was not limited to the news that had the specific words 'human rights' in its content, as will be explained later in this section. This limitation, I believe, reduces the sample of news significantly, and excludes a significant number of news items that are substantively connected to human rights themes, although they are not presented as such. As is more carefully explained in Chapter 6, this study will propose the possibility of three levels of presence of human rights in the news: i) news that includes the words 'human rights' specifically; ii) news that contains correlate terms to human rights; and iii) news under a substantive human rights theme or area.

Widening the scope of the sample can, also, hypothetically, bring new answers to the questions pursued by those studies mentioned above. Through this method it would be possible to readdress some of these issues and address others such as: 1) *human rights reporting is scarce* (almost two decades have passed after the previous research was conducted, making relevant to re-address this question), 2) *human rights topics are almost exclusively under the name of other categories of news* (ICHRP, 2002; Ramos *et al*, 2007), and 3) *civil and political rights receive more attention in the news and little treatment is given to socioeconomic rights and collective rights*³² (Ovsiovitch, 1993).

³² From this conclusion, Ovsiovitch claims the assumption that an 'American' understanding of human rights guides the media' (1993:681).

4.3.2 – Studying the different *levels of depth* of human rights reporting: a procedural proposal

As previously mentioned, this thesis will analyse the presence of human rights in the news considering three different levels. Yet it remains important to consider a whole set of elements which hide behind these news stories, as the different levels of *presence* are not the same as the *depth* to which human rights are addressed in the news. Pertinently, it is necessary to note that stories that include the words ‘human rights’ do not necessarily provide as deep an understanding of human rights issues as other stories which might not include these words, or which barely establish a ‘disposition of care’ (Chouliaraki, 2006) or engagement towards human rights issues. As tested in the content analysis conducted in Chapter 6, the different nature of the news items suggests different levels of engagement with human rights issues, and it is precisely this professional involvement that this research aims to address when examining the relationship between human rights and journalism. Observing different levels of presence is useful in order to spot human rights in the news, as well as to spot news that potentially refers to human rights issues but might be limited in terms of providing information about the professional/journalistic engagement towards human rights.

To get a better fix on this, and to explore the different levels of engagement towards human rights issues, this section explains the theoretical background that supports the methodological design of three frames or three *levels of depth* in human rights coverage. Although this conceptualisation was drafted based on the theoretical background explored in this and the previous two chapters, it is relevant to elucidate that these three levels of depth were tested and refined by the content analysis and empirical findings explored in Chapter 6. Therefore, the following theoretical approach advances some of the determining elements that result from the empirical endeavours of this research, stating that the theorisation both inspires the analysis of existing practices of human rights reporting and is inspired by its empirical findings.

The differentiation of three levels of depth in human rights coverage used in this thesis stems from an epistemological approach that explores the existence of human rights issues in the news. Inspired by the different *levels of pity* suggested by Chouliaraki

(2006) and explored previously in the literature review (Chapter 3), the suggested levels of depth in the news also involve different levels of engagement with human rights. However, while Chouliaraki analyses the media's capacity to establish a disposition of care and engagement with the *far away other* or *the distant sufferer*, these levels of depth in human rights coverage refer to the different levels of journalistic or professional engagement with human rights reporting. This therefore focuses on the journalistic production processes more than the expected reactions of the audiences to the presence of human rights in the news. Chouliaraki provided, as mentioned earlier in the research, essential work that helps us to understand the framing device for *proper distance*, shedding light essentially on the expected relationship established between the news and its audiences, and the consequent connection with the distant other. Chouliaraki refers mainly to the role of the media in shaping the ethical sensitivity of the viewers who will potentially respond with different regimes of pity.

This thesis argues that different levels of depth of human rights coverage are established with the different frames in which human rights are present in the news. As this thesis is interested in the complex process and practices of television news work and the particularities of the professional conduct of journalists, it is insufficient to merely envisage the media's potential in shaping the viewers' understanding of the *distant sufferer*. Framing processes that occur in such coverage are also dependent on a complex interaction between the production of each news story, professional constraints, decisions, and dispositions of engagement that influence the journalistic output regarding human rights. In this thesis I merged the concept of *communicative frames* coined by Cottle and Rai (2006) with the previously mentioned Chouliaraki's *regimes of pity* in order to identify the most common frames used in human rights reporting. Before further explaining this combination, it is important to underline that the concept of frames as used by this research, is closer to the idea of different *communicative frames* for human rights reporting than the traditional idea of *frames* adopted widely in journalism research (Gitlin, 1980; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson *et al*, 1992; Entman, 1993; Robinson, 2000). The conceptualisation of *communicative frames* is essentially connected to a *communicative architecture*, as Cottle and Rai suggest, in which a 'repertoire of communicative frames' is found to 'routinely organise how news events and issues are publicly communicated and contested' (2006:164). These communicative frames, the authors argue, diverge from the conventional use of the term

'frames', since they pre-exist in the discursive constructions of any issue or news event, and therefore are not as discourse dependent and issue specific (2006:170). This analysis suggests a distinction among *different degrees of depth* regarding the presence (or absence) of human rights in the news. The levels of depth are thus dependent on the communicative frame in which each news item is presented. I assessed the sample of news considered by separating news reports using the three aforementioned different categories, which determine the presence (or absence) of human rights in the news. These categories help to unveil the presence of human rights in a news story, but not the level of depth or professional engagement or even agency regarding human rights in the story. Thus, in addition to the allocation in each different category used to determine the coding sample, each news item was then analysed in terms of the communicative frame in which was reported.

Cottle and Rai suggest a repertoire of frames routinely organize how news events and issues are publicly communicated and contested, contributing to a communicative architecture of television news, and structuring news presentation in both conflictual and consensual ways (2006:164). Based in the political theory debates about deliberative democracy, and attending to the democratizing potential of television journalism, the authors query how the processes of deliberation are conditioned and shaped when mediated (2006:167). The authors bring notions of deliberative democracy to journalism theory, and point out the media's constitutive role in deliberative process, encompassing both ideas of dialogue and dissemination. In developing a pilot empirical study of news programmes broadcast in and across six different countries, Cottle and Rai suggest a list of communicative frames of television news, depending on its logistics, technical capabilities and the organization of news production (2006:169). This repertoire is analytically divided into conflict communicative frames on the one hand (*'dominant', 'contest', 'contention', 'campaigning' and 'exposé/investigative'*), referring principally to challenging claims, propositions and arguments; and consensual communicative frames on the other (*'community service', 'collective interests', 'cultural recognition' and 'mythic tales'*), based more on cultural display, they argue, than analytical dissemination (2006:170). Finally, there are also other news frames *'reporting', 'reportage'* and, most rarely observed, *'reconciliation'*, frames which draw upon both argumentative and expressive, or deliberative and display modes of communication (*ibidem:171*). Blending this categorisation of news with the

three levels of pity suggested by Chouliaraki (adventure news, emergency news, ecstatic news), I therefore suggest that there are three levels of depth while reporting human rights issues: *shallow*, *medium*, and *deep*. This differentiation prompted the analysis of different treatments of human rights issues, and provided hints to understand how these human rights subjects are taken into account when producing news outputs.

4.3.2.1 - Shallow depth of coverage

A shallow depth of coverage is directly comparable to what Chouliaraki (2006) called 'adventure news' or 'news without pity'. These reports present a descriptive and factual narrative, where the management of visibility involves minimum visualisation of footage or maps, representing suffering in geographical terms, and casting them in the abstract. Coupled to a geographical distance there is another type of distance, an emotional and moral distance between 'us' and the 'distant sufferers' (Chouliaraki, 2006). With a closer look at the sample of news considered in the present research, this frame refers to news items seen usually of the form of an anchor's reading over graphics or footage, or perhaps an anchor's introduction followed by a short quote. This can also come in the shape of a short packaged report, which although involving some editing, provides no context or background information. Similarly to Chouliaraki's adventure news, a shallow approach to human rights issues involves no context of suffering, no emotions, and produces no disposition to act or care. From the perspective of a daily television news production cycle, this frame for human rights reporting is analogous to Cottle and Rai's 'reporting' communicative frame, which refers to news items as mere vehicles for information conveyance and surveillance of current events. Likewise, these shallow-depth news items are about up-to-date information, have a short duration, report about occurrences without context, background or accountability, and provide only 'basic informational elements that may later inform more elaborated interpretations' (Cottle and Rai, 2006:172) or, in this research, a deeper depth of human rights coverage.

A shallow approach to human rights coverage corresponds also to professional choices, determined by institutional or editorial preferences as well as routine impositions. The production resources of these news entries usually dwell in news agency's material, and involve minimal professional initiative or enterprise. Chouliaraki's *adventure* news would not invite the spectator's engagement, but the

distant contemplation of the spectacle of suffering instead, from the perspective of the engrained news production processes. It can be argued that this type of shallow presentation of human rights issues suggests no (or very little³³) professional engagement with such issues.

The sourcing of these news matters may also determine this frame of shallowness, in cases when the short accounts originate from a 'dominant' news source (Cottle and Rai, 2006), providing an authority's or challenger's view or perspective exclusively. On the other hand, these news items tend to be reported in a neutral or factual angle, and its valence is typically straight³⁴.

4.3.2.2 - Medium depth of coverage

Differently from a shallower approach, medium depth human rights news coverage involves some professional commitment to human rights questions. This communicative frame is somehow parallel to Chouliaraki's *emergency news*, where contrarily to adventure news some form of action does take place, and the visibility of suffering is organised in a way that suggests agency and a sense of humanness. The emergency news, argues Chouliaraki (2006), raises a significant appellative force that invites the spectator to 'do something' and the sense that 'more needs to be done'. From a television news communicative architecture's perspective, a medium depth frame transitions from a simple display of information to a slightly profound degree of deliberation (Cottle and Rai, 2006) regarding human rights questions. The format of these news items can vary from a traditional edited package to live reporting, comprising some kind of journalistic enterprise even when using solely news agency materials, and finding more creative solutions for the coverage of the news³⁵. Using Cottle and Rai's communicative frames, a

³³ Also in line with Chouliaraki's suggestion regarding the possibility of the spectators' identification with the distant sufferers, perhaps only the selectivity factor may reveal a tenuous professional engagement to human rights issues: as journalists cannot report everything in the same degree of importance, there is a pragmatic element to the choice to bring a certain issue to light instead of other.

³⁴ The angle and the valence of the news reports will also be coded along this research's content analysis. These variables contribute mostly to the constitution of the three proposed levels of depth for human rights reporting and therefore for the framing analysis conducted.

³⁵ As it will be further explored in the empirical chapters of this thesis, some of these creative initiatives involved phone calls, interviewing experts, Skype calls, and archive footage.

medium depth of human rights coverage is positioned between the aforementioned superficial approach of *reporting* and engaging more with the endeavors of a *reportage*, although this latter belongs, as it will be argued, to a deeper coverage of human rights issues. Nonetheless, a medium approach offers already some deeper understanding of and insights into current events, encompassing some background information context or even analysis, and going beyond the simple informational aim of the reporting.

In this medium depth there is a more concerted consultation of sources, providing a wider plurality of voices or, in case of a single dominant voice in these news, providing deeper and more profound the knowledge³⁶ than the information delivered in the reporting news frame. These news items are longer in duration, and often engage with a more advisory or service-oriented role, as the *community service* approach suggested by Cottle and Rai (2006). This includes advising about the meaning of the information and how it actually impacts the audience. Consequently, their angle is not necessarily exclusively neutral, often presenting human-interest cases and/or balancing these with statistically corroborated data.

4.3.2.3 – Deep depth of coverage

This is the approach that more powerfully suggests the existence of a professional commitment to human rights issues. As I will explore later in this chapter and throughout the rest of the thesis, this is the less frequent frame utilised along the analysed news sample. This is possibly because this approach is most commonly used outside the formats traditionally adopted in daily news bulletins. It is somewhat comparable to Chouliaraki's third type of news, *ecstatic news*, but not entirely, since these correspond specifically to exceptional events or stories. Ecstatic news refers to the semiotic elements of rich verbal and visual narratives and aesthetically complex presentations (Chouliaraki, 2006); my suggestion of deep depth of human rights coverage concerns the active and sustained professional involvement with the human rights cause to be reported. While Chouliaraki's description refers to news that break

³⁶ Also to be further explained throughout Chapter 6: besides coding the source types, the content analysis included the categories of 'context' of news source and 'knowledge' provided, used later to provide a clearer definition of the three levels of depth in human rights reporting, and consequent framing analysis.

the ordinary conception of time, presenting historical moments³⁷, a deep coverage of human rights issues refers more precisely to a break with professional routines or constructions intrinsic to the coverage of daily news. This approach presents and provokes reflexivity and questions the politics behind each human rights issue. A deeper professional connection with human rights questions is more narrowly related to the idealised democratic role of journalism as a public watchdog. It connects to what Cottle and Rai note as practices of investigation (or *exposé*), when journalists set out to investigate, expose and uncover information that is outside the public domain (2006:174). A deeper approach to human rights issues is close to their *reportage* (2006:179-180), in which journalists go beyond the reporting mission of surveillance, aim to generate deeper understandings and insights into current news, and provide a meticulous background and analysis, including their very own journalistic reflexivity. This communicative frame of *reportage* included both deliberative and display modes of communication. Likewise, a deeper professional engagement to human rights topics may also involve the audiences in a more complex reading process and deliberation (Cottle and Rai, 2006:170). This deeper approach may occur also when providing *community service*, sharing *collective interests*, and may affirm *cultural recognition*, by supporting communal values and community ideals, and even *campaign* actively and performatively for particular causes. This deeper involvement is likely to provoke a disposition for *reconciliation*, encompassing and extending beyond the performative 'community service' or campaigning. This is where the broadcaster becomes actively involved in bringing conflicted interests together (Cottle and Rai 2006:180-181). This interest is closer to the normative proposition of 'peace journalism' as explored previously in Chapter 3.

A more profound depth of coverage implies a degree of embedded discussion, either raised by the journalists' own reflexivity, or brought up by juxtaposing a plurality of sources, or even by exploring the complexity of one single voice deeply. As mentioned above, this professional engagement or motivation may correspond to other pro-active journalistic formats that involve investment of time and resources (feature reports, talk-

³⁷ The illustrative example used by Chouliaraki is the 9/11. Such type of news, she argues, in terms of news conventions, mean a move from the broadcast to live footage, as well as an uninterrupted flow of images and stories with various degrees of emotional power, constant updates, following debates, opinions and reactions, all with the sense of the 'here and now' (Chouliaraki, 2006).

shows, debates, among others). Therefore the daily news bulletins only rarely include such formats. However, there were a few examples noted in the analysed news sample, which leads me to argue that such endeavours are nonetheless possible within the everyday news programmes, despite the limitations of the context.

From the analysis of the considered news sample, together with the explanation of these three levels of depth when covering human rights issues, I designed the following table in order to better clarify this categorisation and demonstrate its operationalisation regarding the analysis of how human rights issues' are framed in television news:

Levels of depth			
	Shallow	Medium	Deep
Sources	<p>Dominant and providing authority's or challenger's view or perspective exclusively;</p> <p>Reliant on agency's information or press releases, no information confirmation or deeper investigation;</p> <p>Provide only factual or descriptive knowledge;</p> <p>'Human rights' refers only to someone's profession or affiliation;</p>	<p>Presents some creative initiative complementing the material provided by news agencies/press releases;</p> <p>Includes a wider plurality of voices, or explores deeply a single testimony;</p> <p>Some explanatory or evaluative knowledge provided by sources;</p>	<p>Great variety of types of sources (potentially providing balance between opposing views)</p> <p>Gives voice to victims as sources;</p> <p>Citizen journalism as source (when confirmed reliability);</p> <p>Uses experts as sources (potentially providing background and critical information in report or studio interview);</p> <p>Knowledge delivered by the sources built on background information;</p> <p>Provides explanatory, evaluative/moral knowledge;</p>
Resources	<p>Agencies, press releases, statistics and reports corroborated;</p> <p>Report edited in newsroom with no creative initiative (no possibility of engagement);</p> <p>Packaged by correspondent but providing up to date information exclusively;</p>	<p>Journalist <i>in situ</i> or in newsroom: uses some creative initiatives to overcome limitations/go beyond processing information provided by news agencies or press releases, (eg. using Skype, archive, graphics)</p>	<p>Reporter or correspondent's report or live report;</p> <p>Sent reporter, correspondent, foreign correspondent, stringer (physical proximity to the news);</p>
Duration	<p>Short (less than one minute) – prevents from giving background information. Example: anchor pack – presenter reading only (less than one minute), no interviews;</p>	<p>Standard ENG packages, but not lengthy/in-depth feature analysis involving expert/specialist correspondent and/or live studio discussion</p>	<p>Feature stories and investigation; in-depth interviews or analysis involving expert/specialist correspondent and/or live studio discussion</p>

	Breaking news – but with no further developments		
Content	Factual, descriptive; Up-to-date information; Basic informational elements;	Some embedded discussion aiming to generate deeper understanding and insights;	Embedded discussion in order to generate deeper understanding and insights; journalist may possibly be actively involved and aiming to provoke action or change

Figure 4.1 – Categorisation of the different levels of depth in human rights reporting

This division into three levels of depth in the coverage of human rights topics is inspired and metaphorically comparable to the use of the depth of field in manual photography (or *focus* in cinematography). In brief, the depth of field is the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene that appear acceptably sharp in an image. The process in obtaining a picture with a shallow or deep depth of field is interestingly close to the process of obtaining a deep or shallow coverage of human rights. A journalist, like a photographer, may provide a sharp picture of an object surrounded by a blurred background (or shallow depth of field) or, instead, they may opt to have the entire image sharp, working on a deep depth of field. A deep depth of field will show the object, or the subject, as well as its background in detail, providing a visually rich and meticulous photograph. In other cases, a shallow depth of field will focus on one particular detail, emphasizing the subject while de-emphasizing the foreground or background. The technique to obtain these different pictures is also directly akin to the process of explaining human rights in the news. In photography, the depth of field is determined by the exposure to light, which is determined by the combination of a certain aperture size (or the opening through which the light travels) and the speed of the shutter. The wider the aperture used, the fastest the shutter should be released in order to get the adequate lighting. This produces an image that is sharp around what the lens is focusing on and blurred otherwise. If the aperture used is narrow, so is the channel for light, and therefore a longer exposure time is needed. The shutter speed (or exposure time) chosen should therefore be slower, cautious, and any camera movement should be avoided. It is a careful process that results in a sharp focus at the image plane, and the photography will display a deep depth of field. Transferring this process to human rights reporting, one can say that the fast day-to-day coverage of events may allow focusing on

one specific detail or focus of the news story (and a shallow depth approach), whereas a slow, prolonged and meticulous coverage may display the subject focused as well as foreground and background information in detail. This metaphor is also useful to clarify the normative engagement of this theoretical suggestion of different depths of coverage in human rights reporting. In photography, the depth of field chosen determines the type of photograph but not necessarily its artistic quality. The argument here is that a shallow approach to human rights in the news should not, in principle, mean that the quality of the coverage is reduced. Both approaches (as well as a medium depth also possible to obtain in manual photography) may result in different interpretations of a subject, but these are still considerable interpretations that are the product of a series of decisions and key determinants that exist and influence *a priori* the coverage of a human rights problem (or the shooting of a photograph). These determinants, in photography and in the production of news, are subjective, contextual and infra-structurally and resource established.

The empirical research conveyed and presented in the following chapters is based, therefore, in this elaboration of the different levels of depth of coverage of human rights issues. This division derives from the non-existence of an adequate research model with which to combine the analysis of the nature, and content of human rights news with other intra-institutional factors that interfere with the news production processes. The findings obtained, in their turn, informed the ethnographical investigation conducted within the Portuguese public service broadcaster.

4.4 – Conclusion

Following the discussions on the complex definition of human rights in Chapter 2, and the social role of journalism operating in a so-called global public sphere in Chapter 3, this chapter sought to establish a connection with the second part of the thesis, which is dedicated to the empirical research. Drawing upon the sociology of journalism as an investigative framework, this chapter highlights the main determinants that influence the coverage and the role of the journalists regarding the coverage of human rights topics. Overall, this chapter argued that objectivity and ethical standards still represent a relevant justification for professional practices, and that timeliness, proximity and

scarce production resources are key determinants within the news production practices. This chapter also highlighted the importance of observing the silences in human rights reporting, stressing the importance of the research, and for that purpose the observation of the production stage of the news.

Departing from a practical difficulty in researching human rights in the news, and based in the revised scholarship in the previous chapters, three human rights frames within the news were also suggested and thoroughly explained, introducing the following empirical chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 5

Statement of Aims and Research Methodology

The literature review chapters have presented this study both as an examination of the presence or absence of human rights in the news, and an attempt to understand the reasons why human rights are being reported as they are. Specifically, it aimed to describe and provide a better understanding of the role that the media, namely journalism, plays with regard to human rights. It did so by reviewing literature about the dynamics of news production, and its relationship with human rights policies and social responsibility regarding their promotion. Chapter 2 introduced the evolution of the concept of human rights based on historical, philosophical and sociological perspectives. It also established a connection with media studies, by examining the possible contribution of the media to a global social ethic for human rights. Chapter 3 focused on the interplay between news media, human rights issues and global moral spaces. It explored the suggestion that a *responsibility to report* on atrocities and raising awareness for human rights causes exists. Chapter 4 examined the factors that regularly determine, encourage or hinder human rights reporting. This chapter also examined previous research studies on the coverage of human rights issues, and noted a procedural problem in undertaking such research. Therefore, while providing introductory elements to the adopted methodological approach and blending these with information about the case study investigated, the last chapter highlighted three prominent communicative framings for human rights reporting. Overall, the three chapters have pursued the complex relationship between human rights and journalism, emphasizing the extended set of elements that shape the coverage of human rights issues.

This methodology chapter is divided into three parts, presenting firstly the research questions and subsequent sub-questions, followed by the introduction of the case study to be considered. Finally the third section elaborates on the research methodology adopted.

5.1 – Research questions

As previously argued in the introductory Chapter 1 the leading research aim of this thesis is to explore the relationship between human rights and journalism. Seen as scarce and underexplored from a rights perspective (Apodaca, 2007), this research aims to address this relationship by observing both content of the news as well as the journalistic production processes that deliver such content. Therefore two main research questions (RQ) surface from the main exploratory aim of the research:

RQ1: How are human rights represented in the news?

This question explores how news professionals translate human rights issues into journalistic output, by looking at the representation or presence of human rights in the news. This also involves looking at the possible interference of contextual factors in human rights coverage, and the consequent prevalence under relevant areas or themes. Furthermore, it is pertinent to observe the variations that characterise such news, by disclosing information regarding its sourcing, format and relevance. The following sub-questions will be then considered:

RQ1.1 – How are human rights present in the news?

RQ1.2 – Which areas or news themes prevail in human rights representation?

RQ1.3 – What are the main variations that characterise these news reports?

RQ2: Why are journalists covering human rights issues the way they are?

This second research question focuses on the professional practices, the organisational dynamics, and editorial choices, and journalists' reflexivity on their professional and social role regarding human rights, which together influence the coverage of human rights issues. This question is also divided into three sub-questions:

RQ2.1 – How do professional practices and organisational dynamics influence human rights coverage?

RQ2.2 – Which editorial choices and news values prevail while reporting human rights issues?

RQ2.3 – What are journalists' understandings of human rights and their perceived role regarding human rights issues?

5.2 – Case study

This research observes the Portuguese news media, namely the public-service television – *Rádio e Televisão de Portugal* (RTP). Although the analysis focuses on the prime-time news service, the RTP1's 8:00 PM news bulletin named *Telejornal*, the broadcaster's television news production was considered in all its forms and content. Indeed, and as will be explored along this thesis, RTP's news production is intertwined across several formats.

This research is interested in observing the manner in which human rights are covered within the news, and to unveil the reasons behind the coverage. The Portuguese television public service news provides this research with an example of a news service and newsroom operation that can be examined in its every day routines. Although exploring such a relationship in countries or newsrooms that work under the shadow of authoritarian governments might provide possible insights into the roles, importance and potential of the media in such realities, such a quest goes beyond the scope of the present research. An essential argument here is that observing the practices and outcomes of a broadcaster that operates in a democratic country, enjoying the privilege of a free press, can both enlarge the range of the existing research, and also probably mirror other similarly structured newsrooms around the world. Additionally, I have excluded the possibility of extending this study to other broadcasters for comparative purposes. Although there are innumerable advantages in conducting comparative studies in media research, I believe that the close observation of one case study is more revealing and detailed in a first stage and makes it possible to address the lack of similar studies of human rights in the news. The methodology and results of the present in-depth research may therefore and hopefully inspire further studies about the relationship between journalism and human rights in other news media.

Portugal has been a democratic republic since the Carnation Revolution in 1974, which overthrew forty-eight years of dictatorship. The following ratification of the Constitution of 1976 affirmed, among many other articles, the *freedom of expression and information* (Article 37), comprehending the freedom of speech, the right to inform, to inform oneself and to be informed, and the *freedom of the press* (Article 38). Similar to other European countries, this document also defines the nature of the State regulated media,

and consecrates the independence and plurality of the media (Article 39). Over the last four decades and under a democratic political regime, Portugal has been classified as a peaceful³⁸, democratic³⁹ country, with a free press⁴⁰.

Out of all the Portuguese news media, this research targets the public service broadcaster. This is because the broadcaster's principles encompass the same underlying values of human rights, which are to defend *universality, accessibility to all individuals equally, independence and autonomy, and diversity* (UNESCO, 2001). In addition, opting to analyse public service television allows the research to (theoretically) isolate the possibility of state inference in the news, as well as clarify the economic and market-driven pressures that the public service broadcaster is under, at least in the terms of the law, and its protections and influences. It is under these same public service principles that this Portuguese broadcaster extends its transmission of *Telejornal* live and daily worldwide, through its international channels (*RTP Internacional, RTP África*), via satellite or online, to millions of Portuguese language speakers. The interest in broadcasting this daily newscast globally is especially to reach former colonies in Africa, Asia and South America, and the Portuguese emigrant communities in these same countries, as well as in Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. Therefore, while this research addresses a national broadcaster its transmission and scope is global.

According to rating agency Marktest⁴¹ RTP1 has scored an average of 21.6% audience share in 2011, which dropped to 18.5% in 2012. Although it was only the third

³⁸ The Global Peace Index 2013, produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace and the Economist Intelligence Unit, classified Portugal as the 18th most peaceful country in the world; the 1976-2011 Political Terror Scale ratings, which combines data provided by the Amnesty International and the U.S. Department of State's reports, attributes Portugal the level 2 of political violence and terror (from 1-5 scale), meaning that 'there is a limited amount of imprisonment for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beatings are exceptional. Political murder is rare.' (See <http://www.politicalterroryscale.org> - last accessed August 2013).

³⁹ The Democracy Index 2011, by the Economist Intelligence Unit, positioned Portugal as the 26th most democratic country in the world, listed between countries considered to have full democracy. However, the updated 2012 index downgraded the country to the category of 'flawed democracy' due to the 'erosion of sovereignty in the context of the Eurozone crisis'.

⁴⁰ The Reporters Without Borders' 2013 Freedom Press report indicates Portugal as a country with satisfactory situation (28th position), having been upgraded from the 40th position in 2011.

most seen generalist television channel in 2012, its prime time newscast *Telejornal* recorded the highest number of spectators among other networks prime time news bulletins. Its results indicate a 35.5% share in July 2011, and the newscast has kept a leading position over the last couple of years.

RTP's authoritative audience share is under dispute, however. A newly adopted audiences measurement system, (GfK), implemented in early 2012, registered a 6% share drop for the public service broadcaster's channel 1. The company's first report showed an average share of 13.9% for RTP⁴², contradicting the broadcaster's own statistics using the previous system, which pointed out an average share of 20.1%. The broadcaster questioned the official commission regarding the reliability of the new measuring system, highlighting 'severe flaws' in the audio-matching technology and in the representativeness of the panel of 1100 homes. This inquiry has not yet been resolved⁴³.

This investigation uses a wide range of resources and methods. Research materials include *media texts* or news stories as they appear within the news bulletins; the *actors*, that is the journalists or any other person who act as human rights sources; *documents* such as press releases, news agencies' texts and news programmes' rundowns and archives; and *direct observation* of the news production processes from the first steps on news filtering, to the editorial meetings and the final outcome. Each of these were analysed through the lens of the different methods discussed below, and their strengths and weaknesses will be explored in the following paragraphs.

5.3 – Methodology

This study draws upon a multifaceted and flexible research methodology, which combines a variety of traditional media research tools and methods, adapting and adjusting them to the purpose of the research. There are substantial benefits to

⁴¹ Data available in www.marktest.com [last accessed in September 2013]

⁴² Data from 01/03/2012.

⁴³ This issue has also been debated in the Assembly, and left-wing opposition parties claimed that these unfavourable reports are conveniently elaborated in order to validate the Government's privatization plans for the public service broadcaster (sources: *Expresso*, 2012; *Sol*, 2013).

methodological eclecticism, when these approaches are used in combination with each other, because ‘the resulting analysis is invariably stronger’ (Deacon et al. 2007:140). To this effect, a set of four methods was adopted to answer the research questions: 1) content analysis, which allowed the research to develop grounds for 2) a communicative framing analysis, 3) ethnographic observation of news production and 4) interviews with the news professionals. Content and framing analysis were combined to examine the presence of human rights issues in the news, by identifying the main news topics treating human rights issues, their sources, their different formats, the geographical location of the news items and their relevance within the news programmes. The analysis of such news elements in combination in the different news items, allowed items to be placed into different typologies of human rights reporting, grouped into three different framings of coverage (further explained in section 5.3.2). Ethnography of news production and in-depth interviews with professionals permitted the research to explore journalists’ work environments, as well as to understand their perspectives on human rights reporting. The following sub-sections outline the application of each of the methods in the thesis.

5.3.1 – Content analysis

News stories include many interacting components, which provide various possibilities for study. Through the observation of a rolling random sample⁴⁴ of news programmes, this study collected important data about reporting patterns on news concerning human rights. This method allows the researcher to ‘describe and analyse media content in a more comprehensive way, a way less prone to subjective selectiveness and idiosyncrasies’ (Hansen et al., 1998: 91). Although the use of content analysis has repeatedly been criticised for its quantitative nature, its positivist notion of objectivity, and its lack of theoretical meaning (Kracauer, 1952, Burgelin, 1972, Sumner, 1979), content analysis continues to be one of the most frequently used methods in communication research, supporting a systematic analysis of communications content. Content analysis was therefore used to address RQ1 regarding the representation and

⁴⁴ The mentioned sample is explained later in this chapter (see 5.3.1.1).

presence of human rights in the news, and provided this research with patterns of when human rights is included in the news.

Content analysis was applied to place the coverage of human rights issues in the news into two strands. On one hand, and differently from previous studies, this research scanned for the *presence* of human rights within the daily news, analysing it on three levels (news containing the words *human rights*; news containing correlate terms to human rights; and news covered under a substantive human rights theme). On the other hand, content analysis provided an examination of different features within these news items. The various combinations of such elements allowed the definition of three communicative framings for human rights coverage, as formulated in chapter 4.

5.3.1.1 – Sampling and unit of analysis

The analysis followed a rolling or composite week scheme for sampling, which consisted of examining the news broadcasted from April 2011 to March 2012 by selecting one day of each week. This generated a sample of 53 *Telejornal*⁴⁵ news programmes with variable duration of 55 to 60 minutes each. Using this selection scheme allowed a sample of news to be collected that is ‘aware of the cycles and seasonal variations which characterise much media coverage’ (Hansen et al., 1998:103). This choice improved the representativeness of the sample, and ensured that the data emerging from the sample were equally distributed across the weeks. For the precise delimitation of what constituted each sampling item, the research defined one news item as:

- i) Anchor’s introduction plus packaged or live report;
- ii) One item if the following report refers to the same subject. The transition by newsreader and the report from a second correspondent will be considered a second item;

⁴⁵ See Appendix nr 2 for a detailed list of days included in the sample.

- iii) An item also counts as one unit when a news story is presented with no report, that is, when a certain topic is covered by the presenter reading only, reading over footage, or reading plus a sound bite;

In summary, 471 news stories were selected, screened and then scrutinised using a coding scheme that will be described in the following section. The data collected was then processed using a software package used for statistical analysis (SPSS).

5.3.1.2 – Coding scheme

A purposefully designed coding sheet and manual were used⁴⁶ to analyse the compiled news. The coding sheet included eleven sections: 1) news item's general information, including *date, day of the week, time code, placement* in the programme, *length, authorship*; 2) *format*; 3) *production resources*; 4) *topic and focus* of news item; 5) *human rights presence* in the news; 6) *sources* of the news; 7) *mode* of reporting; 8) *location*; 9) *scope*; 10) *special features*. The coding sheet also included a non-numbered section regarding the news item's *communicative frame*, which will be addressed in the following section of this chapter.

5.3.2 – Framing analysis

Content analysis is an insufficient method to study questions related to the communicative construction of each news item. However, the elements provided by this method allowed me to gather a number of elements that reveal certain discursive patterns. Thus, if content analysis provided a general understanding about human rights *presence* in the news, such noted discursive patterns could be clustered in three main communicative frames. These unveil the different *levels of depth* in human rights reporting: *shallow, medium* and *deep*. These three communicative frames were elaborated by combining the concept of *levels of pity*, coined by Chouliaraki (2006), and the communicative frames proposed by Cottle and Rai (2006). Integrated together, these

⁴⁶ See Appendix number 1 (Coding sheet).

levels of depth refer to different levels of professional journalistic engagement regarding human rights reporting. This choice, division and findings were theoretically formulated in Chapter 4. Additionally, the communicative patterns suggested by the framing analysis trigger and feed the subsequent ethnography and observation of news production processes, as well as the interviews conducted for this thesis.

Figure 5.1, below, illustrates the levels of presence of human rights in the news and levels of depth or engagement according to its characteristics.

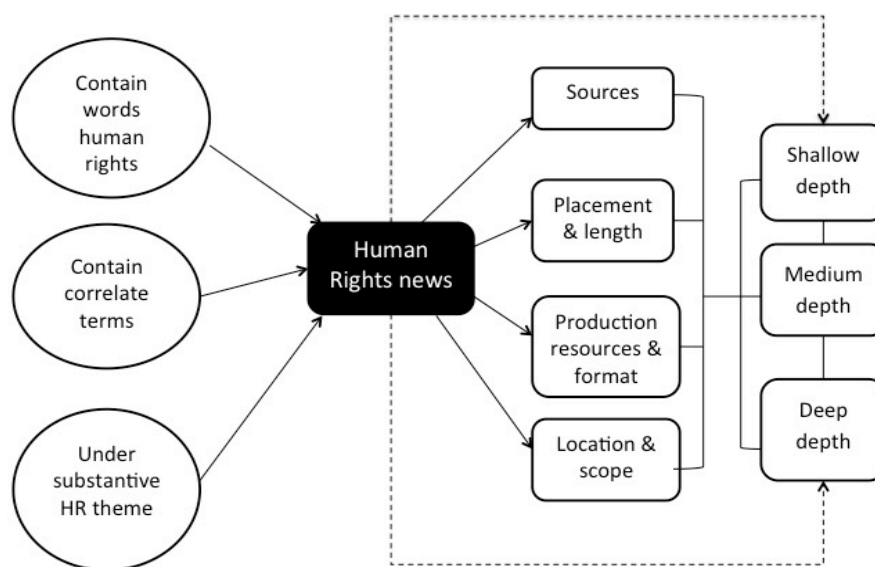


Figure 5.1 – Levels of presence and depth in human rights related news

5.3.3 – Ethnography of news production

In communication research, far more attention has been given to audience reception than to the production process. However, in order to address the second research question of this thesis, it is necessary to refer to important insights into the complex of constraints, pressures, and forces that surround, select, and shape media output (Hansen et al., 1998:35). These potentially influence the manner in which human rights are included or not in the news. Observing and following news production processes

allows us to understand what motivates or constraints journalists' responses and professional engagement with human rights issues. As Halloran claims, it is essential to 'question basic assumptions and policies, challenge professional mythologies and prevailing values, enquire about existing structures, external pressures, and *modus operandi* and, where appropriate, suggest alternatives' (1998:20). Relevant ethnographies of news production since 1950 inspire and contribute to the present study (see, for example White, 1950; Breed, 1955; Tuchman, 1972; Sigelman, 1973; Schlesinger, 1978). Still, the news production realities are increasingly changing, and findings from these key-studies (or more recent others) may now be in need of updating and revision. The contemporary media landscape is confronted by a fast-changing and complex news ecology that encompasses much of the globe and is characterised by 24/7 news outlets, different news platforms, and diverse production arrangements. Therefore, the need for such studies is as great as ever (Cottle, 2007). Hansen *et al.* claim that ethnography or participant observation (the first refers to the anthropological label for the method) has a number of strengths: it *makes the invisible visible*, recording the 'behind the scenes' elements of news production; it *counters the 'problem of inference'*, helping to reveal the complexity of the constraints and conventions that inform the shape, selections and silences of media output; it *qualifies or corrects speculative theoretical claims*, taking theories out of the speculative level, and engaging them with sources of evidence; it reminds media research of the *contingent nature of cultural production*; it provides evidence for the *dynamic as well as embedded nature of cultural production*; and improves upon other methods through *triangulation* (1998: 43-46).

This method helps to reach findings about the process of news-making in its three perspectives, as articulated by Schudson: the political economy view, which relates to outcomes of news processes to the structure of the state and economy, and to the economic foundation of news organizations; the sociological view, especially the study of social organization, occupations and professions, and the social construction of ideology; and, thirdly, the cultural approach that emphasises the constraining force of broad cultural traditions and symbolic systems, regardless of the structure of economic organization or the character of occupational routines (2000:177). Some of the previous research (based on ethnographies and other methods) reveals valuable empirical data, which is useful as a departing point to understand the relationship between news and human rights; these data and insights inspire this research's ethnographic purposes and

propel the research discussion. This is especially true for the case studies of source interaction or competition, which reveal that journalists receive the largest share of their news from official government agencies (Fishman, 1980:51), and also that 'resource-poor' organizations have great difficulty in getting the media's attention (Goldenberg, 1975), and therefore need to adjust to modes of organizational interaction closer to those of established organizations (Gitlin, 1980). Additionally, there are studies about the relationships in the newsroom, both among reporters and editors, that show that reporters write what all the others write (Feldman, 1993, Krauss 2000, Freeman 2000), or that when covering the same international event all adopt common themes and orientations when addressing 'humanity' rather than particular national audiences (Hallin and Mancini, 1991), or that the members of an organization modified their own personal values in accordance with the requirements of the organization (Epstein 1973:xiv). Finally, besides considering studies about newsrooms organisational routines, and with particular relevance for the study of human rights in the news, there are crucial ethnographic studies on the culture of foreign correspondents (Pedelty, 1995; Hannerz, 2004), as well as the work of international news agencies (Paterson, 2011). These are only a few examples that must be confronted to account for the rapidly evolving characteristics of the news-making ecology, in a fast-changing global context. This research also aims to reconsider these studies from a human rights perspective and question them, to disclose further elements about news values, the imperatives of airtime and deadlines, imagined audience interests, national cultural outlooks, the professional pursuit of impartiality and objectivity or moral stances and crusades.

For the purposes of this research, participant observation included following daily editorial meetings and weekly planning editorial meetings, engaging in daily newsroom observation, shadowing journalists and news editors, observing news reports and even joining news professionals in informal moments such as meal times, where some relevant conversations occurred. This news production observation was completed over one working week in January 2013, every day from early morning to late evening. This allowed observing the complete cycle of news production routines and decisions throughout the day. The duration of this observational period was not decided *a priori*, and I had unlimited access to the newsroom and full collaboration of the news workers. This access and collaboration permitted me to gather valuable and comprehensive research notes, including documents that support the process of news making (agency

feeds, raw footage, press releases, programmes' scripts and running orders), as well as to arrange interviews with the news staff. Given the above, the observation period ended when I was confident I had the research material I needed. Additionally, my personal and vocational experiences as a former news producer for the Portuguese public service broadcaster have somewhat accelerated the process of observation, as I was familiar with the functioning of the broadcaster's news department, staff and news making routines.

The choice of ethnography of news production as a method applied in this research is therefore linked to both analytical and personal justifications. On one hand, this approach is in line with the thesis's theoretical framework that refers to the importance of examining the various elements that interfere in news production, namely the coverage of human rights related issues. On the other hand, as a former news worker, I am aware that this 'backstage' research unveils these key determinants better than another method. In this sense, including ethnographic studies in the design of my methodological approach has therefore added significant and unique value to the study of the representation of human rights issues in the daily news.

Despite the advantages of this methodological choice, I was aware of the drawbacks that a personal involvement with the subject of study might imply. However, years of study that preceding the completion of this thesis allowed me to acknowledge the dangers raised by significant news production ethnographers (see for example Elliott, 1971; Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1980). Malinowski alerts researchers to the information taken for granted by the researcher when becoming too familiar with the observed situation or, 'going native' (1922, cited by Deacon et al, 2007:260). In my case, I felt both 'native' but also an 'outsider': reliant on a strong familiarity with the people and situations observed, but also aware of the need to preserve a distant analytical stance by preventing my personal views and subjectivity to interfere with the research. Overall, I felt that the perks of my familiarity with RTP far outweighed the disadvantages for the research as it helped overcome obstacles in access to the subject matter, as will be further explained in the next section. Furthermore, it is important to note that this research is not solely based in participant observation, but employs the method in combination with other methods of research, making, as argued in the beginning of this section (5.3) the resulting analysis stronger.

5.3.4 – Interviews

Like any other method ethnography has its weaknesses. The main criticisms refer first to the fact that participant observation is likely to give too much explanatory weight to only visible practices of production only and not external forces. This could possibly be correct if participant observation studies were conducted through the theoretically innocent prism of naive empiricism (Hansen et al., 1998; Cottle, 2007). Yet most studies that use this method are aware of these wider and impinging forces and seek to research how they become ‘negotiated’ in and through the intricacies of production and professional practices (Cottle, 2007:7). Second, it has been argued that the participant observation approach ‘tends to obscure the way in which managerial pressures are brought to bear on journalists’ (Curran, 1989:144), since it is difficult to gain regular access to senior levels of management. It is certainly the case that ethnographers rarely manage to gain access to senior corporate decision-making ‘behind closed doors’, and managerial influence may in any case become institutionalised in the organisational culture or ‘way of doing things’ these forms of pressure and constraints need not necessarily escape the participant observer’s eye (Cottle, 2007:7). In order to overcome this I conducted a number of interviews at middle levels of management seniority as well as with those above and below, to gather a wide range of testimonies with several news workers including foreign correspondents. In total, thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted⁴⁷. The planning of the interviews included, in the first stage of the research, addressing the news workers that were specifically connected to the evening news programme in question *Telejornal*. However, due to the close interconnection and dialogue during the production of the broadcaster’s various news outputs (as will be further explained in Chapter 7), other relevant interviewees from different sections and programmes were approached. This way, therefore, the body of interviews encompasses a more representative sample, displaying also a more diverse range of opinions regarding the broadcaster’s process and policies of news production and decision-making. The news workers were all interviewed face to face, except for the Brazil correspondent, who was interviewed and recorded on Skype. All the interviews

⁴⁷ The list of the interviewees is included in Appendix 3

were recorded but one⁴⁸. All the interviewees were firstly asked to briefly summarise their professional paths, previous jobs and functions at RTP; they were also asked to explain their current functions and daily tasks. The interview would move differently for each interviewee, but a key set of questions were common in every interview: a) *Have you ever reported on human rights issues?* b) *What does it mean to cover human rights in the news?* c) *What is more rewarding to you, as recognition of your work: audience increase, journalism awards or recognition by your peers?* c) *Do you feel free to report whatever information you like? Is there freedom of the press in Portugal and in RTP more specifically?* d) *What is your ideal project or report, if you had no financial or time constraints whatsoever?* e) *What should journalists' role be regarding human rights?* Other matters ended up being common to the majority the interviews, but were often raised by the news professionals themselves, such as the issues of newsroom financial constraints, the impact of the financial crisis in Portugal and in the news, the coverage of international news in person or via international news agencies, the pressure of audiences, and decisions on covering certain ongoing news topics, as will be further explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

Given the above, the interviews also provided this thesis with material to be crosschecked against evidence provided by the other methods. This material is believed to be determinant, and it allows the study to reach what Lindlof summarised as the seven basic objectives of qualitative interviewing for communication research (1995:166-167): 1) learning about things that cannot be observed directly by other means; 2) understanding a social actor's perspective; 3) inferring the communicative properties and processes of interpersonal relationship; 4) verifying, validating, or commenting on data obtained from other sources; 5) testing hypotheses the researcher has developed; 6) eliciting the distinctive language – vocabularies, idioms, jargon, forms of speech – used by social actors in their natural settings and; 7) achieving efficiency in collecting data. The research hence includes in depth semi-structured interviews with various actors at every stage of news production processes (from news directors to senior correspondents, foreign correspondents, desk editors and programme editors,

⁴⁸ This interview started as an informal conversation with one of the one of the deputy news directors, and lead to an in-depth interview. While I requested his authorisation to record the conversation, he preferred not to, but allowed me to take notes.

investigative reporters, news anchors and news producers). The interviews allowed for 'openness to changes of sequence and question forms in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the interviewees' (Kvale, 1996:65).

A crucial part of this study consequently relies on participant observation and interviews. Despite being seen as a slow, time-consuming but thorough method, ethnography and participant observation are highly rewarding since they provide 'a rare look to the inner sanctum of media production, that privileged domain in which media professionals ply their trade, make their decisions and fashion their collective outpourings for consumption by the rest of us' (Hansen *et al.* 1998:35). The problem of access to the newsroom was overcome by benefiting from my positioning: as previously mentioned, as a former journalist and news producer and former employee of RTP, I enjoyed easy access to this broadcaster's headquarters, which provided my thesis with valuable insights and findings. I believe that this privilege was fundamental to addressing precisely the research theme considered. I benefitted from professional and, often, previously built personal trust. This has put most of the news workers at ease, such that they may have felt less 'intimidated' by the scrutiny of academic research. Furthermore, I benefitted from having previous understandings and experience of how news routines happen in journalism, particularly in RTP; and was aware of internal and external elements that influence news production processes. As Nolas puts it, there are advantages with both outsider and insider perspectives; on one hand, outsiders have the 'benefit of approaching the situation a fresh – and as a result, hopefully, the ability to surface the taken-for granted'; but on the other hand, 'insiders have the experience and tacit knowledge of the situation and possess the 'pieces of the puzzle' often 'inaccessible' to the outside researcher' (2005:2).

5.4 – Conclusion

The combination of methods above will be deployed to answer this thesis' research questions regarding *how* human rights are present in the news and *why* these are covered the way they are. Content and framing analysis address the problem of tackling human rights in the news, overcoming a procedural difficulty, as argued in Chapter 4,

and providing a new methodological approach specifically designed for this subject matter. Further, ethnographic observation combined with in-depth interviews permitted the testing of the nature of the news within preliminary stage of news production at the Portuguese broadcaster. The content and framing analysis explored a sample of news gathered between April 2011 and March 2012, and the ethnographic fieldwork and interviews took place in 2013. Along the timeline considered there were no major structural changes within the administrative policies of the broadcaster, and therefore the time gap did not represent an obstacle to the research. Additionally, it allowed me to test the core editorial changes regarding human rights related issues.

Using a combined set of methods based mainly on participant observation of news production processes allows the exploration of the extent to which the journalists' understandings of human rights plays an essential part in defining and legitimizing ideas about human rights (and marginalising or rendering silent others), and what may therefore be publicly available to have an impact on the shaping of common understandings of human rights.

This research's findings will be presented in the following three chapters. Further details on the application of the methods will be provided in these chapters when necessary.

Chapter 6

Representation of human rights in the news

As stated in the previous chapters, this research aims to examine *i) the presence or absence of human rights in the news* – including *how* human rights is represented in the news when it is present; *ii) the professional elements and organizational circumstances, which contribute to this presence or to an absence* – or *why* are human rights reported the way they are; both aims set out to reflect upon the wider topic of the relationship between journalism and human rights. For this reason, and in order to better describe and analyse the presence of human rights in the news in a comprehensive way, this research conducted a content analysis, which provided essential findings that help to understand the *how*, before engaging with the *why*. This chapter delivers the rationale for the selected sample of news, and also presents the main findings of the analysis. These provide a solid set of elements that ground the research before stepping to the next level, which is related to the aforementioned *why* (this will be explored in chapters 7 and 8).

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first one recaps the ambiguity of tackling human rights in the news (as argued in Chapter 4), and suggests a subsequent division into different levels of presence. It also explains the contextual coverage of human rights issues under four main themes or topics in which human rights are addressed in the news. The second section comprehensively examines the most visible characteristics of the coded news stories, addressing their focus, sources, production resources, placement within the programmes and the geographical distribution of such news stories. Lastly, drawing upon the previous sections' findings the third section explores the prevalent communicative framings of these news stories, which connect to distinct levels of depth in the coverage of human rights issues. These were thoroughly elaborated in Chapter 4, which blends the theoretical revision to the purposed case study, and the last section presents the findings of the framing analysis. The different levels of depth consequently suggest different levels of professional engagement towards human rights issues, and leaves hints for the analysis of the news production processes, addressed in Chapters 7 and 8.

6.1 – The ambiguous presence of ‘human rights’ in the news

The choice of the news content to analyse derives from the articulation of the research problem and the theoretical framework of the study, and it aims to address the first research questions of this thesis, *RQ1: How are human rights represented in the news?* and other questions in combination with this main one, such as *are human rights under a specific category of news, or are they present across different related news subjects or themes? How often are human rights issues covered in the news? In such stories, who are the main actors or sources of news? What is the geographical distribution and scope of human rights news, and does this affect the potential contribution of journalism to a ‘global moral order?’*

As stated in Chapter 4 the previous research has shown the difficulties of operationalising the identification of human rights topics and issues in the news. Selecting a research sample according to specific or related key lexicon (Hanson and Miller, 1987; Geyer and Shapiro, 1988; Ovsiovitch, 1993; Ramos *et al*, 2007), as argued before, excludes a significant number of news items that are substantively connected to human rights themes, although not presented as such. Having reviewed the prominent research attempts to tackle the presence of human rights in the news, this thesis suggests that such endeavour should be extended to more than a lexical choice. For this research human rights were spotted in the news on three levels of presence: i) news that includes the words ‘human rights’ specifically, ii) News that contains correlate terms to ‘human rights’ and iii) news under a substantive human rights’ theme or area⁴⁹.

6.1.1 - Different levels of presence of human rights in the news

This subsection looks at nature of human rights in the news. It nominates three different levels of presence on an ontological level of what is believed to exist with regard to human rights in the news. These three aforementioned levels of presence are:

⁴⁹ This division was pertinent after a first approach to the news sample and therefore it was not defined prior the coding. A first screening allowed the drafting of these three levels of presence, as well as eliminating the news items that were not remotely connected to human rights. A second screening of the news *corpus* allowed the coding of these news into these three categories and a third screening was conducted to confirm this distribution.

- i) News that includes the words 'human rights' specifically⁵⁰,
- ii) News that contains correlate terms to 'human rights'⁵¹ and
- iii) News under a substantive human rights' theme or area.

Informing and instructing the selection of this sample, news items were chose by drawing on such legal documentation as the International Bill of Human Rights⁵². This consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the two legally binding instruments that expand the litany of rights enshrined in the Declaration: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and two Optional Protocols annexed therein, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); as well as other documents⁵³. Drawing upon such legal documentation provided this research with a wider lexicon, which shaped the selection of the news items in the sample⁵⁴.

Having considered these three levels of presence in human rights reporting, the research shows that 87% of the news is under a substantive human rights theme or area (410 news items), although these items are not delivered or defined as human rights stories; 9.6% of the news items contain correlate terms to human rights (45 news items) and a smaller percentage of news, 3.4%, include the words *human rights* specifically (16 news items). As the chart below illustrates (Figure 6.1):

⁵⁰ Or the expressions *people's rights*, *citizen's rights* or *fundamental rights*, seen as synonyms.

⁵¹ A list of these terms is provided in 6.1.1.

⁵² Referred to by the United Nations as 'the ethical and legal basis for all the human rights work of the United Nations... the foundation upon which the international system for the protection and promotion of human rights has been developed' (Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet no. 22, p.3)

⁵³ The mentioned documents are those that protect the 3rd generation of human rights. These are considered aspirational 'soft law'. Although the term 'third generation of human rights' remains unofficial, it encompasses an extremely broad spectrum of rights, as detailed previously in chapter 2 of the present study.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 5 for further details on the coding scheme used.

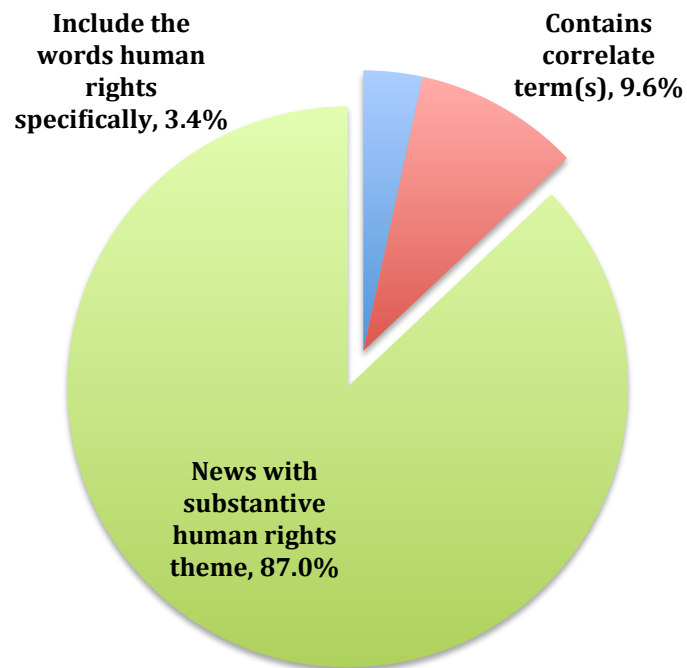


Figure 6.1 – An overview of the analysed news stories according to the *presence* of human rights issues

According to this distribution in the sample it is possible to explain each of these three categories and their correspondent news stories.

1) *News that include the words ‘human rights’ specifically*

This category is the less frequent and the most ambiguous regarding any news reporting patterns. It represents 3.4% of all the news stories coded (16 news items), which are distributed along three of the four topics considered for this research, as shown below in Table 1 (this distribution in themes is explained further ahead in the text, in subsection 6.2 and 6.4.1). Even though they include the specific words ‘human rights,’ this rather limited sample of sixteen news stories refers to news items that do not necessarily address *human rights* as an issue itself.

2) *News that contain correlate terms to ‘human rights’*

Along with the previous category, news stories under this category are a small proportion of the whole sample considered by this research (9.6% or 45 news items). These news items are also spread around three of the four topics defined for the coding

(see Table 1). This news group is distinguished by the rest due to the incidence of the following key correlating terms and phrases to human rights: *'workers' rights'*, *'equitable distribution of sacrifices'*, *'onslaught against civilians'*, *'protect the most vulnerable'*, *'right to healthcare'*, *'social rights'*, *'discrimination'*, *'responsibility to protect its people'*, *'prejudice'*, *'crimes against humanity'*, *'right to protection of identity'*, *'freedom of circulation'*, *'sex abuse'*, *'crimes against children'*, *'right to demonstrate'*, *'right to strike'*, *'equality'*, *'women's rights'*, *'peace building work'*, *'freedom of expression'*, *'right to vote'*, *'right to a participative democracy'*, *'people's resistance and struggle'*, *'State of right'*, *'freedom'*, *'social State'*, *'right to benefits and pensions'*, *'dictatorship'*, *'inequality of access to healthcare'*, *'right to life'*, the NGO name *'Human Rights Watch'*⁵⁵, *'slavery'*, *'racism'*, *'xenophobia'*, *'censorship'*, *'paedophilia'*, *'children's rights'*, *'genocide'*. As previously mentioned, the correlating terms highlighted are based in the legal documentation of human rights law, which determined the selection of this sample.

3) *News under a substantive human rights' theme or area*

The most significant number of news stories considered in the analysed sample was found to come under this third category (87% or 410 news items). By substantive human rights area this research understands all news items that are strongly connected to human rights issues or events, although they are not presented as distinctive human rights news. These news items do not include the words *human rights* specifically, or contain the aforementioned correlate terms to human rights, but are still directly connected to the human rights topics and secondary topics included in the coding scheme. The systematic viewing of the bulletins considered in the sample revealed a significant number of news items that justified the existence of this third group. Despite not including the words 'human rights' or any correlate terms, these news items were still connected to themes that strongly relate to human rights problems. These themes were also considered in the coding and grouped into four main topics (*armed conflict/war, disaster, economy and politics* and *social issues*) and analysed regarding the focus of these stories in twenty categories listed in section 6.2.1. These news stories included, for example, the coverage of protests or strikes against austerity measures by

⁵⁵ Although this non-governmental organisation's name includes the words *human rights*, its mention was included in the category of correlate terms.

several countries' governments, stories about poverty and the social impact as consequence of the financial crisis, and reports about war developments or humanitarian aid, refugees or asylum seekers, among many other examples, even though they did not include the specific words 'human rights' or any correlate term in the narration. These news stories, in sum, were about the four main topics coded and fitted the categories of sub topics elaborated for the coding of the news sample. Additionally, these news stories were coded in terms of the human rights at stake, or the human rights implied in the content. For example, again, a news story about protest against austerity would be coded as news about civil rights (as the right to assembly is a civil right) and social and economic rights (at stake when austerity plans are to be applied). Further detail and results regarding the types of rights in the news analysed are explored and presented in section 6.1.3.

Using these three different possibilities of the presence of human rights in the news at the first stage of analysis is mostly a practical solution to operationalise the sampling of news items. These figures show that researching human rights and its presence in the news cannot be limited to the analysis of news items which deliberately contain the terms *human rights*, and therefore, human rights cannot be researched as a specific category of news. This reinforces the idea previously argued that human rights are covered in the news almost exclusively under the name of other categories of news (ICHRP, 2002; Ramos *et al*, 2007). Given this, the next subsection examines comprehensively the contextual coverage of human rights issues under four main themes or topics in which 'human rights' are addressed in the news.

6.1.2 - Contextual coverage of human rights issues: relevant topics

Having introduced the three levels of presence of human rights in the analysed news items, these same news items were distributed into four predominant and generic news topics. Distribution by topic occurred independently of their classification by level of presence, and according to the introductory text of each news item (or anchor text): 1)

Armed conflict or war, 2) Disaster⁵⁶, 3) Economy and Politics, 4) Social issues. As figure 2 illustrates, the most predominant topic in the news is *Economy and Politics* (46.3% or 218 news items), followed by the category *Social Issues* (29.7% or 140 news items), *Armed conflict or war* (16.6% or 78 news items), and finally *Disaster* (7.4% or 35 news items).

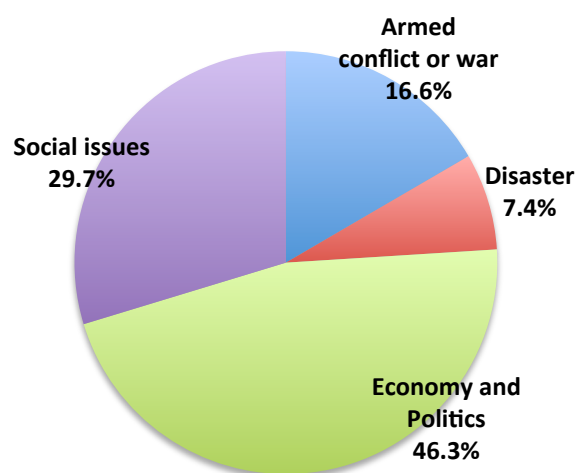


Figure 6.2 - An overview of the analysed news stories according to the distribution in four different topics

	Armed conflict / war (n)	%	Disaster (n)	%	Economy and Politics (n)	%	Social Issues (n)	%	Total (n)	%
Include the words human rights specifically	7	9	0	0	7	3	2	2	16	3
Contains correlate term(s)	10	13	1	3	25	12	9	6	45	10
News with substantive human rights theme	61	78	34	97	186	85	129	92	410	87
Total	78	100	35	100	218	100	140	100	471	100

Table 6.1 - Human rights presence in the news items and corresponding distribution across different topics

⁵⁶ Natural disaster or non-natural disaster .

Based on this outcome, the coverage of human rights issues under the topic of *Economy and Politics* may signal a contextual influence on the journalistic agenda. The global financial crisis and its impact on Europe may explain the evident importance of the issue to news agendas of the affected countries, and brings to light consequential aspects that involve human rights issues. This inference will be thoroughly analysed and confirmed in section 6.2, when looking further into the characteristics of these news items, particularly their focus, sources (quoted directly or indirectly), scope and location. Following this same reasoning over contextual influence on the determination of news themes, the lower numbers of *Armed conflict or war* news may suggest a dereliction of duty regarding international or distant human rights causes. These findings suggest interesting discussion points that will be further developed in this and the next chapters.

6.1.3 – Types of rights covered

Based on the progressive definition of human rights reviewed in Chapter 2, the content analysis included the examination of the types of rights in question within the considered sample of news. Previous research has demonstrated that the most prominent type of rights featured in news is civil rights and that economic and social rights are blatantly ignored in the news (Ovsiovitch, 1993; Ramos *et al*, 2007). However, having argued that the external milieu has a significant influence on news content, and observing that the most covered news topic within the collected sample is economy and politics, it becomes necessary to re-evaluate this affirmation.

To this effect, human rights were coded by order of appearance in the news. This refers to the underlying human rights within each news item, both when such rights are referred to by a journalist or sources or merely subjacent to the event. Based on legal documentation, four categories of rights were defined⁵⁷: 1) *civil rights*, 2) *political rights*,

⁵⁷ a) *Civil Rights*: right to life, liberty and security; right to a fair trial; freedom of movement; asylum; nationality; freedom of thought, conscience, religion; freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of assembly and association;

b) *Political rights*: Participation in the government, voting and electoral rights; equal access to public service; the will of the people as the basis of the authority of the government (expressed in periodic and genuine elections; universal and equal suffrage; secret and free voting procedures);

3) *economic, social and cultural rights*, 4) *collective rights*; further, a 5) *non-stated* category was added. Although political rights and civil rights are part of the same wide group, the first generation of rights, these were coded separately to get a clearer idea about which rights were specifically addressed. The chart below illustrates the data obtained:

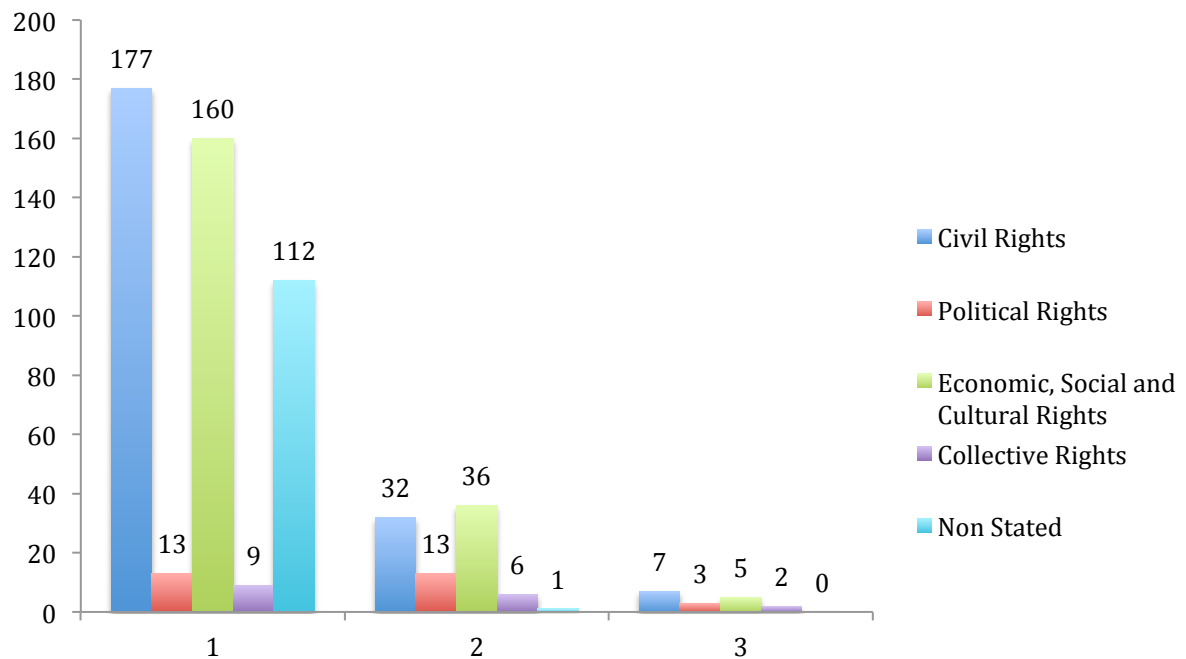


Figure 6.3 - Types of rights in the news by order of appearance

These numbers show that civil rights are still the most represented in the news as the first reference (177 times); however, they are closely followed by the number of economic, social and cultural rights (160) demonstrating that this type of rights is far from ignored in the news, as previous research has claimed. Furthermore, reinforcing this argument is the fact that this type of rights is the most addressed as a second reference (36 times). It is worth mentioning that the prevalence of civil rights may also be due to a high number of news stories about demonstrations, as the right to

c) *Economic, Social and Cultural rights*: right to work, fair conditions of work, union membership and activities; right to adequate standard of living, education, housing, food, health care; right to a rich cultural life and protection of author's rights;

d) *Collective rights*: solidarity rights, right to self-determination, right to an environment conducive to development, right to development, right to peace.

demonstrate and the freedom of assembly are part of the first group of rights. However, the analysis of the focus of these news stories (which will be further developed in section 6.3) shows that several of these reports about demonstrations were actually positioned under the topic of economy and politics. These reports referred to protests against austerity measures and other finance related matters, which increases the visibility of economic and social rights within the news⁵⁸.

6.2 – Covering human rights issues: characteristics of news

The frequency of topics presented above gives an overview of the content of human rights related news issues which, as stated previously, are often covered under the name of other categories of news. However, the overall findings suggest that these prevalent topics must also be tested and discussed in terms of another set of elements that characterise these news stories: their focus and subsidiary focus, news production resources, sources, their placement in programme rundowns as well as their duration, and finally their scope and location. This section is therefore divided into five sub-sections that present the key findings of the content analysis, probing each category separately.

6.2.1 – Focus of news stories

This sub-section looks into the focus of the analysed news stories by examining their *hook*, *focus* and *subsidiary focus*. These three elements were coded along twenty common variables. The combination of these variables provided a deeper insight to the content of each news item:

- 1) *Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout or financial rescue)*
- 2) *Celebration, tribute or success*
- 3) *Celebrity appeal*
- 4) *Combat, battle, war developments or strategy*
- 5) *Death, human tragedy*

⁵⁸ A cross-tabulation analysis shows that 18.3% of the Economy and politics news focus on demonstration/protest (40 news items of a total of 218).

- 6) *Demonstrations, protests or strike*
- 7) *Deprivation, poverty, famine*
- 8) *Discrimination, racism, intolerance*
- 9) *Governance, policies debate, elections*
- 10) *Human rights awards or events*
- 11) *Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue*
- 12) *International law mechanisms, application policy or debate*
- 13) *Migration, refugees, asylum seekers*
- 14) *Repression, confrontation, violence*
- 15) *Scandal*
- 16) *Education, health, elderly, court cases or police investigation*
- 17) *Threat, risk*
- 18) *Women and children*
- 19) *Other*
- 20) *Non-applicable*

Tables 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 below refer to the occurrence of the variables regarding each generic news topic. The highest occurrences are signalled in bold:

ARMED CONFLICT/ WAR NEWS	HOOK		FOCUS		SUBSIDIARY FOCUS	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Celebration/ tribute/ success	11	14.1	11	14.1	6	7.7
Celebrity appeal	1	1.3	0	0	0	0
Combat/ Battle/ war developments, strategy	11	14.1	14	17.9	10	12.8
Death, human tragedy	21	26.9	19	24.4	6	7.7
Demonstration, protests, strike	3	3.8	6	7.7	2	2.6
Discrimination, Racism, Intolerance	0	0	0	0	4	5.1
Governance/Policies debate/Elections	3	3.8	3	3.8	2	2.6
Human rights awards, events	1	1.3	1	1.3	0	0
Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue	1	1.3	1	1.3	3	3.8
International law mechanisms/ application policy, debate	13	16.7	9	11.5	16	20.5
Migration/ refugees/ asylum seekers	2	2.6	2	2.6	1	1.3
Repression, confrontation, violence	7	9	6	7.7	10	12.8
Education, health, elderly, court cases or police investigation	1	1.3	0	0	2	2.6

Threat/ Risk	1	1.3	3	3.8	3	3.8
Women and children	0	0	0	0	2	2.6
Other	2	2.6	3	3.8	2	2.6
N/a	0	0	0	0	9	11.5
Total	78	100	78	100	78	100

Table 6.2 - Occurrence of the variables regarding news items about armed conflict/war

DISASTER NEWS

	HOOK		FOCUS		SUBSIDIARY FOCUS	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Celebration/ tribute/ success	0	0	1	2.9	0	0
Death, human tragedy	12	34.3	8	22.9	6	17.1
Deprivation/ poverty/ famine	0	0	1	2.9	0	0
Governance/Policies debate/Elections	0	0	0	0	2	5.7
Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue	6	17.1	8	22.9	4	11.4
International human right law mechanisms/ application policy, debate	1	2.9	0	0	0	0
Migration/ refugees/ asylum seekers	0	0	0	0	2	5.7
Education, health, elderly, court cases or police investigation	1	2.9	0	0	1	2.9
Threat/ Risk	13	37.1	13	37.1	4	11.4
Women and children	0	0	0	0	1	2.9
Other	3	8.6	2	5.7	2	5.7
N/a	0	0	1	2.9	13	37.1
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 6.3 - Occurrence of the variables regarding news items about Disaster

ECONOMY AND POLITICS NEWS

	HOOK		FOCUS		SUBSIDIARY FOCUS	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout and financial rescue)	79	36.2	71	32.6	46	21.1
Celebration/ tribute/ success	1	0.5	1	0.5	3	1.4
Celebrity appeal	0	0	0	0	2	0.9
Combat/ Battle/ war developments, strategy	1	0.5	2	0.9	1	0.5
Death, human tragedy	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.5
Demonstration, protests, strike	43	19.7	40	18.3	11	5
Deprivation/ poverty/ famine	5	2.3	9	4.1	3	1.4
Discrimination, Racism, Intolerance	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.5

Governance/Policies debate/Elections	45	20.6	43	19.7	50	22.9
Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	0.9
International law mechanisms/ application policy, debate	2	0.9	2	0.9	3	1.4
Migration/ refugees/ asylum seekers	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	0.5
Repression, confrontation, violence	5	2.3	6	2.8	4	1.8
Scandal	7	3.2	7	3.2	5	2.3
Education, health, elderly, court cases or police investigation	18	8.3	24	11	33	15.1
Threat/ Risk	6	2.8	7	3.2	5	2.3
Women and children	1	0.5	2	0.9	1	0.5
Other	2	0.9	1	0.5	6	2.8
N/a	0	0	0	0	40	18.3
Total	218	100	218	100	218	100

Table 6.4 - Occurrence of the variables regarding news items about Economy and Politics

SOCIAL ISSUES NEWS

	HOOK		FOCUS		SUBSIDIARY FOCUS	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout and financial rescue)	2	1.4	2	1.4	5	3.6
Celebration/ tribute/ success	5	3.6	6	4.3	2	1.4
Celebrity appeal	2	1.4	2	1.4	3	2.1
Death, human tragedy	12	8.6	14	10	7	5
Demonstration, protests, strike	12	8.6	12	8.6	2	1.4
Deprivation/ poverty/ famine	2	1.4	3	2.1	2	1.4
Discrimination, Racism, Intolerance	2	1.4	5	3.6	3	2.1
Governance/Policies debate/Elections	11	7.9	10	7.1	11	7.9
Human rights awards, events	0	0	1	0.7	0	0
Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue	10	7.1	9	6.4	7	5
International law mechanisms, application policy, debate	2	1.4	0	0	4	2.9
Migration/ refugees/ asylum seekers	0	0	2	1.4	0	0
Repression, confrontation, violence	9	6.4	8	5.7	10	7.1
Scandal	4	2.9	2	1.4	2	1.4
Education, health, elderly, court cases or police investigation	52	37.1	43	30.7	27	19.3
Threat/ Risk	5	3.6	7	5	7	5
Women and children	5	3.6	6	4.3	12	8.6
Other	5	3.6	8	5.7	5	3.6
N/a	0	0	0	0	31	22.1
Total	140	100	140	100	140	100

Table 6.5 - Occurrence of the variables regarding news items about Social Issues

The numbers show that *Death, human tragedy* is the most preponderant angle when reporting *Armed conflict or war*, both as the news item's hook (26.9%), and as the main focus of the story (24.4%). The most popular subsidiary focus of these news stories is *International law mechanisms, application policy or debate* (20.5%).

Disasters are predominantly reported under a perspective of *Threat/ risk*, both as the report's hook (37.1%), and the main focus of the story (37.1%). *Death and human tragedy* is the next most relevant hook (34.2%), and focus of the stories (22.9%), along with *Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue* (22.9%). This may suggest that the crux of these news stories relates to the aftermath of the disaster, reporting on casualties and damages, and following up on the possible consequences that these events could have⁵⁹.

Economy and Politics news is clearly about the *Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout or financial rescue)*, both as a hook (36.2%) and as the focus (32.6%) of the report. The most common subsidiary subject of the story relates to *Governance, policies debate, elections* (22.9%). These findings strengthen, at this point, the earlier argument that the economic crisis context influenced the journalistic agenda.

Finally, the data obtained show that news about Social issues is largely about *Education, health, elderly, court cases or police investigation*. This variable appears 37.1% of the time as the hook of the news story and 30.7% of the time as the focus of the story itself.

6.2.2 – Production resources and news format

This subsection looks into the news production resources allocated to cover each news item, as well as its format. Due to the nature of this thesis, this is an essential analysis, which provides pertinent data about journalists' production practices and choices that were later confirmed and tested with newsroom observation and interviews with news professionals.

⁵⁹ The incidence of threat and risk as the focus of disaster stories is highly connected to the coverage of Fukushima nuclear meltdown, as will be further explored later.

The data, obtained through analysis of the most frequent news production resources utilised in the news sample, expose some interesting findings, as disclosed in Table 6.6. Among the 78 news items about *armed conflict or war*, 49 of these (an equivalent to 62.8%) were based on international news agency material; the same production resources were the most exploited when covering disaster news (48.6%). By contrast, while reporting on the economy and politics and social issues the broadcaster mostly preferred to send correspondents to the news scene (67.9% and 73.6% respectively).

The news format of these news stories shows an equivalent tendency that corresponds to patterns in resources used, as shown in Table 7. Once again, both *Armed conflict/war* and *Disaster* reports are mostly edited in the newsroom (52.6% and 37.1% of the news reports, respectively). In comparison, *Economy and politics* and *Social issues* reports are frequently covered in the field, and later edited before broadcasting (also called *package news* – 61.5% and 70% respectively). The choice of the format directly matches whether the news item is done *in situ* or relies on news agency material. At this point, it can be construed that news items that relate to distant scenarios of armed conflict or disaster are processed from a distance and inside the newsroom, whereas economy and politics and social issues are addressed more closely and *in situ*.

Production resources	Armed conflict / war	%	Disaster	%	Economy and Politics	%	Social issues	%	Total	%
Correspondent/ Reporter	17	21.8	10	28.6	148	67.9	103	73.6	278	59.0
Foreign correspondent	5	6.4	2	5.7	13	6.0	4	2.9	24	5.1
Agencies, other journalists or media	49	62.8	17	48.6	37	17.0	20	14.3	123	26.1
Archive	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.4	3	0.6
Journalist in newsroom	2	2.6	1	2.9	10	4.6	4	2.9	17	3.6
Presenter	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	1.4	3	0.6
Citizen journalism	2	2.6	1	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.6
Other	1	1.3	4	11.4	10	4.6	5	3.6	20	4.2
Total	78	100.0	35	100.0	218	100.0	140	100.0	471	100.0

Table 0.6 - Production resources used in the news and its distribution throughout the different topics

Format of news	Armed conflict / war	%	Disaster	%	Economy and Politics	%	Social issues	%	Total
Anchor reading (no visuals)	0	0.0	1	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Presenter reading over footage	13	16.7	7	20.0	15	6.9	12	8.6	47
Presenter intro and quote/sound bite	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	7.8	2	1.4	19
Live report	4	5.1	3	8.6	9	4.1	5	3.6	21
Report in the field/ package	18	23.1	9	25.7	134	61.5	98	70.0	259
Report edited in newsroom	41	52.6	13	37.1	37	17.0	18	12.9	109
Interview	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.9	2	1.4	4
Other	2	2.6	2	5.7	4	1.8	3	2.1	11
Total	78	100.0	35	100.0	218	100.0	140	100.0	471

Table 6.7 - Formats of the news and its distribution throughout the different topics

6.2.3 – Sources of the news

Following the analysis of the focus of the news, production resources and choices of format, this subsection continues by examining sources in the news seen as the providers of the information. Quoted directly or indirectly, the news sourcing was coded in order to understand who the prominent sources in news reports relating to human rights issues were. This category, in combination with other analysed categories, also contributed to the configuration of different frames regarding the levels of depth or engagement of the journalists with human rights issues, as formulated in Chapter 4 and tested in section 6.3.

For the purposes of this research the number of sources used in the news was coded, as was source type, and order of appearance. As displayed in Table 8, most of these reports (62.6%) rely on three or less sources, and the majority (24.2%) rely solely on one single news source:

Number of sources	Frequency	%
1	114	24.2
2	96	20.4
3	85	18
4	64	13.6
5	50	10.6
6	27	5.7
7	14	3
8	9	1.9
9	5	1.1
10	1	0.2
11	3	0.6
12	2	0.4
17	1	0.2
Total	471	100

Table 6.8 - Total number of sources per news item

A closer look at the types of these sources indicates that *politicians/leaders* are the most prominent source of news, featuring 24.6% of the time as the first quoted source in a news story. Looking at each of the news topics independently, this type of source is the most visible in news about armed conflict or war, appearing 21.8% of the time as the first source either directly or indirectly quoted. Similarly, news reports about the economy and politics rely on politicians and leaders to be the first quoted source 38.1% of the time. These findings are in line with the previously mentioned observations regarding the subsidiary subjects of *Armed conflict/war* and *Economy and Politics* news: *International law mechanisms, application politics or debate* and *Governance, policies debate, elections*. Both subsidiary focuses are expected to be highly centred on politicians and leaders as sources of these reports. Additionally, it can be claimed that the preponderance of a dominant news source, *Politicians and leaders* in this case, underlines the continued relevance of primary definers (Hall *et al.*, 1978) in news related to human rights issues. This finding confirms previous research examined in Chapter 4 that confirms journalists' reliance on authoritative and institutional sources. Furthermore, this observation will be brought up again in section 6.3 of this chapter, when the different characteristics of the news explored are considered as elements that help the news to be distributed in three different frames for reporting.

Tables 6.9, 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12 display the types of the three first sources quoted directly or indirectly in the news, along the four news topics. The higher occurrences are signalled in bold:

Armed conflict / war

	First Source		Second Source		Third Source	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Politicians, leaders	17	21.8	18	27.7	18	35.3
NGOs, organised civil society	2	2.6	3	4.6	3	5.9
Public sector sources or institutions	2	2.6	1	1.5	3	5.9
Rebels, militia	7	9	7	10.8	2	3.9
Demonstrator	5	6.4	5	7.7	1	2
Unions, strikers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rescuer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private sector sources or institutions	0	0	1	1.5	0	0
Victims	9	11.5	5	7.7	3	5.9
Ordinary citizens	5	6.4	5	7.7	7	13.7
Military, police	7	9	7	10.8	2	3.9
Journalist	5	6.4	3	4.6	4	7.8
Experts	1	1.3	3	4.6	0	0
Witness	2	2.6	1	1.5	0	0
Celebrity	0	0	0	0.0	1	2
Reports, statistics, surveys, research	0	0	2	3.1	1	2
Other	2	2.6	2	3.1	1	2
News agencies	11	14.1	1	1.5	1	2
Perpetrator	1	1.3	1	1.5	3	5.9
Citizen's video	2	2.6	0	0	1	2.0
Total	78	100	65	100	51	100

Table 6.9 - The three most frequent types of sources quoted in Armed conflict/war news

Disaster

	First Source		Second Source		Third Source	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Politicians, leaders	5	14.3	4	17.4	5	26.3
NGOs, organised civil society	0	0	0	0.0	1	5.3
Public sector sources or institutions	3	8.6	1	4.3	2	10.5
Rebels, militia	0	0	0	0	0	0

Demonstrator	1	2.9	1	4.3	0	0
Unions, strikers	0	0	0	0.0	0	0
Rescuer	6	17.1	1	4.3	2	10.5
Private sector sources or institutions	1	2.9	1	4.3	0	0
Victims	3	8.6	3	13.0	5	26.3
Ordinary citizens	3	8.6	4	17.4	1	5.3
Military, police	1	2.9	1	4.3	0	0
Journalist	3	8.6	1	4.3	1	5.3
Experts	0	0	1	4.3	2	10.5
Witness	0	0	2	8.7	0	0
Celebrity	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reports, statistics, surveys, research	0	0	1	4.3	0	0
Other	3	8.6	1	4.3	0	0
News agencies	5	14.3	1	4.3	0	0
Perpetrator	0	0	0	0	0	0
Citizen's video	1	2.9	0	0	0	0
Total	35	100	23	100	19	100

Table 6.10 - The three most frequent types of sources quoted in Disaster news

Economy and Politics

	First Source		Second Source		Third Source	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Politicians, leaders	83	38.1	44	26.8	28	25.2
NGOs, organised civil society	7	3.2	6	3.7	5	4.5
Public sector sources or institutions	16	7.3	11	6.7	6	5.4
Rebels, militia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Demonstrator	24	11	16	9.8	17	15.3
Unions, strikers	12	5.5	14	8.5	3	2.7
Rescuer	0	0	0	0	1	0.9
Private sector sources or institutions	17	7.8	10	6.1	4	3.6
Victims	6	2.8	7	4.3	4	3.6
Ordinary citizens	24	11	29	17.7	26	23.4
Military, police	4	1.8	5	3	1	0.9
Journalist	9	4.1	5	3	5	4.5
Experts	4	1.8	4	2.4	3	2.7
Witness	0	0	1	0.6	0	0
Celebrity	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reports, statistics, surveys, research	6	2.8	6	3.7	3	2.7
Other	1	0.5	2	1.2	2	1.8
News agencies	4	1.8	2	1.2	2	1.8
Perpetrator	0	0	2	1.2	0	0

Citizen's video	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.9
Total	218	100	164	100	111	100

Table 6.11 - The three most frequent types of sources quoted in Economy and Politics news

Social Issues

	First Source		Second Source		Third Source	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Politicians, leaders	11	7.9	12	11.1	10	12.5
NGOs, organised civil society	5	3.6	3	2.8	6	7.5
Public sector sources or institutions	17	12.1	14	13	10	12.5
Rebels, militia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Demonstrator	3	2.1	0	0	2	2.5
Unions, strikers	5	3.6	2	1.9	1	1.3
Rescuer	1	0.7	3	2.8	0	0
Private sector sources or institutions	3	2.1	2	1.9	2	2.5
Victims	25	17.9	18	16.7	14	17.5
Ordinary citizens	11	7.9	17	15.7	13	16.3
Military, police	7	5	6	5.6	2	2.5
Journalist	5	3.6	0	0	1	1.3
Experts	16	11.4	9	8.3	6	7.5
Witness	6	4.3	5	4.6	5	6.3
Celebrity	1	0.7	3	2.8	0	0
Reports, statistics, surveys, research	4	2.9	4	3.7	1	1.3
Other	8	5.7	3	2.8	1	1.3
News agencies	4	2.9	1	0.9	1	1.3
Perpetrator	7	5	5	4.6	5	6.3
Citizen's video	1	0.7	1	0.9	0	0
Total	140	100	108	100	80	100

Table 6.12 - The three most frequent types of sources quoted in Social issues news

The study of source attribution in news related to human rights issues reveals that the commonly cited sources of information are mostly powerful or authority-related figures. This trend chimes in with existing research that claims that a great deal of attention to human rights is due to the fact that governments and political leaders refer to human rights more often (ICHRP, 2002:5-6). Likewise, despite the attention given, news reports fail to report victims' perspectives (*ibidem*). The low numbers of victims cited (quoted firstly 11.5% in war news, 8.6% in disaster news, 2.8% in economy news), seen in the

tables 9 to 11 above, confirm this trend; this strengthens reliance on authorities' accounts in reports on human rights issues related to armed conflicts or war news, as well as in economy and politics issues. The only exception lies in news about social issues, which relate to mostly to education, health, the elderly, court cases or police investigation news stories, where the voices of victims feature more often (17.9% as source quoted firstly, 16.7% secondly and 17.5% thirdly, as shown in Table 12).

6.2.4 - Placement and duration of news

Looking at the placement of these news items as well as their duration, it is possible to observe that these choices also support the argument that human rights issues are covered under different news topics. In other words, human rights related news is fairly uniformly distributed among news bulletins (which are usually between 55 to 60 minutes long), and their duration is in accordance with the average duration of news reports in *Telejornal* (between one to three minutes). Figures 3 and 4, below, present specific numbers related to the analysis of both placement within the news programme and the duration of the reports.

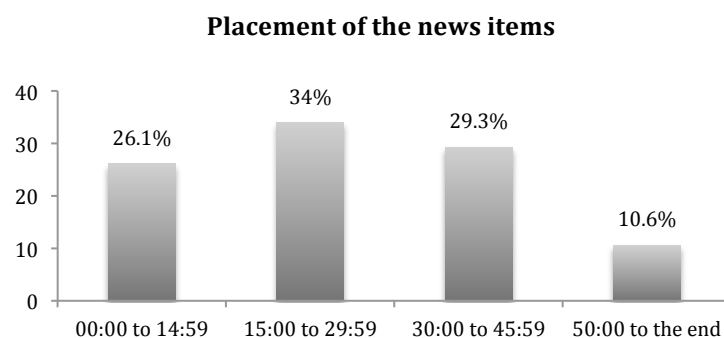


Figure 6.4 - Placement of the news items in the rundowns (in percentages)

Duration of the news items

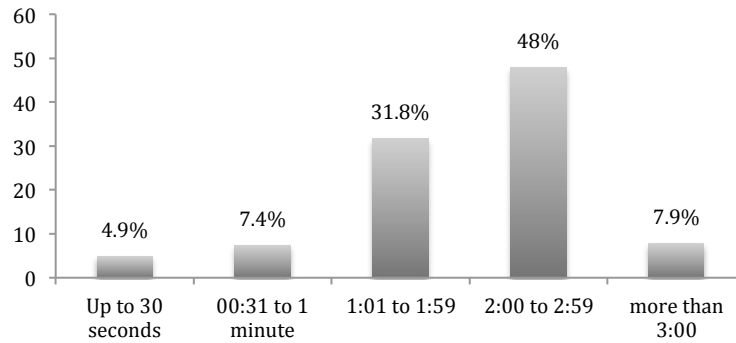


Figure 6.5 - Duration of the news items in the rundowns (in percentages)

Despite this, such analysis allows us to observe the possible comparative relevance of different news items. This contributes to the definition of the communicative news frame used in section 6.3, which explains the different levels of depth in which human rights issues are covered, suggesting different levels of professional or journalistic engagement with such issues.

6.2.5 – Scope and location of news

Examining the scope and the location of news items helps to identify the geopolitically influenced news values that determine the form of news reports regarding human rights issues. This subsection refers to the findings provided by the coding of the location of each news item (the country or region where it took place or mostly refers to), as well as the scope of the news.

The news sample analysed reported news from about 47 different countries or regions. However, a large majority of news reports, 60.3%, take place in or are about Portugal. The next highest occurrence is Libya, with a much lower percentage of news (3.6%). This finding, when interpreted together with the previously claimed prevalence of *Economy and politics* as a news topic covering the financial crisis and its consequences, suggests a strong domestication of this issue, and the importance of proximity and interest of national audiences.

Countries and/or regions featured in the news

Region or country	Frequency	Percent
--------------------------	------------------	----------------

Libya	17	3.6
Northern Ireland	1	0.2
Japan	5	1.1
Portugal	284	60.3
Iceland	2	0.4
Egypt	4	0.8
Ivory Coast	1	0.2
France	12	2.5
European Union	2	0.4
Syria	11	2.3
UK	10	2.1
Afghanistan	2	0.4
USA	15	3.2
Spain	14	3
Pakistan	1	0.2
Italy	7	1.5
Germany	5	1.1
Greece	10	2.1
Belgium	3	0.6
Afghanistan	3	0.6
Brazil	6	1.3
Mexico	3	0.6
South Sudan	1	0.2
S. Tome and Prince	1	0.2
Somalia /Horn of Africa	2	0.4
South Africa	5	1.1
Norway	8	1.7
The whole world	2	0.4
Europe	4	0.8
Cape Verde	1	0.2
West Bank	1	0.2
Several locations	2	0.4
Turkey	2	0.4
Tunisia	3	0.6
Angola	4	0.8
Russia	2	0.4
Panama	1	0.2
North Korea	4	0.8
South Korea	1	0.2
Burma	1	0.2
Nigeria	1	0.2
Iran	1	0.2
China	1	0.2
Argentina	1	0.2
Ireland	1	0.2
Timor	2	0.4

Guinea Bissau	1	0.2
Total	471	100

Table 6.13 - Countries and/or regions where news reports take place

The analysed news items were also coded in terms of their scope, whether this was exclusively national (regarding Portugal), international (international news covered with no connection to Portugal), national and international (with elements of both national and international references⁶⁰), global news (news referring to worldwide issues), or finally two or more of these categories combined (or unclear). This categorisation was foremost grounded in the theoretical readings about global journalism developed in Chapters 3 and 4.

As for the results, the national perspective is still the most adopted in reporting on news regarding human rights issues: 50.1% have a national scope, followed by international news (22.7%), news with both a national and international perspective (18.7%), global news (4.5%) and news with more than one of these categories combined (4%).

Scope	Frequency	%
National	236	50.1
National and International	88	18.7
International	107	22.7
Global	21	4.5
Combined	19	4
Total	471	100

Table 6.14 - Scope of human rights related news reports

The data in this table hint that human rights related news is still strongly territorialised, and perhaps far from the suggested global outlook on social reality (Berglez, 2008). This is despite the fact that it is now harder to categorise news texts as either solely domestic

⁶⁰ International news covered by a Portuguese correspondent, for example, or news about Portugal with reference to other countries (or vice-versa).

or foreign. The suggested *domestication* of financial crisis news, the dominant news theme within the analysed sample, may also imply a reinforcement of cultural proximity or meaningfulness as a news criterion for the coverage of the financial crisis, and consequently human rights related matters.

So far, a close analysis of the content of the news demonstrated that there are different levels of presence of human rights issues in the news, named as such, evoked by correlate terms, or covered under a substantive human rights theme. The prominence of this latter category reveals a collection of human rights themes emerging within the news, which are potentially covering human rights issues but not exactly delivering the story as human rights news. This has led the research to question whether it is possible to find different *levels of depth* in human rights reporting in these stories, revealing different potential forms of journalistic/professional engagement with human rights issues. Examining the combination of different elements in the news items such as focus, production resources, format, sources, placement within the rundowns and duration of news stories and finally their location and scope⁶¹, provides this research with the foundation to support the proposed different levels of depth for human rights coverage, thoroughly developed in Chapter 4.

6.3 – Different levels of depth suggesting different levels of engagement with human rights issues

As argued in 6.1.1, there are different levels of presence of human rights issues in the news. Yet, different levels of presence are not necessarily indicative of levels of professional engagement with human rights issues. It was argued in Chapter 4 that including the words *human rights* in a report does not necessarily make the report more profound than other stories that may be written without naming these words. In accordance, these different levels of presence may be useful to address human rights in

⁶¹ Although this chapter is not presenting statistical results regarding the *Angle* and *Valence* of the news items, as well the *context* and *knowledge provided by the source*, these categories were coded, contributing also to the separation of the news items into three different communicative framings, used as complimentary information which would help to classify each news story and the level of professional engagement.

the content of the daily news, but are more limited in terms of providing knowledge about journalistic engagement behind those news stories.

To this effect, more than distinguishing different levels of presence, the content analysis provided findings that allowed the argument that there are different *levels of depth* featured in these news stories. These different levels refer to different levels of professional engagement with human rights. The content analysis details and documents the nature of reporting human rights analysed in these forms of news output.

This next section is therefore divided in two subsections: the first subsection briefly reviews the methodological background that supported the design of the three levels of depth or communicative frames for human rights reporting used in the research (these frames are comprehensively detailed in Chapter 4). The second sub-section presents the findings resulting from the framing analysis of the considered sample of news, providing examples.

6.3.1 – Different levels of depth in human rights coverage

Before referring to specific examples it is important to summarise the different *levels of depth* of human rights reporting proposed by this research. These are frames derived from the combination of elements investigated with the content analysis, and inspired by a blend of the theoretical suggestions of different levels of pity (Chouliaraki, 2006), and the concept of *communicative frames* (Cottle and Rai, 2006). This is done in order to identify the most common frames used in human rights reporting. On one hand, these levels of depth refer to both the media's capacity to establish a disposition of care and engagement with the *far away Other* or *the distant sufferer* (as proposed by Chouliaraki), and on the other hand, they acknowledge the complex production processes that 'routinely organize' how news events and issues are communicated. As previously argued, this study aims to go beyond the analysis of expected effects of the news in audiences, and examines the production stage of the news and the surrounding elements that influence coverage of human rights related news. To this effect, the research probed the sample of news within three levels of depth: shallow, medium and deep.

In brief, a *shallow depth* of coverage presents a factual and descriptive narrative, usually in short anchor texts over graphics or footage, sometimes followed by a short quote. It can also be short package news, which involves some editing, and provides no context or background information. This type of news item involves minimal professional engagement or creativity, and is mostly dependent on international news agency material. Further, these items mostly present source-dominant accounts and no opposing perspectives.

Comparatively, *medium depth* coverage involves some professional engagement with human rights issues. These news items go beyond a simple display of information and provide more elements, which would potentially contribute to a more profound degree of assessment and deliberation. They encompass some background information or even analysis surrounding the issues covered. With respect to the production resources utilised, these news items can vary from traditional package to live reporting, embracing some professional enterprise and even creative solutions for the coverage of news. There is a more balanced consultation of sources and therefore a wider plurality of voices included. Compared to shallower reports, these news items are longer in duration and their angle is not necessarily neutral.

Finally, a *deep depth* approach, as explained before, is the one that more powerfully indicates professional commitment and involvement with human rights related issues. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, this is the least frequent frame used. This is mostly because the format diverges from traditional news formats of daily news bulletins. These stories represent a break from daily informative routines: these news items provoke reflexivity and questioning, and delve deeper into investigative and expositive approaches to human rights issues. Providing careful background information and analysis to current news, these reports demonstrate a more profound professional engagement with human rights problems, possibly involving performative campaigning. These reports also include embedded discussion and reflexivity, juxtaposition of source perspectives and often correspond to a bigger timeframe and resource investment such as feature reports, interviews or debates.

Given the elaboration of these three levels of depth regarding the coverage of human rights issues the following section presents the findings of such framing analysis. It also provides concrete examples and transcriptions found in the analysed news sample.

6.3.1 – The depth of human rights reporting in the Portuguese daily news

Having presented three different frames for human rights reporting, it was argued that these are intimately connected with the level of depth of coverage, which suggests different levels of professional engagement or motivation. The news framing analysis illustrates how these human rights issues are reported in the daily news.

As shown in Figure 6, a *shallow depth* approach to human rights issues is used the most, accounting for 62.4% (294 news items) of the news sample, followed by *medium depth* reporting (33.1%, or 156 items) and finally, only 4.5% (21 news items) of reports were coded as using a *deep depth* approach.

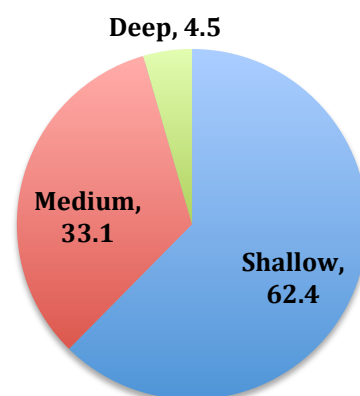


Figure 6.6 - Levels of depth in human rights issues coverage in the Portuguese daily news (percentage)

As argued before, the high frequency of the *shallow depth* frame is most likely connected to the nature of the daily news programme itself, which is determined by the news values of novelty and time constraints.

In a closer look at the 21 news items classified in a deep engagement frame, content analysis shows that 16 of them were produced by correspondents assigned to the field. Four of them were conveyed by foreign correspondents, and one item was

based in the use of content generated by citizen journalism. It is interesting therefore to note that none of these reports were based on international news agencies' material and footage. Consequently it is pertinent to suggest that the physical proximity of journalists to human rights issues or events increases the chances of a deeper professional commitment with such issues.

The following news report transcripts exemplify each of the types of news approaches:

Shallow depth:

a) Anchor reading over footage:

Anchor: More than one thousand illegal migrants have arrived to Lampedusa. The Italian police intercepted four overcrowded boats off the island. These people are going to stay in shelters until their asylum requests are evaluated; but it is almost certain that these migrants will be repatriated. Illegal migration to Europe has increased after significant political instability in several North-African countries.

(Telejornal, RTP1, 9 July 2011)

Anchor: In Mexico, the violence due to drug cartels has no end. This time, a group of dealers known as the Templar Knights were involved in a battle against the federal police. Seven dead people (members of this gang), plus three injured people... this was the result of the shooting. In order to prevent police pursuit, the drug dealers blocked the roads by burning cars. Furthermore, ten corpses were found in the surroundings of the capital city. Forty thousand people have died due to this drug war in Mexico over the last 5 years.

(Telejornal, RTP1, 9 July 2011).

b) Anchor reading and sound bite:

Anchor: Cavaco Silva wants a society that is more attentive to those who suffer from disabilities. The President of the Republic spent the day visiting solidarity institutions [showing footage of the official visits]; he was at the Torres Vedras care home and then in Odivelas, where the President inaugurated the charity Casas da Granja. This is an institution created to support people with cerebral palsy. Here, the President appealed to the Portuguese people's solidarity.

Sound bite – President: A disabled person cannot be seen as marginalised from our society, and the institutions that take care of them cannot be seen as social ghettos. Therefore it is important that these institutions open up to society, so that the citizens become aware both of their difficulties and their

achievements. *The society's concerns should focus on promoting integration of disabled people into an active life.*

(Telejornal, RTP1, 26 July 2011)

The examples in a) show news items factually and briefly narrated, based on news agency content, providing no background information or analysis. The preparation of these items required minimal professional engagement and production resources. Similarly, example b) presents a short sum of the President's official visit, providing no further elaboration on the topic raised. It relies on a dominant source and an authority's perspective, which delivers superficial knowledge on the issue.

Medium depth:

a) Standard package done *in situ* by correspondent

Anchor: *Demonstrators in Barcelona blocked the entrance to the members of the Catalanian Parliament. Several MPs needed a police escort, as well as some Catalanian Government members, who had to arrive by helicopter.*

Correspondent: *The Spanish Indignados are not only itinerant but spontaneously arise in every corner of the country. This time the chosen site was Barcelona, outside the Parliament of Catalonia that this morning was prepared to debate and approve healthcare and education cuts.*

Demonstrator1: *There is a risk of losing what was accomplished over several generations and years. And what is lost is very hard to recover.*

[footage of demonstration]

Correspondent: *Around two thousand demonstrators concentrated in ciudadela, shouting that they are tired and that the crisis cannot be an excuse for everything.*

Demonstrator2: *We are outraged and we are here to demand that they won't make more cuts. It's enough.*

[footage of demonstration's police cordon]

Demonstrator 3: *It seems important to demonstrate against the cuts, because this is an offense to social rights, and with the crisis' excuse, this is a farce.*

[footage of violence]

Correspondent: *The most radical tried to prevent the MPs to get in the building. These were booed and even assaulted. They needed police escort to get inside the Parliament. The Catalanian Government and other 24 MPs arrived by helicopter to a session that began late and condemned the violence by the Indignados.*

President of the Catalanian Government: *It is unacceptable in democracy and I'm not able to overcome the use of violence and coercion – which is an offence - to prevent an institution like the government to keep its responsibilities and functions.*

Mariano Rajoy: *No democrat is able to accept what happened here.*

Correspondent: *The police's violence was justified by the President of the Assembly as legitimate means to protect the MPs' physical integrity. This authentic battlefield resulted in 36 non-severe injuries. People. The Asamblea del Sol, the movement that started the 15M spun off any of today's violent acts in Barcelona. (Telejornal, RTP1, 15 June 2011)*

b) Edited package, using agencies or other media material but involving some creative alternative and initiative for coverage

Anchor: *In the US, a mother injected botox in the face of her 8-year-old daughter, so that the child could enter a beauty contest. ABC channel has shown images of this child while being injected in her eyebrows and lips. The mother claims that she has injected botox in order to conceal her daughters' wrinkles, mostly visible when the girl smiles.*

Reporter: *This is a tradition in the US – there are competitions for very young girls everywhere. Some parents do everything so that their daughters are elected beauty queens – even botox injections.*

Mother: *There are a lot of mums that are there to give their kids botox. It's pretty much like 'the thing'. There are certain things that you need to get in to the pageants – a lot of mums do it.*

Reporter: *Campbell had no problems in doing it. [visuals – photos of daughter being injected] and went even further: interviewed by ABC network, she explained why she injected botox in her 8-year-old daughter.*

Mother: *She didn't exactly asked me but I know that she was complaining about her face, her wrinkles and things like that.*

Child: *I just don't like to see wrinkles in nice little girls.*

ABC Reporter: *How does it feel like to get botox.*

Child: *It hurts and I get used to it.*

ABC Reporter: *Do you cry?*

Child: *Hum, a little.*

ABC Reporter: *Do you look better after you get the botox?*

Child: *Yeah, it looks way better.*

ABC Reporter: *How?*

Child: *Like, beautiful. Pretty.*

Reporter: *Besides botox, the girl confessed that her mum waxes her legs.*

Child: *I just don't think it's lady legs, to have hairs on your legs.*

Psychologist/Child support specialist (interview): *Her mother, who should think she is pretty all the time, if she is doing this it is because she does not think that the child is beautiful, and the child is aware of it. From an interaction point of view, this child is being punished and she will suffer the consequences throughout her life.*

Reporter: *The use of botox in children may cause irreversible physical damages, like the paralysis of the face muscles.*

Mother: *Do you see anything wrong with my daughter, psychologically? I don't see anything wrong. I have a normal child. It's not breaking her spirit. I'm a great mother. She is a happy kid.*

Psychologist: *It seems to me that this child wants to show her mother that she is happy; because the child, when participating in this competition is mostly satisfying her mother's whim. For me, this will mean pain and suffering and this child needs to be immediately protected.*

Reporter: *This case is now being investigated by the California's child support services.*

(Telejornal, RTP1, 13 May 2011)

The examples above involve some professional engagement with human rights issues, and provide further elements beyond the simple display of information. Example a) is a standard package edited by Spain correspondent; the physical presence where the event is taking place approximates the reporter to the issue, and allows a balanced inclusion of sources and perspectives. Despite providing some explanatory information (unlike a shallower approach), it does not include any feature analysis, expertise or discussion. The following example b) is a newsroom edited package, using agency or other media material (ABC news). Although there is physical distance between the journalist and the event (and actors involved), there is some use of creative alternatives and initiative for coverage, as in interviewing a Portuguese expert⁶², which shows some degree of engagement with the issue.

Deep depth:

- a) Standard package done *in situ* by Brazil correspondent, including some embedded analysis by the journalist

Anchor: *Forty-three homosexual couples got married in Rio de Janeiro. This happens two months after the Supreme Court's decision that recognises same sex unions. RTP's Brazil correspondent João Pacheco de Miranda attended these ceremonies.*

Correspondent: *These are not Saint Anthony's weddings; these are not blessed by the Church. These are not even yet recognised as weddings, but as family entities, in cases where there is a stable homo-affective union. Anyway, the state of Rio saw this as an advance and has patronised these ceremonies.*

Individual and Collective Rights State Superintendent: *This is a very important milestone that brings Brazil up into a higher civilizational degree of humanity and respect for the rights of homosexuals in the world.*

⁶² In terms of its placement in the programme's rundown, this was the closing report in the news bulletin that day.

Correspondent: *This ceremony was organised to celebrate the recent decision of the Federal Supreme Court, but there are still cases where the law is not respected.*

'Victim' – Homosexual man: *We were obliged to walk a long distance from Goiânia to Rio de Janeiro so we could once again register our stable union, because one judge from our town claimed we could not be a couple with civil rights as any other heterosexual couple.*

Correspondent: *The movements that support the gay cause want more: the right to adoption, as well as the recognition of a law that is already being discussed in Congress that penalises any kind of discriminatory acts against homosexuals with imprisonments of between 2 to 5 years.*

Correspondent: *The Catholic Church and the Evangelic are on the warpath against this law; according to them it is creating privileges more than just defending rights. If this legislation is approved, they claim, it will be a 'muzzle' for the society, punishing inappropriately all those who protest against homosexual behaviours. For example, if this law is approved, any criticism in a public space to an attitude like this [footage showing two men holding hands] means prison. The polemic was launched, but forgotten today to give place to celebration instead. Everyone is different but everyone is equal even in the ceremony's vows.*

Bride 1: *We can be happy without prejudice's hypocrisy.*

Bride 2: *I wish her all happiness and companionship, facing many years of struggle ahead.*

(Telejornal, RTP1, 23 June 2011)

b) Package edited by war correspondent in Libya, on the aftermath of the conflict, about the restoration of freedom of the press

Anchor: *Libya is now learning how to live in freedom. But it is hard to break with habits of 42 years of dictatorship, as stated the special correspondent sent to Tripoli Paulo Dentinho.*

Correspondent: *A few months ago, one word could mean imprisonment or even death. The Libyan press has been living under the regime's blindness and its vision was limited.*

Libyan journalist: *They would arrest you; maybe they would kill you or take you somewhere. Nobody could even ask about you.*

Correspondent: *The journalists of Al Jamahiriya withdrew those who most colluded with the regime, and change the name of the newspaper to 'February', the month of the revolution. Freedom has done these things. It takes time to change mentalities and work out methods, but the television, too, is adapting to a freer society.*

Libyan television CEO: *It is going to take time; it's going to take a lot of dialogue, a lot of workshops, a lot of rehab, a lot of training.*

Correspondent: *Religious broadcasts take most of the programmes on Radio Quran. Even this radio used to be under the regime's straight control. But even here one can feel the urgency in catching up with history's airwaves.*

Radio Quran journalist: *The world is now a small village thanks to the internet and satellites; so people can now educate themselves.*

Correspondent: *Freedom is a recent good – it took months to obtain; it took many lives to get it.*

Correspondent: *during many decades in this country the Libyan journalists were limited, forced to portray one sole vision of the world – the one that the regime allowed and fomented. Now, they have ahead of them learning democracy, which starts within themselves, so that they can later pass it to others.*

(Telejornal, RTP1, 24 October 2011)

c) Live report with war correspondent in Libya, with background information and in-depth analysis

Anchor: *In Libya, our team of special correspondents report now live. José Rodrigues dos Santos. Good evening. This incident between the international forces and a rebels column, as we have just watched, is it, in your opinion, an isolated error, or the result of the lack of organisation from the very own opposition forces?*

Correspondent: *I think is both. On one hand it is an isolated mistake since it is the first time that happened, or has been known. It is important to refer that, during a war, it is normal to have several casualties caused by so-called 'friendly fire'. In fact, there are studies that show that the majority of the casualties during an operation are mostly caused by 'friendly fire'. On the other hand, this is also the result of lack of organisation, and mostly due to the difficulty in identifying the forces in the field. Since NATO started its operations, attacking Gaddafi's armoured tanks, the Libyan government forces understood that they would have to adopt a modus operandi similar to the one by rebel militia; they started using pick-ups as the militia, so that the allies would think that these were rebel vehicles and not army vehicles. NATO realised that there was this tactical change by the Gaddafi's forces. Furthermore, an important event occurred: among these five vehicles – one was an ambulance – one of these had an antiaircraft weapon, and for an unknown reason, perhaps to celebrate, the man operating this antiaircraft weapon opened fire. Therefore the aircraft that was flying over thought that if fire was being shot at the aircrafts there was probably a Gaddafi's force. For that reason it attacked the column presuming that, somehow understandably, that this was a government attack. But it was not the case; there is this cultural habit of shooting for no reason [as a form of celebration].*

Anchor: *José, this confrontation has been about advances and retreats. How is the situation in the front line at the moment? Who is conquering terrain, the opponents or Gaddafi's forces?*

Correspondent: *There was an overturn now, and the insurgents gained terrain. Over the last 48 hours, Gaddafi's forces had control over Brega – 200 kilometres away from Benghazi. However, the rebels were able to expel them from Brega, and that happened because NATO was involved in heavy bombardment on that region. These bombardments were made difficult due to the weather conditions, but efficient anyway; the Gaddafi's forces had to withdraw and the rebels advanced.*

Anchor: *José, there is an idea – not only in Libya but also in other countries where there were revolutions - that once the dictators are overthrown, a democracy will arrive. Are there reasons to fear who will take control?*

Correspondent: *There is hope that, once the dictators are overthrown, democracy will come. A pro-western democracy, where people assume their rights, and freely elect a new leader every four years. This is what is wished for, but the reality will probably be different. Before arriving in Libya, I spent four days in Egypt and was able to notice something curious; the same people who have made the Revolution in Tahrir Square, the so-called 'Facebook generation' – these are urban youngsters who are looking for a more westernised style of living, with respect for human rights and embracing liberal democracy – these people were very worried. I've spoken to them and they are very worried because the Islamic Brotherhood – a radical movement - seems to be taking over the whole process; the polls show that they are likely to win the elections. The Islamic Brotherhood is a movement that defends the return to the seventh century – the time of the Prophet Mahomet, establishing sharia, the Islamic law. This means that women's' rights are repressed, Christians are seen as second-class citizens and, finally, the peace agreements with Israel will be revoked. This is likely to happen in other countries as well, including Libya. We cannot forget that there is a silent majority in these countries: a non-urban population, but they are the majority; they are silent at the moment, but by the time they will vote, they will choose what they believe; and religion is what they believe. Democracy in these countries, as in other countries, means the choice of the majority of voters; and the majority is highly religious and conservative. This will not happen necessarily, but there are strong signs that this could happen this way. We cannot forget that Islamic extremists won the Algerian elections, and the army had later to intervene and prevent the establishment of an Islamic State in Algeria. We can most likely predict a future like this for these countries.*

(Telejornal, RTP1, 2 April 2011)

d) Journalist involved in a cause/ campaigning

Anchor: *This case [of the son of football player Carlos Martins] is triggering an increase of bone marrow donations in the country. The collection centre in hospital Pulido Valente in Lisbon registered 200 new donors in only one day. One of these donators was the reporter Daniela Santiago.*

Reporter: *Gustavo is 3 years old and needs all of us. The case of national team player Carlos Martins has again launched the warning: bone marrow donors wanted. [footage showing reporter signing the agreement form]. And you will see – it does not cost a thing. The first thing to do is to fill in a form, simple and confidential.*

Reporter talking to nurse: *Good afternoon. I've filled this in, and think there is nothing missing.*

Nurse: *That's right. I just need to know if you have any herniated discs or if you have had epilepsy or thyroid problems as a child.*

Reporter: *No, not any of those. How many people have come here today?*

Nurse: *Around 180 or 200 people.*

Reporter: *How about in a normal day, where there is no appeal going on in the media?*

Nurse: *Five or ten people, I would say.*

Donator 1, interviewed: *The appeal done by Carlos Martins has moved me a lot. I know that these initiatives concern not just this case, so I hope to help somehow this child or any other person.*

Donator 2 , interviewed: *I never knew it was so easy as collecting a blood sample.*

Reporter: *Cristiano Ronaldo started this appeal before the European championship.*

Cristiano Ronaldo: *We are all with him. What I hope the most is that many people can make a donation.*

Reporter: *His sisters heard the appeal and couldn't resist.*

Cristiano Ronaldo's sister: *Especially as a mother, I could not resist. You should be doing this more often. It should not be needed a case like this to get people donating. I hope to be compatible with this boy, or with any other child.*

Nurse 2 calls: *Ms Daniela Santiago please.*

Reporter: *That's me. I don't quite like taking blood, but I'm not afraid either. [steps into the room and sits on the chair]*

Nurse 2, while sterilizing the reporter's skin: *We will need to take two tubes only.*

Reporter: *That's done. I'm now a potential bone marrow donor.*

Reporter: *There are collection centres everywhere in the country, as well as teams who can go to companies or other places where people might be interested to be part of the international list of bone marrow donors. (Telejournal, 17.11.2011)*

What these examples have in common is a longer duration (more than three minutes), as well as physical presence in the place where the action takes place and a profounder commitment to the to human rights issues implied. The first example refers to a standard package edited *in situ* by Brazil correspondent, which includes a wide spectrum of voices, (with victims of discrimination, experts and opponents among these); it also contains embedded analysis by the journalist. Example b) refers to live reporting from a country at war, transmitted after a standard update package report edited using agencies' material. As previously argued, the presence of correspondents at war scenes is scarce. This live report includes thorough background information and in-depth analysis, possible due to direct observance and reflection on the events in the field. Finally, example c) refers to an obvious example of commitment to the cause by the journalist. Engaged in performative campaigning, the reporter is the actor of the news (donating blood), appealing to the audience's response and triggering a disposition of care.

6.4 - Conclusion

This chapter presents an examination of the various elements of news content that detail and document the nature of reporting human rights, analysing these forms of

news output. Overall, this study suggests that human rights are present in the news in three different forms: by mentioning the words *human rights* specifically, by containing correlate terms, or under substantial human rights themes. It was also possible to state that these news items are mainly covered under four different news topics: *Armed conflict/war*, *Disasters*, *Economy and Politics* and *Social Issues*. Economy and Politics news are the most prominent, particularly when focusing on the global financial crisis and its consequences, suggesting the influence of an external context on the news agenda. War and disaster news are mostly covered by relying on news agency material, but, in contrast, economy and political issues, as well as social issues, are reported mostly by correspondents *in situ*. The study of the news sources reveals that most of these news stories are informed by one source, and the most commonly consulted sources are politicians and leaders.

In another highlight the news sample collected is strongly centred in news about or located in Portugal, which hints a 'domestication' of the leading news subject, which is the world financial crisis. The adoption of a national angle for this news neglects its global reach, and points towards a highly territorialised coverage of these news items, as well as a concern to target national audiences.

Additionally, this chapter examined three levels of depth while covering human rights related issues in the news sample. Different news variations, such as the format and production resources, sources, placement and duration, and location and scope contribute to the definition of this scale of depth, which in turn suggests different levels of professional engagement regarding human rights issues.

Chapter 7

Covering human rights: News Production processes

The previous chapter revealed the nature of the reporting of human rights issues, by analysing the several elements that characterise its outputs. The content analysis demonstrated that human rights are presented differently in the news, and are mostly covered under other categories of news. Economy and politics news is the most prominent, in particular when the focus is on the financial crisis and its consequences, which suggests a strong influence of the external milieu on the news agenda. Regarding the production resources utilised, the content analysis showed that war and disaster events are mostly reliant on news agencies, whereas social issues, economy and politics issues are reported by correspondents in the field. Additionally, the news sample examined indicated that many of these are about or located in Portugal, implying a 'domestication' of these news topics with human rights issues; this is particularly true about the leading news subject, the world's financial crisis. The journalistic inclination for a national scope demonstrates a noticeable territorialisation of the news coverage and the targeting of the national audiences, despite the global reach of this news programme, as stated in Chapter 5. Moreover, most of this coverage is informed by just one source, and the more frequently consulted sources are politicians and leaders.

The analysis of these several aspects allowed the distinction of three different communicative frames for coverage of human rights issues, depending on the level of depth of coverage. The framing analysis pointed out a prevalence of a more shallow approach to human rights issues, which is likely connected to the nature of the daily news programme itself, determined by the news values of novelty and time constraints.

Both content and framing analysis contributed to answering the first research question posed by this thesis, examining the representation of human rights in the news. The second research question focuses on the news production culture surrounding this coverage, and its influence on different journalistic roles and understandings regarding human rights. This chapter and the next explore the reasons behind different related professional practices, organisational dynamics and editorial choices, as well as journalists' reflexivity on their professional and social role regarding human rights

issues. Based on data gathered from ethnographic observation in the newsroom and in-depth interviews, this chapter identifies key elements that influence news production processes and human rights issues reporting. The following chapter 8 presents discussions around journalistic understandings and roles regarding human rights news.

This chapter is divided in three parts that aim to test empirically the theoretical concepts of sociology of journalism reviewed in Chapter 4. The first provides an overview of the context surrounding the news production processes, and it is divided into two subsections; one is more descriptive, looking at news filtering processes, newsroom organisation and news outputs; and the other examines recent editorial changes and their influence on news production processes. The second part, split in three subsections, focuses on the determinant news values that define human rights reporting in this context, particularly the impact of financial constraints on news outputs and newsroom organisation, culminating in a critical analysis of the growing tendency to *proximity* as the main criterion for human rights coverage. The final part presents a concluding summary of the chapter. In all, this chapter seeks to provide an overview of the journalists' professional practices and constraints that determine the presence or absence of human rights issues in the news.

7.1 – Human rights news production

This section presents a general portrayal of RTP's news production processes and the resulting news outputs. Subsequently, it moves to discuss the recent editorial changes, and how these may have been influenced by the aforementioned external context of financial crisis, but how these also help to somewhat perpetuate or accentuate the current reporting inclinations.

7.1.1 – Newsroom organization, decision-making and news output

Newsroom organisation

RTP's newsroom is an open-space two-floor room, where desks and broadcasting studios are blended. The upper floor encompasses the diary planning section, the online news (or multimedia) section, the sports section and the non-daily news section, such as the reportage team (investigative journalists). The lower floor includes the daily news team and the different thematic desks, clustered in four different groups: *Economy*, *International affairs*, *Arts and Culture*, and the *Newsroom* section, which merges the previously divided *Social Issues* and *Politics* desks. This convergence was a recent editorial decision, and will be discussed later in this chapter, in section 7.1.2. Journalists who work for the international channels *RTP International* and *RTP Africa* share this open-space office as well. The news sets or studios are also located here, and most of the news programmes include the newsroom with its news workers as a background. For these studios' technical support there are different-sized control rooms.

In the centre of this wide, open space there is a cluster of desks and computers where the *Telejornal* programme editor and producer sit together with the editors of other news programmes⁶³. There is constant discussion between news programme editors and producers; this dialogue is about how each assignment should be carried out, sometimes down to the detail of questions to be asked in interviews. This nearness also allows editors to acknowledge which news content is available to be reused in different news programmes. In addition to this policy of maximising the news outputs, reporters, correspondents and editors have quite multifaceted functions. As an example, the evening news editor Adília Godinho, is also the Arts editor, weekly arts programme writer and presenter, and often a reporter too. During my ethnographic observation, I noticed the overlapping activities that she was managing, for example: following the coverage of President Obama's inauguration ceremony via three different broadcasters and taking note of sound bites, while keeping an eye on the agencies' wires, and at the same time writing the scripts for the arts programme to be broadcasted later in the week. These tasks were often interrupted by phone calls from reporters in the field. This versatility is quite common to news workers in RTP. As another example, one of the *Telejornal*'s presenters, José Rodrigues dos Santos, is a widely popular journalist in Portugal and has been known for years for being 'the face' of the public service

⁶³ Except the programme editors for the lunchtime (RTP1) and the afternoon (*RTP Informação*) news bulletins, which are broadcasted from RTP's production centre in a different city, Porto.

television news. But he is also recognised for his coverage of several wars and armed conflicts over the last twenty years. Furthermore, all the computers in the newsroom are equipped with editing and voice recording software and hardware, so journalists can dub and edit their own packaged news, as an alternative to requiring editing assistance.

This open-space policy and choice for the newsroom seems to have been designed to foment the versatility of the news workers, as well as the flow and interaction which allows the recycling of news content within different formats. Or perhaps the idea was born the other way around. The need to maximise the usage of the news outputs and the journalists' multitasking justified the choice for an open-space shared newsroom.

At the moment, RTP has foreign correspondents in different areas of the world. Maintaining an employed journalist away from home is seen as an extraordinarily expensive resource, although essential for the news department. Thus these news workers are distributed in core locations, prepared to cover a vast territory and in some cases, a whole continent. The Portuguese broadcaster has foreign correspondents in Washington, DC (someone who is also a senior war and international affairs correspondent), Rio de Janeiro (covering the whole South American continent), Madrid, Paris (this journalist is also a senior war correspondent), Brussels (a European Union specialist), Switzerland, Moscow, and Angola. At the time of production of the news sampled and analysed in this thesis, there was also a correspondent in Timor. However, during my observation period this position would cease to exist. The two correspondents in central Europe are also frequently assigned to cover issues in other European countries. Regarding other remote areas the broadcaster often relies on stringers, as the case of Macao, where there are a significant number of Portuguese publications and broadcasters with available news staff to collaborate.

Additionally, RTP has a signed protocol to keep local representation in the Portuguese speaking African countries⁶⁴ of Angola, Cape-Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé e Príncipe. This representation includes facilities and the production of media content that is later broadcasted in RTP Africa, and reused, if

⁶⁴ These countries belong to the *PALOP* – acronym for *Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa* (Portuguese-speaking African countries).

necessary, on other RTP channels' programmes. Nevertheless, the content analysis showed that the analysed news programme, *Telejornal* hardly reports on these countries. Only 1.4% of the investigated news reports took place here, and there were no occurrences in Mozambique, demonstrating a scarce use of the African resources in the prime time public service newscast. Yet, this bulletin is broadcast simultaneously to everywhere where RTP has reach, including in the aforementioned countries. The habit of using the African resources to produce news content for the *Telejornal* will be further debated later in this chapter.

The headquarters of RTP are located in the capital Lisbon, where the ethnographic observation and interviews took place. However, the news department also includes a production centre in the north of the country, in Porto, and regional offices in fourteen other towns, including the islands of Azores and Madeira. In these centres a variable number of journalists (sometimes even just one) and camera crews contribute to the production of daily news contents.

Finally, it is relevant to mention that since 2005 RTP has been promoting a synergy-based policy for television and radio newsrooms. This policy aims to optimise resources both in terms of manpower and content. However, this managerial choice for broadcasters is often seen as linked to decisions to downsize and reduce staffing (Deuze, 2004; Singer, 2004). Therefore, it is rather common that a radio reporter would double up to produce news content for both television and radio, or the other way around. For example, the Middle East radio correspondent (based in Lisbon) is often sent abroad with a cameraman in order to report for both platforms. There are also local representations where the only reporter employed (besides the camera operator) works for both radio and television. This policy has resulted in a merging of professional routines, resources, technologies and discourses, predominantly motivated by financial reasons (Santos, 2013).

News filtering and decision-making

One of the starting points of the news production cycle is at the diary planner's desk⁶⁵ located in the upper floor of the newsroom. This team uses the main organisational tool

⁶⁵ In Portuguese, the name of the Diary planners' section is '*Agenda*'.

ENPS, which is the common software used by all the news workers at RTP (previously presented in chapter 5). They input relevant information in diary entries corresponding to each day. Using Sigal's categorisation of three channels of information (1973), the diary planners mostly draw upon routine contents⁶⁶ such as press releases from the government, political parties, public relations firms, private companies, unions, non-governmental organisations, and civil society organised movements, among others. To this list can be added articles or reports clipped from other media, official statistics and reports, advance copies of speeches, invitations to exhibitions, inaugurations and other ceremonies. Furthermore, the diary planners keep track of established fixtures such as parliamentary sessions, court hearings, sports events, anniversaries and other ephemeral events of all kinds. The diary planners are also in charge of confirming scheduled events, creating and editing the information available into basic briefing paragraphs which include the organisers' contacts and other informal notes (interviewees' availability, expected attendance, special features, and others). The diary is a dynamic entry in the system that is changed and revised throughout the day; it also serves as a worker's register of assignments, as will be explained in a moment.

News editors consider each diary line (corresponding to a different event) on the previous day, deciding which events will be covered, and who will cover them. The editors have the software permissions to add or delete information to these entries, providing recommended coverage angles or questions to be posed, or previous background information in case it is referred to in follow-up news. Afterwards, they allocate a journalist to cover each of the selected items, turning this diary line into an assignment entry with written instructions setting out details on the event or issue to be covered.

After this preliminary step in the decision processes, the diary planners are in charge of liaising with the camera crews, and organise the availability of vehicles and satellite cars, in the case of live reporting. As the diary planners work in different work

⁶⁶ According to Sigal (1973) there are three channels through which journalists attain information: 1) *routine*, the aforementioned press releases, press conferences and scheduled events; 2) *informal*, information via leaks, nongovernmental proceedings, background briefings or news from other news organisations; and 3) *enterprise*, journalists own initiatives, such as interviews, first-hand observations of spontaneous events, independent research and the reporter's own analysis (cited in Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).

shifts the editors expect to be informed if something relevant is added to or scheduled for the next day's diary. The diary planning is a continuing task, and not only for the next day. Information is processed and kept in different days' entries for more serious consideration nearer to the day of the event or coverage. In their turn, news producers delve deeper into investigating possible approaches to the issue, either researching further information or adjusting and liaising the reporting with involved sources. Although the task of anticipating what will be on screen later in the day is a shared concern, it is the news programme editor who shoulders the responsibility of coordinating planning the programme as a whole. The programme editor, based in the newsroom, briefs the reporters and correspondents throughout the day, either personally or on the telephone, suggesting alternative angles to a report, for example, in case there is a last minute alteration or aspect that needs to be covered. Police and fire alerts, as well as story ideas phoned in or emailed by the audience as news tips, are also scrutinised by the programme editor, although all news workers on service process these normally.

General news directors, senior editors and programme editors meet daily at noon to decide on the evening news contents and running order. Although the number varies everyday, during my observation period there used to be, on average, 16 senior staff members at these gatherings. The policy of an open-spaced newsroom and versatility of work functions is also applicable for these meetings. Despite the fact that these happen in a quieter corner, there are people permanently going in and out of the meeting and phone calls being made, either to add or sort out issues related to the evening news programme or with other news programmes. There are several television screens tuned into different national and international networks, and the daily newspapers are lying on the table. There is a concern to be attentive to other media coverage of events and frequently this content provides hints on when to build a bigger story.

Besides this daily meeting, programme and section editors, executive editors and general news directors gather every Thursday for the news department weekly meeting. These usually precede the day's meeting and take place in the same corner of the newsroom's open-space. Although this is a weekly gathering, it attempts to anticipate the future, in order to contextualise events and coverage across time. The most salient

presence here is that of the radio and television planning senior editor, a combined role that stems from the aforementioned synergy-based policy for radio and television news. Furthermore, these meetings have a live stream connection to the newsroom in Porto. This allows for the arrangement and coverage decisions to be made for both production centres. In comparison to the daily editorial meetings, which mostly decide the coverage of daily news, these weekly planning meetings offer more room for spontaneous suggestions of ideas for stories or deeper investigations. Some of these ideas derive from journalists' personal observations or sensibilities, or branch out from other news stories or news tips from personal acquaintances. There is also debate around recycling old stories such as anniversaries, which are often brought back at appropriate times. These ideas are then narrowed down to a list of feasible reports depending on relevance, availability of resources and pertinence within the various news programmes and formats.

Figure 7.1 illustrates the line of news production in the Portuguese public service television.

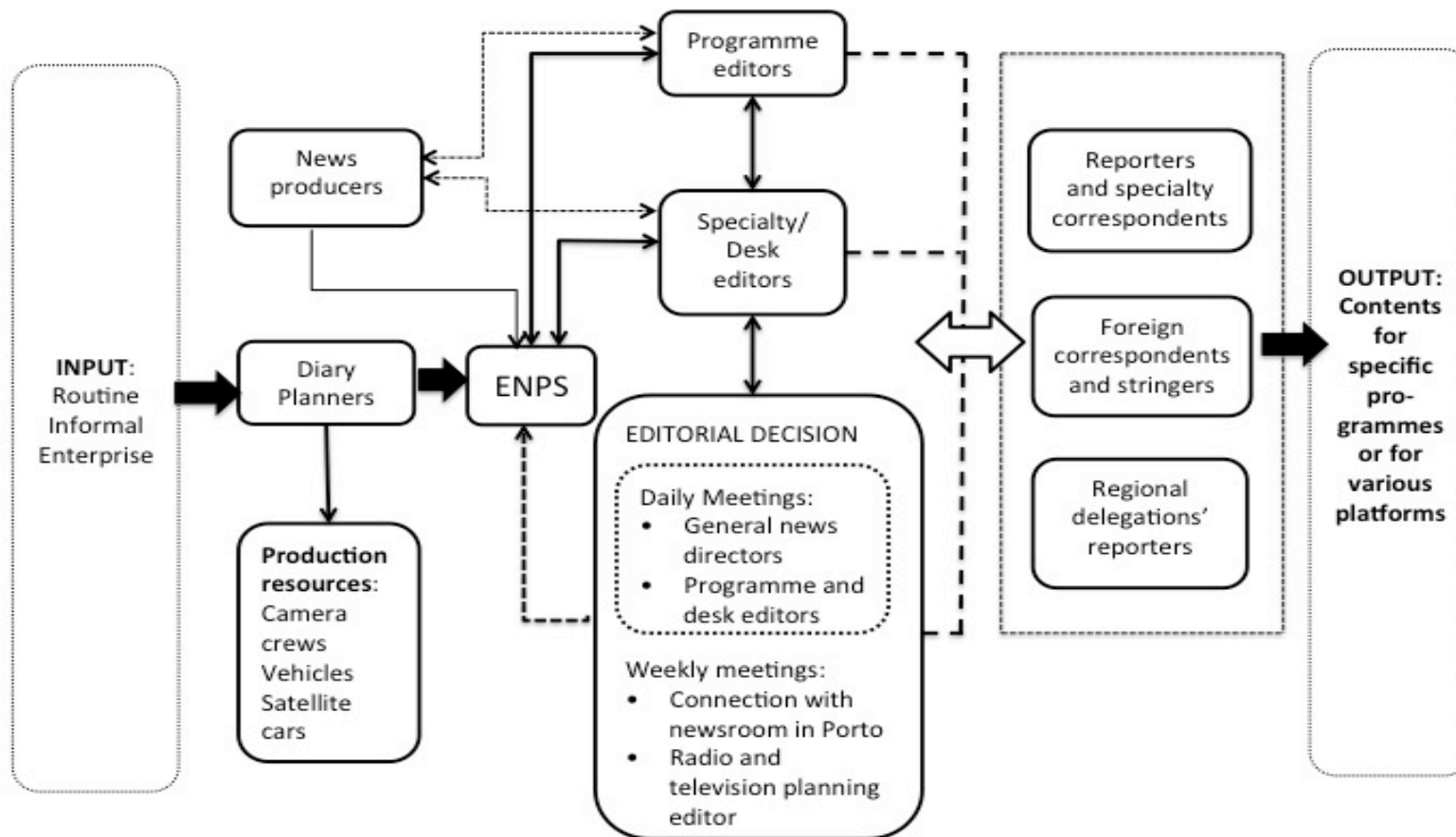


Figure 7.1 - The line of news production in Portuguese public service television

The news broadcasting and news outputs

The evening news programme *Telejornal*, as mentioned previously, is on air daily at 8pm, at the core of prime time television in Portugal, and has duration of roughly 55 to 60 minutes. As observed during my ethnographic endeavours, this programme encompasses not only careful and daily planning, but is also the result of the articulation between the contents of different news formats and programmes. In fact, RTP also produces a 24/7 news channel – RTP *Informação*⁶⁷ – with hourly newscasts that are mostly fed by the contents produced for the main channel’s news programmes, but which also build up contents for these same programmes. In the deputy general news director’s words,

‘RTP Informação is made by live coverage, by analysis of the aftermath of the events, but also by significant anticipation of what we will cover at 8pm (...) The most important news programme is Telejornal; the most important guest needs to comment in 360°⁶⁸. The rest needs to be articulated around this.’

(Cecília Carmo, RTP Deputy News Director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Telejornal is therefore seen as the most prestigious time for the news, despite the fact that it is planned in combination with the other news programmes. From a human rights analysis, and recalling the previous chapter, most of the news coverage is addressed in a shallow depth frame (62,4%), which led to the central argument that professional engagement with human rights issues is barely noted in day-to-day hard news coverage. A deeper engagement to human rights issues is most likely possible in other news formats such as feature stories and investigation programmes, in-depth interviews or analysis encompassing embedded discussion and generating deeper understanding and insights. Table 1, below, is a representation of the news programmes in RTP’s main channel from the evening to prime time:

⁶⁷ RTP Information, when literally translated to English.

⁶⁸ 360° is the analysis section in *Telejornal*. This is a recent alteration to the newscast, as it is further developed in section 7.1.2.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6-7pm	<i>Portugal em Directo</i>	<i>Portugal em Directo</i>	<i>Portugal em Directo</i>	<i>Portugal em Directo</i>	<i>Portugal em Directo</i>		
8-9 pm	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>	<i>Telejornal + 360°</i>
	9-9:30 pm – <i>Termómetro Político</i>	9-9:30 pm – <i>O nosso tempo</i>	9-9:30 pm – <i>De Caras</i>	9-9:30 pm – <i>Linha da Frente</i>	9-9:20pm Political analysis* 9:20-10 pm <i>Sexta às 9</i>		9-9:30pm Political analysis*

Table 7.1 - The news programmes in RTP1's prime time⁶⁹. (*Analysis and commentary by a fixed prominent political figure)

This table illustrates the two informative moments that surround *Telejornal*. From Monday to Friday, the 6 to 7pm time slot, or access to prime time, is dedicated to the local news, or the news from the different regions combined to a single and common newscast⁷⁰ called *Portugal em Directo*⁷¹. Some of its content is reused from other programmes, but most of it is produced purposefully for this programme. The time slot right after the evening news is seen as a continuation of the prime time informative space. There are different contents and formats depending on the weekday: from political debate on Monday, to reportage on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, an in-depth interview on Wednesdays and political analysis on Fridays and Sundays.

⁶⁹ Available at www.rtp.pt, last accessed June 2013.

⁷⁰ A brief examination of RTP's yearbooks from 1965 revealed that there has been a local news programme since 1979, justifying the expansion of RTP into opening its regional centres during the 1980s and 90s. From 1997 to 2003 this news programme converted into a multiple region broadcast, meaning that, for approximately 30 minutes, the RTP Channel 1 emission would unfold in different local emissions, broadcasting different news contents regarding six different regions of the country. However, the Government's public service broadcaster's restructuration plan in 2003 applied financial cuts and workers were dismissed (Sousa, 2003; Carvalho, 2009), and ceased these different broadcasts, re-merging the programme into a national broadcast with news contents produced by the different regional centres.

⁷¹ *Portugal Live*, when translated to English.

7.1.2 – Recent editorial changes

As demonstrated by the content analysis explored in Chapter 6, *Economy and Politics* is the most salient topic for news stories related to human rights issues, comprising 46.3% of the total sample of examined news. The fact that the majority of these reports focused on the sub-topic of the *financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout and financial rescue)* signalled the resilient influence of the global financial crisis on the journalistic agenda. It is important to mention that April 2011 was the date of the Portuguese bailout request to the International Monetary Fund. This plunged the country into a complex financial scenario that fomented on-going parliamentary, public and journalistic attention. This sample relates to the period between April of 2011 and March of 2012, and the ethnographic observation and interviews were conducted in January 2013. One month before the ethnographic observation period RTP's news department undertook managerial changes worth mentioning within the interest of this thesis. The newly designated general news director was the former Economy senior editor, performing new duties by the time of the examined news sample. A central argument here is that such editorial and managerial choice was probably based on the awareness of the growing importance and pertinence of news contents regarding economy, finance and politics. Furthermore, the Economy and finance news desk has increased the number of correspondents over the last ten years, from three to eight; a number which, according to the section's new senior editor, is still insufficient. However, the editor assumes there is an increasing connection between finance and social issues:

'Economy has always influenced people's lives. Even the reports about social issues or political issues are now centred in economy. It is difficult now to establish a separation between these areas now. A report about inflation concerns people and society because it is about something as simple as the prices at the supermarket; the growing unemployment rates and the benefits cuts – these are all economic matters which have taken over people's lives due mostly to the crisis. There should exist a dynamic between the thematic areas in the newsroom, and an acknowledgement that everything is intertwined now. (...) Even in the justice area there has been an increase in court cases regarding fiscal and bank corruption, money laundering, etc. On one hand, it shows that justice is doing better work in these areas; but on the other hand, this may also result from the crisis effects (...)'

(Rui Alves Veloso, Economy senior correspondent, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Despite the daily concern of this news section with ‘translating economy to people’, there is an awareness that such topic is growingly present in the public’s thoughts:

‘I believe that we should not play those issues down and, according to our collective and individual capacities, we should try to report on the economy in a way that the highest number of people would understand, even though we are aware of the fact that there is always someone who will not understand. The way we write, the way we use graphics, we are trying to decode these big words and concepts that half of a dozen years ago did not even exist. For example, some years ago, the public debt issue would never be opening news. Nowadays, people talk about it in the cafe as if they were commenting on some football game. Sometimes we even comment that we would never imagine that the Spanish debt crisis news would ever open *Telejornal*, or Italian debt, or Greek debt (...) How is the public money being spent? This all needs to be questioned. In my opinion, this is so decisive that it has reached a point where we almost do not need journalism to do this. At this moment, and due to the tax burden and the sacrifices imposed, society easily questions how the state has been spending the public money. This is a latent filter inside people’s minds.’

(ibidem)

The increasing entanglement of news themes, and subsequent unclear and difficult division of topics are also linking traditional finance news to human rights related news. Finance is now connected to other news angles and areas, such as poverty, social protests, unemployment, pension cuts, among others:

‘Economy and human rights is not the easiest connection. I would connect these areas when talking about poverty and differences. Nowadays, Portugal is an example of this gap that exists between the richer and the poorest; despite the fact that Portugal belongs to the Eurozone and it is a developed country with a good quality of life, there is a significant poverty outbreak and there are people living under the poverty level according to western society’s criteria. ‘Human rights’ in its rigorous sense is not an issue that we work with directly, but this is a clear approach I believe. (...) [Another issue] relates to the pension cuts. (...) But the State, when cutting the pensions, is violating this contract. (...) They are stirring the pensioners in a level that is somehow confusing me, because they are also disturbing people’s dignities. In some cases people become poor, and have no money for basic needs. This particular measure in the austerity plan is disturbing (...); we are not talking about people who have the option to change jobs or emigrate; these are people who signed a contract with the State and the State is violating this contract, messing with people’s dignity.’

(ibidem)

Other recent editorial modification converted the previous *Social Issues* desk into the more all-encompassing name of *Newsroom*, coordinated by an executive editor. It can be

argued that this decision mirrors the progressively blurred division of news topics, demanding a more flexible professional performance. The *Newsroom* clustered the previously divided sections of Social Issues and Politics news, and now includes other specialty correspondents such as the Parliament correspondents and Courts correspondents. Despite covering such areas, this team of reporters and correspondents is also expected to be involved in the coverage of other related themes, such as Economy and finance, if there are no available personnel. By attending the daily editorial meetings, I was able to notice this flexibility, when the General News director often advised the politics senior correspondent to delegate a reporter for covering an issue suggested by the Economy senior editor. If on one hand this flexibility is seen as sign of interconnection and correlation of news topics, on the other hand this may be a symptom of the lack of staff and resources in the newsroom. The previous chapter demonstrated how much the financial crisis is affecting the content of the news. Later in this chapter and in the forthcoming chapter, I will explore the impact of the financial cuts in the newsroom as an organisation, how cuts have been affecting its functioning and dynamics, with subsequent implications for news content.

The new editorial approach has also included a reformulation of the news programmes broadcast during the week on the various RTP channels. Likewise, *Telejornal* suffered changes: its duration is still around one hour, but the difference is that 15 minutes within the programme are now designated for the analysis of an elected topic of the day. This section is called *360°*, and it is not necessarily about the opening news, but the news topic that the team sees as the most important of the day. As mentioned previously, this theme is determined daily in the editorial meetings, and is produced by a senior journalist assigned to this task. These fifteen minutes are presented by a second news anchor and aim to include deeper analysis and debate, statistical data, and interviews with prominent experts. This space intends to further digest a certain event or news item and provoke reflection among the programmes' spectators, as the deputy news director points out, turning the news selection into an even more careful task:

'There is a very concrete example [about how the topic for this section is chosen]: the Governments' budget implementation. The day it was announced, we felt like we had to explain where the government was spending or saving, and how they have come up with this budget. In these 15 minutes there is deeper reflection. We weren't able to do it within the *Telejornal* only. This section includes

more elaborated reports, the presence of a guest, an expert, who explains the topic thoroughly. (...) Formerly, we could only have an interview in very selected moments. This new format allows us to incorporate analysis everyday. And it does not mean that we are not reporting as much as we were before; it means that we are more selective regarding certain issues (...) We are now building a much better-structured news bulletin, by re-directing certain news items to other more suitable news programmes.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Curiously, the sample of news items regarding human rights gathered for the present thesis showed an extremely low number of in-depth interviews as a format for the evening news programme (0,8%). The introduction of daily in-studio interviews within the evening news programmes is therefore a benchmark in this new editorial understanding, and would probably increase the aforementioned number of in-depth interviews chosen as a format to cover human rights related items. The introduction of such a change was also projected as a means of demarcating the programme from other networks' newscasts, broadcast at the same time of the day:

'We live our lives rushing around and having little time to understand all the news fragments that we hear or read throughout the day (...). At 8pm we are most of the times talking about news that happened in the morning, so we need to cover these differently. This section [360°] introduces some reflection about the news (...). Both SIC and TVI [competition networks] include guests or commentators in their newscasts sometimes, but this is not a constant presence. We have this now, so people can count on in-depth analysis of the topic of the day.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

This may indicate that there is some managerial concern and initiative to reflect and provide the spectators with tools to better understand significant news issues, and therefore there is a potential to increase the depth of coverage regarding human rights issues. As argued in Chapter 6, in-depth interviews and feature analysis are elements that potentially contribute to a deeper approach to human rights issues.

7.2 – Determinant news values and limitations of human rights reporting

This section now delves into greater detail about determinant news values and limitations that define human rights reporting. This is certainly at the crux of the

argument defended in this thesis, since it focuses on what exactly is determined or limited in the presence of human rights news, as well as the professional engagement of journalists with human rights issues. This segment is split into three sub-sections, corresponding to the three overarching factors observed through the newsroom ethnography and in-depth interviews. The first sub-section explores the importance of the *new*, or the immediate, as a determinant news value. The second sub-section looks into the financial constraints within the news department, and how these influence news practices and decisions about human rights issues. Finally, the third section discusses how human rights issues' reporting may be progressively shifting to a closer proximity of coverage (geographically and emotionally), and how this was induced by the previously mentioned financial constraints.

7.2.1 - What's new is news

The newscasts' rundowns, as explained in the previous section, are the product of established news routines that involve careful and reasoned choices. The order in which news reports are broadcast obeys the same logic of the newspaper's inverted pyramid, in which the most important stories go first, followed by less important stories. In this sense, it is crucial to understand what exactly makes a report more important than another. The ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews conducted highlighted that what makes into the news is *what's new*. The *new* comprehends a combination of news values and newsworthiness first pointed out by classic journalism studies mentioned in Chapter 4 (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Tunstall, 1970; Golding and Elliott, 1979; Gans, 1980; Schulz, 1982), and more recent elaborations of the theory (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; Allern, 2002; Harrison, 2006). These studies underline the importance of the immediate, the timeliness, the recent or the follow-up of a certain subject.

From the daily editorial meeting at 12am and until 8pm when the newscast is broadcast, a series of decisions are made, depending on briefings between senior editors, phone calls to the reporters in the field, updates on events or breaking news. These can come in the shape of a news agency wire, or a new sound bite recording, a reaction, or a last minute event. The general news director is also regularly briefed about rundown alterations, especially if these question the editorial stance of the

network. In turn, the news director replies with suggestions and his or her editorial opinion about the content of the news. As an example observed during one of the editorial meetings, the senior editors were commenting the previous evening's decision to interrupt the live transmission of a sports live programme due to a railway accident in the main train line in Portugal. This decision was made with only a little information about the accident, and no other network opted for this disruption. This made *RTP Informação* win the 24/7 news channel audience war, and gave them the highest audience share and ratings that evening. In the words of the general news director to his team of senior editors:

‘We should have no problems in interrupting programmes whenever we need to. We won because we decided to interrupt the programme and TVI24 [competitor news channel] was afraid of doing it. There was not much information available so we have done well in not persisting [by extending the interruption] so we wouldn't make mistakes or report any inaccurate information.’

(Paulo Ferreira, RTP General News Director during the editorial meeting, 22 January 2013)

Furthermore, last minute alterations do not cease at 8pm and the newscast rundown order is permanently reconsidered while the news is on air. What in one minute is the most important news story or will be the opening news, becomes secondary when breaking news happens just before or during the newscast. During one of the days of observation, *Telejornal* suffered an exceptional alteration to its format, and included an opening in-depth interview with the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, seen as the number two in government. A few minutes before the broadcast the minister announced the withdrawal of the privatisation plans for the public service television at the Assembly. The privatisation project has been an on-going discussion since the election of the current Government in 2011. This exclusive interview was particularly meaningful to RTP's news workers, whose future was at stake. Most of them remained in the newsroom during the opening of the newscast, and the production of the interview was a team effort. The programme editor, sitting inside the control room, had access to the anchor's in-ear piece and she kept giving him cues for questions and data sent by other senior editors through ENPS messaging system. One of these cues came from *Newsroom* editor who found an online finance newspaper report advancing the possibility of the dismissal of three hundred RTP's workers as a consequence of privatisation. The interview content ended up being mainly determined by this information. After this

interview, many of the reports included in the rundown had to be re-organised or dropped, according to time calculations. Although ultimately this is the editor's decision (as the general news director was also there suggesting alterations), the programme editor is careful enough to contact the senior editors about the reports to be dropped. One of the criteria is the timelessness of certain news stories: 'we can broadcast this later. It will not go bad'. As the programme editor later commented in interview, these disruptions to the normal format of the newscast are part of the process:

'I'm not at all a fatalist: despite all the planning we make, this is about daily news. Sometimes it is possible to plan a lot in advance, and have several reports 'in the pocket'. However, we work with day-to-day news. If there is some issue that superimposes on all others – it's like that – *Telejornal* will reflect this in its rundown. This is only normal. There are some quiet days in which we keep the order of news, but there are some other days in which a certain topic overrides all other topics. Therefore we pay more attention to it.'

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

As the above indicates, deciding on the alterations to the running order of news reports rely mostly on instinct rather than logic (Harcup and O'Neill, 2009), and the flexibility of news content is also part of the routine. Time constraints play an important role in this decision-making process, and programme editors juggle with the restricted time they have been allotted.

Prioritising the new, the immediate, and dealing with time constraints may be the main reason why human rights news stories are mostly addressed in a shallow manner; or, in other words, the nature of daily newscasts' contents is, itself, unfavourable to a deeper journalistic engagement with human rights issues. However, the insertion of these human rights issues in the daily rundown, despite being reported in a shallow manner, may be itself a form of involvement with human rights issues. It was evident during my observation that some editors struggle to decide on stories that, although being new, are frequently set aside with a 'we've already done that' type of answer. Two frequent examples were the increasingly frequent layoffs of dozens of workers from closing companies, or the number of families in financial distress in Portugal. These stories, because of their commonality, are often seen as 'nothing new', although some journalists defend the exact opposite, arguing that there are always new angles to recurring topics:

‘Sometimes people complain that it’s always the same, that we’ve done it: to go out and look for cases and talk to people; but I insist because I believe that this is fundamental: it is about people and not figures. There is a frightening figure [regarding unemployment] that is then affecting people’s lives. So therefore I try to transform this figure into reports with a face. Unemployment is an obvious example that we address almost every day.’

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

‘Unfortunately this is the situation in many newsrooms: there is so much poverty and crisis, and we hear ‘one more case of a starving elderly’ and we think that it’s just one more, but no; this is another case, another person starving and we should not tolerate it...The argument is that it is banal and repetitive and ‘we have done this report before’. We allow these cases to become banal like seeing a child on the street starving and act as if it is banal... When cases as these are established as normal we stop covering them. This is perhaps why politicians stop feeling pressured to act upon these situations. This is what is happening to journalism during the crisis.’

(Rita Ramos, RTP investigative reporter, interviewed in 23 January 2013)

Contributions like these suggest a more profound involvement with human rights issues, even if these come in the form of a more shallow approach in daily newscasts. Repetition, in these journalists point of view, should not be seen as a problem, but as a mission engrained in the nature of their professional role, which they imagine is to trigger some sort of response or action by the leading elites, as the latter quote suggests. This aspect of the journalists’ understandings of their roles regarding human rights will be further explored in Chapter 8. But for the time being, this particularity demonstrates that journalists somehow bear social concerns in mind when producing the daily news, even if those issues are simply addressed in a superficial manner. Daily news coverage, in their view, is not about human rights specifically, but instead embeds human rights constantly:

‘No one broadcasts a report just pondering whether it is about human rights or not. However, news about the sacking of dozens of 40-year-old employees for example, workers who will then have great difficulties to find a new job and to survive, is this about human rights? Yes, I think so. News about attacks in Iraq is about human rights too. However, we do not think about this as in human rights terms, but it is always there. I’m very sensitive to the unemployment issue, and it is shocking that people lose everything from one moment to the other; this is the reality and it does concern the rights of the people, human rights or workers rights and how this is changing so quickly. The fact that you are reporting these stories, you are embedding human rights in the daily news.’

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

‘Human rights are never reported in abstract, but when related to certain events where human rights violations are at stake. It is important to alert people about these issues. (...) But these are not addressed as human rights violations. Human rights are there; those things happened. We don’t usually cover the institutional work, I must recognise, despite the fact that the High Commissioner for Human Rights is Portuguese, Guterres. But I have not seen him in the news lately.’

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Overall, the most important reports in the daily newscasts are predominantly news stories that bring the most recent events, or the latest developments to an on-going story. Despite this, as argued before, there is often the initiative to report the ‘not new’ when referring to cases of social concern, because this is seen as an obligation rooted in the journalists’ social role. In addition, there is the proximity factor which is also an imminently decisive news value, as will be further defended later in this section.

7.2.2 – Financial constraints

The previous chapter explored the content of news related to human rights issues revealing that, during the examined period, Economy and politics is the most frequent topic covered, with the financial crisis and its consequences as the most salient news focus. This suggests a strong influence of external context on the journalistic agenda. The present sub-section aims to discuss the effect of the financial constraints within the public service news department, and how this determines professional practices, the availability of resources, decision making and, subsequently, the content of the news, particularly regarding human rights issues.

The content analysis also disclosed important hints regarding the production resources of a newsroom that has sustained a scenario of financial cuts. The research showed that 62.8% of war coverage relied on material provided by international news agencies; this also occurred in a majority of disaster news (48.6%). On the other hand, specialty correspondents were sent to the field to cover most of the news issues related to economy, politics and social issues. This latter finding, combined with the prevalence of news reports about, or happening in Portugal (60.3%), pointed to a ‘domestication’ of international or global issues. Yet, it is important to dissect the reasons behind this

domestication, namely the motivations for such choices at a news production level. The question is: are the financial cuts preventing journalists from covering human rights issues abroad, or is there a growing and prevalent interest in human rights issues at a more local level? My period of observations and the in-depth interviews with news workers confirmed the changes after the financial cuts, clearly showing that both premises are right and actually are each other's cause and effect. Although undeniably interwoven, however, the effects of the financial cuts in the news department and the correlate emphasis on 'domestic' human rights issues are separately debated in this and in the following sub-section (7.2.3).

At the time of my ethnographic observation, and despite having the foreign correspondents as a resource, there was no war correspondent allocated anywhere in the globe. Sending a correspondent to cover armed conflict or other correlated news topics is seen as an extremely expensive investment, and therefore needs to be carefully deliberated on a managerial level. This impacts the coverage of on-going conflicts, but also the engagement with other human rights causes, as the 'Newsroom' senior editor admitted,

'If it wasn't for this crisis, I'm sure that we would have sent a team of reporters to Haiti this year since it has been three years after the earthquake, to check how Haitians are living now. There are a series of financial constraints that prevent us from looking at human rights beyond our borders. Off the top of my head, during the last two years we have not been in any refugee camp (...). We now worry about what's at our door, at the end of the road, in our neighbourhood, in our country, where there are people living under extremely dramatic conditions.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

As argued in the previous chapter, sending correspondents to the news scene is more likely to inspire a deeper engagement with human rights related issues. Indeed, the majority of news stories covered in a deeper engagement communicative frame were produced by correspondents either specially sent to the field (home or abroad), or foreign correspondents (76%); and none of these stories was based on news agencies materials. However, as argued before, there is a blatant reliance on news agencies when covering armed conflict and disaster news. As suggested in Chapter 4, this is actually a general tendency among major international media, who are increasingly dependent

upon international news agencies as they cut newsgathering resources (Paterson, 2011). Senior editors are well aware of this dependency, although their opinions about it differ. On one side, there is a mindfulness that sending a crew to war zones provides a more profound understanding of the conflicts and human rights violations at work:

‘It is always preferable to send someone to those places. Receiving information from news agencies creates a distance that having a correspondent there would not do. Witnessing those situations by ourselves gives us a much clearer vision about the drama. In fact, it is always preferable to have someone there *in loco*, checking if things are being fairly exposed. In that matter, we are highly dependent on what comes from outside.’

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Moreover, sending correspondents to the field places the spectators closer to a deeper understanding of the embedded discussion that surrounds such issues, and perhaps closer to the normative ideal defended by the theory of peace journalism, as explored in Chapter 3, and explained by a war correspondent:

‘The closer an event is to the spectators, the better they will understand it (...) The more distant the spectator is from the event, the more the spectator needs mediation, because he is unaware of things. When we report events from a distance, there are many contextual elements that we do not understand. If journalists don’t understand what they are writing about, chances are that they misinterpret it; and this will be reflected in the texts that will be broadcast. Therefore going to places helps us to better understand certain aspects of the problem that we were unaware of. (...) We often don’t believe this when we are from a distance; we have to be there to see and understand it. When I was in Libya, on the frontline, I realised that those who were fighting were Islamic fundamentalists, and this information is something that I couldn’t acknowledge through news agencies. (...). We see things better through our own eyes. The so-called ‘rebels’ or ‘rebels pro democracy’ were a myth; something constructed which was convenient in that context. The same thing is happening in Syria. The Syrian government is right when they claim that they are fighting against an Islamic extremist force, which is not Syria, and that that is essentially formed by a coalition of extremists from several countries. This is true; the thing is that we don’t believe it. But we understand this when we are actually there.’

(José Rodrigues dos Santos, RTP *Telejornal* anchor and senior war correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

On the other hand, news agencies materials are perceived as a reliable resource, safer and done by well-prepared reporters. Therefore, in some cases, this is seen as a better

option than sending correspondents to war zones, such as Syria, as the deputy news director confesses:

‘We have no chance to do better than they [international news agencies reporters] do; and we’re not even allowed to. If RTP decides to go there now, we wouldn’t be able to cover more than they do. We probably wouldn’t even be allowed into certain places; and international news agencies’ reporters are experienced, they are always the same ones, jumping from war to war, heavily trained for this. Therefore they have more contacts and acquaintances in these places; and this allows them to cover issues that war correspondents from any other broadcaster have no access to.’

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

International news agencies materials are also considered to be more trustworthy than citizen journalism or alternative media materials, which are rarely used:

‘If we were a giant broadcaster like BBC or CNN – and even they use news agencies’ materials – we would probably have more resources; that’s how it is. I’d rather work with news agencies than with those alternative materials because I trust their sources. Most of the times it is hard to understand the provenance of the sources of those alternative blogs, etc. I’m not saying they are not correct, but it is difficult to confirm the information provided there. Agencies are credible and rigorous and the people who work there work under the professional and ethical journalism rules such as confirmation of sources, quotations.’

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

As the above indicates, relying on news agencies as the main production resource for the coverage of war and armed conflict (and the subsequent news topics such as refugees and asylum seekers, humanitarian aid, solidarity or rescue, among others) is seen as both a threat and an asset for human rights reporting. However, the decision to not allocate a senior correspondent to war zones aggravates the silencing or the absence of human rights in the news. This argument draws upon the theoretical concepts explored in Chapter 4 and regards the tendency of routinization of war coverage and the absence of aftermath and peace building reporting.

The fact that wars take place over an extended time period, in the journalists’ opinions, may undermine the relevance of the topic, and precludes the chance of covering these issues on a daily basis. Continuing conflicts are most likely to be covered in sporadic and exceptional cases when some new development occurs:

‘The main problem with these situations is that they develop throughout a very long time span. Regarding Mali, it is true that the situation has been going on for several months, but the military intervention only happened now; and this is what triggered the news. Regarding the Arab spring, we covered it when it started and [followed] the several steps until the situation normalised. Egypt is also an example of that: we were there in the beginning; we followed Mubarak’s overthrowing and all the problems that were happening; but at some point the situation normalised despite some peaks of events. In terms of news, sometimes several weeks pass and nothing new happens, nothing that we haven’t said before. We only go back to those topics when something new happens. It is tragic what is happening in Syria now, but if we talk about Syria every day, unfortunately it would only be about how many more people have been killed in what attack. At some point it is impossible to report it on a daily basis. If either some offensive happens, or the resignation of the president, or international intervention is evoked – we will most probably bring the topic back.’

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Yet, while it is common sense that during a conflict there are moments ‘where nothing happens’, these are not necessarily empty or meaningless moments. It is not as if the conflict holds still for a certain number of days until some negotiation, attack or coup, i.e. something newsworthy occurs. It is pertinent to argue that during these moments there is time to look at timeless stories within a war context. This would involve a close, even acute level of professional engagement and investigation, but also an investment of resources and expenses. This would mean going beyond the simple informational quest of day-to-day reporting, and embracing a pro-active journalistic performance, by searching for first-hand testimonials of experiences and aiming to provide in-depth understanding, detailed background, context and self-reflexivity. All these are most likely possible through *in situ* observation, and this professional pro-activeness is highly favourable for the coverage and denunciation of human rights violations. The permanence of war correspondents in a conflict zone is dependant on the will of the reporter, on the risk involved or permission from the related authorities, but also from managerial decisions to maintain or withdraw the correspondent team from the field. Due to the financial cuts that have been applied to several newsrooms, it is most likely that the live coverage of a conflict remains confined to peak moments where further developments, strategic advances or negotiations take place. When asked about the abovementioned opportunity to pursue more investigative forms of coverage during these in-between moments where ‘nothing happens’, the International Affairs senior editor hesitated and recognised that not having a team in the field escalates the

newscasts' dependence on news agencies. Furthermore, this reliance provokes the depletion or limitation of angles to address the topic of war:

'Regarding Syria, we haven't been talking about it, that's a fact. We addressed the problem of the refugees several times... we talked about the hundreds of people who were fleeing from their cities to escape the war, crossing the Turkish border and are now living under terrible conditions. We had several reports about that, despite the fact that we had no Portuguese correspondent there. We reported what was coming from the news agencies (...) in that regard, we are highly dependent on what arrives from outside. We haven't had and have not any correspondents there.'

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

This is also applicable in the aftermath of the conflict or reconstruction periods where the continuity of coverage is at stake. As argued in Chapter 4 of the literature review, news directors tend to withdraw correspondents from a war zone as soon as the conflict is over, the ruling power is overthrown, or there is a cease-fire. Also, it is rare that news crews are sent back to the field months or years after a conflict in order to report on the reconstruction or peace-building period, which are seen as core moments for human rights affirmation. This was the case with the Libyan conflict, as deputy news director recognises:

'It would be interesting [to send a team back to Libya] if we had the financial capacity for it. We didn't stay in Libya until the end of the conflict. We realised at a certain moment that there was nothing left to say and from that moment our work could be based on international news agencies' work that we receive daily in the newsroom. Of course if we had remained there, we would keep reporting, but this would involve costs. (...) It would be good to see how the situation is there now, but this is a matter of contention of costs. If I send a team to Libya now, I wouldn't be able to afford a series of live reports here [in Portugal].'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

The decision to not send or bring a crew of reporters back from war zones is connected financial reasons, as mentioned in the previous comment, but also to what journalists believe to be a lack of interest from the audience:

'The spectator is not interested in that. How is Bosnia so many years after the war? This is not a very galvanising topic. While a war is actually happening it is very strong from a visual perspective, but then it is no longer. It is very hard to convince a newsroom or the management, who will need to spend

money, to travel to a place where nothing is happening today; that is, nothing visible or visual is happening. This is very interesting, but broadcasters will not spend money on that.'

(José Rodrigues dos Santos, RTP *Telejornal* anchor and senior war correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

There is an understanding, however, that human rights issues can be addressed even while juggling the impossibility of sending teams abroad. This can be possible by promoting the debate in news programmes other than daily newscasts, which are under severe time constraints.

'We often produce discussions and roundtables about those issues [related to human rights], mostly in [the 24/7 news channel] RTP *Informação*, or even in RTP1. There are certain events that have such impact, that we feel the need to debate them (...) and although these are connected to human rights, we don't really address them under that perspective (...). Most of the time we debate these issues without being there (...) We know that we are addressing human rights issues, and sometimes we mention it, sometimes we don't; but it is implied that we are talking about it.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

'When a certain situation prolongs along an extended period of time, then it is just one more bomb, one more attack, and at some point it has no more relevance from a journalistic point of view. This happened in Iraq for example. I always try to provide a vision about the strategic point of view: who is bombing where and why. (...) but it isn't always possible to cover in one and a half minutes news in *Telejornal*. Therefore most of the background information is referred to the weekly [International affairs news] programme.'

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Conducting in-depth interviews and analysis with experts or specialist correspondents is a way, as affirmed in the previous chapters, to embed discussion within the news programmes, and to facilitate deeper understandings and insights for audiences. As mentioned before in this chapter, these are managerial initiatives that may help to overcome the lack of financial resources without undermining the quality of the network's news content production. Although this is a possible solution to foment deeper reflection and to display deeper professional engagement with human rights issues, the financial cuts on journalists' dislocations will also muffle the voice of the voiceless, or the victims in this case, and prevent physical proximity to the scenarios where human rights violations are occurring abroad.

One other creative solution to overcome the lack of resources and reach and report on certain events, and as observed in the analysed news sample, was the use of Skype. Sporadically, the evening newscast utilised this Internet tool to reach out for different voices. However, and as it will be further analysed in section 7.2.3, the inclusion of these voices contributed more to the tendency of ‘domestication’ of global human rights issues, than to the inclusion of international victims’ angles.

7.2.3 – Human rights issues in our neighbourhood: empathetic proximity or forced proximity?

The previous sub-section showed that the priority within daily newscasts is news stories that refer to the most recent events or the latest developments of an on-going issue. Notwithstanding this criterion, the newsroom ethnographic observation allowed the recognition of some initiative to defend reporting ‘repeated’ or ‘not new’ issues when raising cases of social concern. This is seen as part of the journalist’s professional and social role. In addition, the earlier sub-section mentioned proximity as a decisive news value. The present sub-section will explore precisely how proximity is influencing the coverage of human rights issues, arguing that there is both an empathetic and forced proximity caused by the financial constraints imposed on the newsroom.

As argued before, sending a correspondent abroad to cover war or armed conflict situations is seen as an expensive venture, requiring consideration at a managerial level. The newsroom observation and the in-depth interviews conducted showed that this decision depends mostly on the meaningfulness that such events have to national audiences or, in other words, it depends on the national perspective on and interest in foreign conflicts. As deputy news director exemplifies:

‘Here is a concrete example: we have no correspondent in Mali at the moment, and it doesn’t make sense to send one... since this issue is not quite connected to our country, yet. This means that we won’t invest in sending someone to war just because there is a war... If we see that there is an important conflict in the sense that it matters to us, we will be there. Perhaps it is better to send a correspondent to report on some other issue that concerns us – Portugal – instead and not just because

there is a war happening... It's a matter of costs... and in these cases [Mali] what we get from news agencies is enough.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

'We have to think, ponder the costs, if it is worth it or not... Sending someone to Mali, why? Just because there is a war going on there? How much would that cost? What's the impact on our country? Is this important? ... What information do we have available here from the news agencies? Would we be able to report further than that? No. Therefore, if we wouldn't, we have the agencies' materials available. We have to ponder all these aspects before sending someone abroad.'

(*ibidem*)

There is an understanding that distant conflict situations relate differently to audiences, and the more distant audiences are from the conflict, the less interested they will be, and the smaller the impact that such news have upon spectators:

'Well, this [conflict in Mali] is opening the news in France every day because there are French troops there; therefore this is close to French people for this reason. Mali is also very important news to its neighbour countries; but as distant as we are from the event's epicentre, the less relevant this is. News is also measured by the impact that they have in people's lives. If an event has no impact in their lives, it is not very relevant to them.'

(José Rodrigues dos Santos, RTP *Telejornal* anchor and senior war correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

This perspective undermines the possibility of a *global public sphere* or *global civic society* defended by several media scholarship theorists (Volkmer, 1999, 2002, 2003, Silverstone, 2007) reviewed in Chapter 3, who referred the media as a potential global arena for raising awareness and a sense of social responsibility towards the distant 'other'. In this sense, the financial constraints imposed on the newsrooms are compromising the notion of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2003; Benhabib, 2007), and aggravating the gap between 'us' and the 'other'.

However, although there is an assumed awareness that daily newscasts mostly privilege internal or national news, there is also a belief that this limitation can be overcome through the contents of other news programmes, in which time constraints are not such

a limitation. An example of this outlook is the weekly international affairs programme, which is run and presented by the desk's editor, and broadcasted on the 24/7 news channel:

'*Olhar o mundo*' [To Look at the world] is an international affairs news programme; some of the reports are made by us – not as many as I wish; and also with the correspondents' contributions, agencies material and invited specialists and experts in several areas, political analysts. We also invite foreign personalities who are visiting Portugal. (...) This allows us a deeper coverage of this issue than the one done in daily news bulletins. (...) I usually choose a relevant topic for that week and cover it beyond hard news, which go on air daily in *Telejornal*, which are usually shallower (...). *Telejornal* usually focuses on national issues as BBC bulletins focus on internal issues, or other broadcasters from other countries. We are not different. In *Telejornal* we cover what is essential every day (...), analysing what is important or relevant for a Portuguese public (...) There is always a tendency to privilege the national aspect in news. One of the advantages that I have with my show is precisely to be able to separate from that side, and to analyse the situations in another context not exclusively connected to this Portuguese point of view. This is why such a programme is valuable (...); there is a supranational vision of the topics.'

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Still, these types of programmes have substantially narrower audience reach than the everyday newscasts, which as previously mentioned is broadcast globally to the Lusophone communities across the world, through the RTP's international and African channels. This leads me to argue that in these types of news formats, where deeper embedded discussion and understandings of human rights related events is possible, the arena for raising awareness is far from being a global arena, being limited to national audiences (and, in this case, cable subscribers).

Having previously argued that RTP's news production resources in Africa were rarely used for the prime-time newscasts, during the in-depth interviews conducted I addressed this question at a managerial level. The African resources, as the deputy news director explains, are used in specific events, although the contents are produced and sent to the headquarters daily:

'When there is an important issue in Africa, a really important issue, especially to the Lusophone Africa that justifies the coverage within other newscasts other than the ones in RTP Africa, it makes sense [to include it]. For example the elections in Angola were in *Telejornal* every day (...) When a Portuguese man was killed in South Africa, the Mozambique correspondent, who was closer, was immediately sent

there. So, whenever there is a reason, the African delegations collaborate with *Telejornal* and all other RTP platforms. Everyday we receive edited packages from Africa, but these are very focused on African issues which are not quite connected to Portugal but more connected to African communities living here.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

This quote clarifies how the proximity to the national interests prevails as a decisive news value for the evening bulletin, leading editors to be selective with the African news production resources in order to generate outcomes for the broadcaster's several programmes. In this sense, it is visible that there is also a prevalent national interest but from an African perspective. RTP Africa's newsroom and the several delegations have specific newscasts for the African communities living in Portugal (broadcast on the cable 24/7 news channel RTP *Informação*), and other programmes broadcast exclusively on the African channel. Therefore, it is pertinent to argue that RTP's African resources contribute to the strengthening of national interests, using national interest as a core news value both for Portuguese audiences and for Lusophone-African audiences.

Occasionally, there are also other types of creative attempts to overcome the impossibility of having reporters abroad. One of these initiatives is using the online software Skype to reach out and include different voices in the daily news. Using this Internet tool became an alternative to traditional phone interviews, and it is seen as a cheap resource for news production. In order to examine the frequency of this alternate approach to distant human rights events, this research includes a smaller parallel content analysis to *Telejornal's* news⁷². Through this analysis, it becomes clear that during six months in 2011 Skype was used in two cases: the Japan earthquake and subsequent nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, and the Arab uprisings. Both case studies will be separately explored in the following paragraphs.

⁷² Differently from the sample collection technique explained in Chapter 5 and developed in Chapter 6, for the purposes of this case study, I have considered every newscast from 16st March 2011 to 31 August 2011.

During this time span, there was no correspondent sent to cover the disasters in Japan; this resulted in 77% of the related news items being edited from news agencies' information and footage⁷³; 19% of reports being 'domesticated' stories about 'the risk nearby'⁷⁴, and one news story⁷⁵ based in a Skype call to a Portuguese citizen living in the South of Japan. During his interview the man explained how foreign citizens were advised to leave the country. This initiative was undoubtedly an attempt to overcome the dependency on news agencies' materials and as a means to follow up the topic. However, it can be argued that this endeavour resulted more in an attempt to reach 'one of us amongst them', or one of 'us' amongst the distant 'other'.

The same pattern was verified during the aforementioned Arab Spring where during the sampled time period correspondents were sent only to Egypt and Libya. Skype was used during this six-month period regarding the conflicts elsewhere in the Arab world. Curiously, it was used as a production resource to address one of the less intensely covered countries during this period, Bahrain, which was mentioned in the news three times⁷⁶. Furthermore, I was able to confirm⁷⁷ that Bahrain made it into the daily evening news only 11 times during the whole year of 2011, despite the fact that this was a particularly sensitive moment for that country. Of these 11 news items reported throughout the year, ten were edited relying on international news agencies' information, and three reports out of these ten packages were about the overall situation in the Arab countries, in which Bahrain was merely mentioned and which offered no deeper analysis in its content. The exception was precisely the remaining news story, which included a Skype call to a Portuguese citizen living in the capital Manama. This was the one instance in which this country's political developments

⁷³ This number might have been different should this analysis have included the immediate days after the earthquake, which took place on the 11th of March 2011. However, the newscasts were not available for sampling from 11/03 to 15/03. Despite this, it was later confirmed with RTP's news editors that no correspondent was sent to Japan at that time.

⁷⁴ Six of the total of news stories reported on similar risks that Portugal is exposed to (one report about the nearest power plant located in Spain and what could happen if they had a meltdown) or reports about the risk of nuclear contamination in the Japanese dairy products or food sold or served in restaurants in Portugal.

⁷⁵ On air on the 16th of March 2011.

⁷⁶ From a total of 205 news items about the Arab uprisings coded between 16/03/2011 to 31/08/2011, Libya was mentioned in 155 news items, Egypt in 14, Syria in 13, Yemen in 9, Tunisia in 8, Jordan in 3 and Bahrain in 3.

⁷⁷ Having access to the rundowns and scripts of the newscasts' archives of 2011

received more attention within the Portuguese evening news and interestingly happened on the same day as the Skype call to Japan. Again, the presence of ‘one of us among them’ was the only reason behind the story. For a few minutes, the interviewee described the situation as ‘frightening’ and ‘uncertain’ and added that the protesters were ‘nothing but peaceful’. It took five months for Bahrain to appear in the Portuguese television prime time news again, as Figure 7.2 below documents:

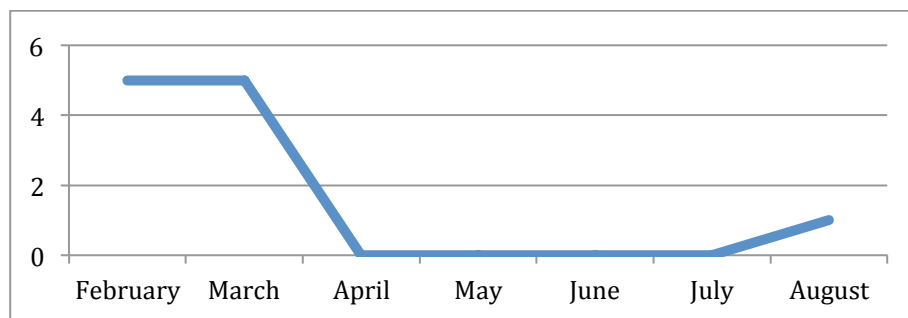


Figure 7.2 - News items about Bahrain (frequency in 2011)

In these two cases Skype was used as a tool to access two different voices in places where coverage was otherwise totally dependent on news agencies. The difference is that, in the Japan case, the story emerged from a need to diversify the angle of the continuous coverage, accompanied by follow up stories about the imminent risk of meltdown. In contrast, the Bahrain case exemplifies a moment when human rights issues were at stake, likewise over a continuing and prolonged time span but, oppositely, barely making it into the news. The scarce coverage of human rights issues in this Arab country was interrupted when ‘one of us amongst them’ was found, but the story was then silenced again for months until mentioned again in August⁷⁸.

This pattern of using Skype as a form to reach national voices within international news issues in places where there are no displaced correspondents remains as an option for the currently restructured newsroom:

‘We have used Skype recently, when there was another boom of nurses sent to England. We have interviewed live via Skype in *Telejornal* with one of the nurses. We have no correspondent based in

⁷⁸ RTP *Telejornal*, 24th August 2011

London, but there were so many nurses going at that time that we thought that it was relevant to have someone telling us about her experience.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

This tendency, supported by the aforementioned smaller case studies, suggests that alternative technological resources are not a gate for global awareness, but an arena for the identification and an alignment with national interest as a news value. Therefore, such news production choices do not overthrow traditional news standards of the domestication of foreign news.

The previous sub-section confirmed the increasing salience of economy and finance news within the daily newscasts, demonstrated by the results of the content analysis explained in Chapter 6. It also argued that, although the nature of the daily newscast contents is unfavourable to deeper journalistic engagement with human rights issues, some news workers affirmed their resilience to report on the social concerns that result from the effects of the financial crisis. It has also been explained that the financial constraints experienced in the newsroom are preventing the news directors from sending crews abroad, due to the high costs of such decisions. This suggested a double-sided pattern influencing the coverage of human rights related news, balancing on one hand, the impossibility of access to human rights causes abroad, and on the other hand, a growing interest in human rights issues on a local or national level. As 'Newsroom' senior editor explains,

'It's journalism of causes. We don't need to go far away to make human rights journalism. We can merely go to the end of our street to report about human rights. When we report about families who live below the poverty line, or when we report about children who are starving – that, in my opinion, is human rights journalism. The repercussion that that report has upon the spectator, or upon these people's lives has exactly the same impact as being in Haiti or Indonesia reporting the reality after the earthquake or the tsunami. In these times of economic crisis as we are living in, the information air time... will be less and less dedicated to these great causes abroad, and more dedicated to looking at these internal problems.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

The growing prevalence of economy and finance news reporting is, as argued before, linking traditional finance news to human rights related news such as news about

poverty, social protests, unemployment, pension cuts, among other topics. But this is also strengthening the importance of the proximity aspect of news. It is both an empathetic proximity, going *merely to the end of our street*, but also a forced proximity, due to the financial constraints and lack of resources to report beyond borders:

‘Look at Latin America. We have a correspondent in Brazil, but this is still one of the less covered areas. ... We only recognise the importance of this region when there is a Portuguese person or interests involved. I would extend our coverage there (...). Covering this area of the globe only when there are Portuguese interests involved is a rather limited vision of things. The Falklands/Malvinas issue in Argentina; the probable succession of Chavez in Venezuela; Cuba and the opening of the borders; all those situations deserve more profound coverage with reports done *in loco* by our reporters; mostly because we don’t know much about what happens in these countries. A few issues are covered in Brazil, because there is a correspondent there, and because there has always been a close relationship with Portugal.’

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

Despite these diverse visions it is visible that budgetary cuts to the public service broadcaster are provoking a shift in the types of human rights reported. This is in line with the content analysis findings that exposed how strongly the so-called second generation of rights, or *social rights* are addressed in the news. This finding challenges the previous empirical claims that suggest that human rights are still taken largely to mean political and civil rights (ICHRP 2002:16; Ovsiovitch 1993; Fan and Ostini, 1999). These studies argued that ‘the importance of economic, social and cultural rights was widely ignored by the media in their coverage of economic issues, including international economy, poverty, inequity and social and economic discrimination’ (ICHRP 2002:16). However, the increasing connection between traditional finance news and human rights related issues is shifting the patterns of human rights reporting. Further, the importance of *proximity* is changing human rights reporting to a more nation-focused coverage, resulting in a persistent attention to issues related to social rights related; these, in their turn, are the outcome of the external context and the predominant human rights issues within borders.

Notwithstanding financial constraints enforced the public service broadcaster’s annual budget, there are exceptions where editorial decisions seem to contradict and

temporarily disrupt the pattern of minimising the costs in the news department. To illustrate this claim with an example, I have piloted another smaller case study referring to the so-called 'DSK sex scandal'. On May 14th 2011, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) director, was accused of sexual assault by a hotel maid in New York. The Portuguese media insistently covered this scandal. The public service television mobilised an exceptionally impressive number of reporters and quantity of resources to New York and to Paris, in order to report on the impact of the scandal. It is relevant to briefly mention that the two months before this scandal were particularly sensitive for the Portuguese political and financial situation. The resignation of the Prime Minister in March⁷⁹ and the request for a financial bailout to the IMF and European Union two weeks later, were followed by the anticipated election of a new Prime Minister⁸⁰. Before the 'DSK scandal' the newscasts were therefore mostly composed of Economy and Politics news, particularly by the bailout request, the negotiations with the IMF, and campaigns for forthcoming elections. As previously mentioned, the day the sex scandal broke into the news RTP covered the issue by requesting a stringer to report live from NY in a three-way split screen with a Paris correspondent. The subsequent days' coverage mobilised significant resources by sending a reporter and camera operator to NY, who travelled the very same day to replace the stringer. For more than twenty minutes there was a simultaneous four-way live report between NY, the news studios in Lisbon, and the Paris and Brussels correspondents. The assigned team remained in NY for five days, covering various details and angles of the scandal: court sessions, reports in the prison's surroundings, reports the neighbourhood where the alleged victim lived, the luxurious apartment in where DSK was not permitted to be taken for home arrest, and meticulous details about the alleged crime, among other angles. Furthermore, there were newsroom-edited packages by the correspondent for international affairs and live reports from Paris and Brussels regarding the political and institutional impact of the scandal. The coverage of the scandal was continuously and exhaustively kept up for nine days. The analysis of these newscasts revealed that, at that same moment, there was no other correspondent specifically assigned to any other international location or war zone.

⁷⁹ 23 March 2011

⁸⁰ The legislative elections took place in 5 June 2011.

As claimed previously, from a human rights law perspective, the growing presence of economy and finance news in the daily newscasts has increased the amount of coverage of socio-economic rights. This pattern changes or challenges previous empirical studies that claim that human rights is largely represented in the news by topics relating to civil and political rights. This case study demonstrates an interesting shift of both content and news production resources and addresses how the sex scandal put the (recent) routine crisis news on hold, bringing to light content that most clearly relate to civil rights, such as sexual integrity, presumption of innocence and personality rights. However, such extensive coverage of this episode within the Portuguese television news is only justified by the internal context of a financial bailout and a critical environment. Again, the proximity news value prevailed, more than a global concern about the political and institutional impact of such scandal. On the other hand, this case also contravened editorial policies of costs reductions, by mobilising an exceptionally large number of news workers to cover this issue and by using such extended satellite time for live broadcasting. Episodes of scandal such as this one momentarily distract spectators and disrupt news programmes' rundowns. Nevertheless, the underlying topic in the journalist's agenda is still the financial and political crisis.

7.3 - Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of RTP's news production processes and the key elements that influence the coverage of human rights related issues. The first section described the news filtering processes and resources, demonstrating that there is an overall policy of reusing news outputs in different news formats, and that the workers in the newsroom have quite multifaceted functions. Despite this maximisation of personnel and news outputs, there appears to be scarce use of the African resources in the prime time newscast. Furthermore, this section debated the recent editorial changes in the newsroom, which reflect awareness of the growing relevance of economic and finance news, and its increasing interconnection with social issues stories and reporting angles related to human rights issues, namely social rights issues. The section also showed the existence of some managerial concern and initiative to include in-depth interviews and

analysis in the evening newscasts, in order to foment reflection and understanding of current issues, which potentially increases a deeper coverage of human rights related news.

The second section of this chapter discussed the determinant news values and limitations shaping human rights reporting. The news workers testimonials and the ethnographic experience conducted allowed the observation that there are three overarching determining factors that influence such coverage. Firstly, the most salient news criterion is the *new*, and reveals the importance of the immediate and the recent, as well as the pressures of time constraints within daily news. This reveals that the nature of these newscasts is unfavourable to a deeper journalistic engagement with human rights issues. However, there is an evident insistence by some journalists to report on recurring themes related to social rights issues, seen as an engrained mission in their social role as journalists. Secondly, the continuous financial cuts to the public service broadcaster are impeding the coverage of human rights causes abroad, and generating a blatant dependence on international news agencies as main production resources. Journalists see this reliance as both a threat and an asset for human rights reporting: some are mindful that it prevents the deliverance of more profound understanding of human rights violations, but others believe that agencies have greater access to these remote news contents. Thirdly, and as a consequence of the financial constraints, there is an evident strengthening of *proximity* as a news value, and that the decision of sending correspondents to conflicts abroad depends on the interests of national audiences in such themes. The national interest in certain topics is also visible in the policies around using RTP Africa's generated content. Furthermore, two smaller case studies demonstrated use of internet technologies such as Skype, which provides alternative coverage to news agencies, and contributes mostly to the 'domestication' of international news. In sum, from a human rights perspective, this chapter argues that the growing concern in the coverage of internal human rights causes, specifically related to social rights issues, is both the result of an empathetic and a forced proximity caused by the financial constraints imposed on the newsroom.

This chapter mostly focused on the determining factors in the news production processes and how these influence the presence or the absence of human rights related issues reporting. The following chapter delves into greater detail about the journalistic understandings and roles regarding human rights news.

Chapter 8

Journalists' understandings of human rights in the news

The previous chapters 6 and 7 presented both the nature of human rights coverage, revealing the different elements that characterise its contents, as well as the news production processes surrounding human rights reporting. The latter examined how the external milieu, organisational dynamics and editorial choices can influence how human rights are covered in the daily news. Whilst chapter 6 focused on the first research question regarding *how* human rights are present in the news, and the following chapter 7 concerned the second research question of the present thesis, analysing *why* journalists are covering human rights the way they are. In all, this latter chapter demonstrated that news filtering processes privilege *what is new* as an essential criterion for the daily news, although there is some insistence on reporting recurring themes concerning social rights issues. Another fundamental news value is the *proximity* that certain events may have for a national audience. The newsroom observation and interviews have also shown that contents and resources are frequently reused throughout different news programmes. This is mostly a consequence of on-going financial cuts that have been applied to the public service broadcaster, which reinforces (or forces) the news value of proximity, since these cuts prevent sending reporters to cover human rights issues abroad. This, in turn, bolsters reliance on international news agencies for content, which is seen as both a threat and an asset for the news content by the news workers.

Drawing upon these previous findings, this chapter will delve deeper into answering the aforementioned second research question, focusing on how professionals' understandings of human rights reporting informs and shapes their coverage. This includes a closer look into news workers' reflexivity on their professional and social roles regarding human rights issues.

Placed into four sections, this chapter develops the debate formerly presented in the preceding chapters, and is based on the professionals' own perspectives. The first section suggests a dichotomous understanding of news production choices regarding human rights issues from a managerial and from a non-managerial perspective. It

continues by presenting different professional views of human rights in the news in the second, third and fourth sections, journalists' perceived roles regarding human rights issues and, finally, their most desired or ideal form of human rights reporting.

8.1 – Managerial perspectives and non-managerial perspectives

The preceding chapter discussed how state cuts to the public service broadcaster have been affecting professional practices, availability of resources, and subsequently, the content of the news. This situation is seen differently by the news workers who hold managerial functions and by those who do not. Furthermore, these opinions are not static, and this section argues that news workers are well aware that their stances vary according to their professional categories. Although keeping in mind a human rights news perspective, this section further enquires about the significance of managerial or non-managerial perspectives upon journalism practice in a wider sense, including impacts on news contents, editorial choices and visions of audience feedback.

As explained in Chapter 4, RTP has been suffering from budget constraints over the last few years, which has led the broadcaster to readjust its costs to this financial situation. Although this research merely focuses on television news department practices, financial cuts have been applied to other departments as well, as the deputy news director states:

'This is not exactly a new moment. RTP is living a restructuration moment internally. We need to adapt most of our projects to the tighter budgets we now have.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

One of the most visible effects on the news department, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, is the reluctance to send correspondents to cover issues abroad, and subsequently increased dependence on international news agencies. As quoted before, the deputy news director admitted that sending a team abroad involves careful thought due to the excessive costs involved, and this decision is normally weighed against the national audience's interests. War scenes are seen as an expensive 'market', as the war correspondent explains:

'We have this enormous limitation that is the financial issue. It is very expensive to go to a war or conflict situation; the prices during the wars are much higher: the hotels, renting cars, the guides and translators, drivers – there is an expensive 'war market' that we cannot afford. For instance, I had to cross the Iraqi desert twice so I could reach Bagdad, whereas there were American journalists who left Kuwait City and landed in Bagdad with the American army. They had lorries crossing the borders, taking all their gear and delivering it to their hotels. Some journalists had bodyguards, drove armoured cars, had helmets and vests. My only luxury was paying my guide to have working air conditioning in his car. (...) But, basically, it is very expensive to send a team of correspondents to a war scenario, and keep them there, not only by providing the essential tools so he can do a good job, like security and accommodation, but also to pay for the satellites and allowances.'

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

The financial difficulties are also felt by foreign correspondents who are expected to cover large geographical areas but are now less frequently directed to travel within their designated territory. Traveling to cover a story is considered reasonable only when there is an exceptional event, or when there is institutional incentive or support for travel expenses, as the Brazil correspondent explains:

'Yes, I can notice the financial difficulties. Travelling around is more controlled now. As I've told you, this is a country with continental dimensions, so they [editors at the Lisbon headquarters] need to plan the travelling in advance. This is also why travelling depends a lot on influences and also on external support, when there is an official visit, for example.'

(João Pacheco de Miranda, RTP Brazil correspondent, interviewed 20 February 2013)

Yet, and despite the reduced dislocations within the designated territories, there is editorial understanding that foreign correspondents are increasingly essential pieces in the news production process, and that their workload may increase:

'[Sending someone abroad] is mostly a managerial decision (...). These are managerial decisions in accordance with this [International affairs desk] and other news desks (...). We partially feel that we are the most affected area, but these financial restrictions are felt all over the broadcaster. Sending someone abroad is expensive, so there have been limitations. There have been more requests to the foreign correspondents, since they are already allocated, and have easier access to certain places if necessary.'

(Manuel Menezes, RTP International Affairs senior editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

As argued in chapter 7, the decisions regarding the production resources utilised for covering war are also dependent on national audience's anticipated interest in such news topics. The pressure for audience response is a contested issue for many RTP news workers in non-managerial positions, as shown in the examples below. These professionals invoke the principles of public service media to argue that its main concern should be pursuing quality journalism, and not targeting audience ratings:

'At that time [as the former International affairs' editor] I have only left the newsroom once or twice, and I had several disagreements with the news directors, such as Judite de Sousa who used to tell me: 'when those news start selling and attracting advertisers, you will be allowed to make the news as you wish. But I have to feed several families here and that depends on the audiences'. It is this 'dictatorship' of the audiences that used to shape the news; but not anymore, primarily because of the new audiences' measuring system that smashed RTP⁸¹. Me (...), and all the 'veterans' (...) are quite happy for this: we are the poisoners of the negativism and for us a problem becomes an opportunity. My opinion is, if we have shitty audiences, why do we keep making shitty news? I guess we don't have to worry about it anymore, and we can make only quality journalism. Let us humanise journalism then and make people look around and see each other. This is public service too (...). We have to 'contaminate' the society with these type of attitudes.'

(António Mateus, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

'There are certain news outputs which, for financial pressures, cannot be done by private televisions: public service television has interview programmes during prime time, as well as news analysis and feature reports which we know are not going to have increased audience numbers; but these are a necessary look at the state of the world which the concurrence does not have (...). With no audiences, private televisions will not have the advertising, and a soap opera or a reality show allows them to obtain increased advertising revenue. That pressure does not exist – or it shouldn't exist for public service television.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

In this sense, news workers invoke and contemplate the core mission of the public service broadcaster, to inform the public by addressing the audience, but not in a commercial sense:

⁸¹ As explained in Chapter 5.

'Of course we worry about the ratings. I believe that RTP has to have a public. That's simple. That's about public service. I'm sure that in this company there are people worried about advertising and with RTP's revenue. As for me, I worry about providing people with what they need to know – not in a paternalist way, but trying to make sure that, of all things that happened, the essential is covered by *Telejornal*. This means that whomever watches it is informed, or gets the best possible overview of events that happened that day through this programme. This worries me – I believe this is the public service's mission. That is why it is important that people watch us.'

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

Some journalists defend the public service mission of informing and introducing relevant topics in the news agenda, despite the predictable lower audiences:

'The pressure of the audiences is probably most felt in the editorial meetings, and not directly felt by the journalists in the newsroom (...). Maybe we don't feel the dictatorship of the audiences mostly because we are a public service broadcaster. Regarding some reports, I'm aware that they are not going to get a massive audience, but they are usually about pertinent and necessary topics.'

(Rita Ramos, RTP investigative reporter, interviewed in 23 January 2013)

Despite this understanding of public service television with regards to its audiences, the perspective may change according to the journalist's functions within the newsroom:

'I had strategies in mind when I was a news editor: hooks, connections, and how to hold audiences' attention. But I don't have it anymore as a reporter. Being an editor is like being a manager.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent and former news editor, interviewed 23 January 2013)

News reporters believe that being sent abroad is an opportunity to capitalise on coverage of other marginal issues, which would otherwise never make it into the news. These side issues, often related to human rights themes, are acknowledged by the reporter while working in the field, resulting from observation and investigation *in situ*:

'One of the most beautiful reports I have ever done – 'Mother's heart'⁸² (...) is about this woman named Adília (...) who has built a home for women who have been victims of sexual terrorism in Africa; women who migrate and are now living in this home in a degraded neighbourhood in Johannesburg. I made this report when I was sent to South Africa to interview Mandela. I heard about this home, and

⁸² Available at RTP's website – last accessed in June 2013
(<http://www.rtp.pt/noticias/index.php?article=517965&tm=7&layout=122&visual=61>).

with a zero budget I made this report. It is important that you, as a journalist, produce more than what you have been asked to. When I interviewed De Klerk in London, I did three other reports; I used my whole time and resources there – I had the cameraman with me so, instead of partying, I used my time 200%, planning it with precision even before I arrived. RTP would never send me to South Africa just to cover Adilia’s story, but as my suggestion to interview Mandela had been approved, I’ve done that other report as well, and two others. This is an utterly beautiful story.’

(António Mateus, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

In accordance, working with adversarial financial obstacles increases the need to use journalistic creativity to look for news that is not previously planned or expected:

‘If there is no money to make a report one needs to use creativity. For example, the other day I sent a reporter out to cover a ‘boring’ conference. She came back with a boring report. I told her *you have been in a room the whole day and you come back with this?, So what should I have done?*, she said, and I replied: *You are a reporter, you have a mouth a brain and a heart, you are gathered in the same room with so many different people, you should talk to them.* I’m sure that somewhere in the room there is someone with an extraordinary story. So instead of covering a boring conference, you come back with one or more awesome stories or suggestions.’

(*ibidem*)

Journalists are aware that not being able to report on distant human rights violations is impacting not only the news content, but also on the unfolding of these situations, and admit the importance of journalistic visibility in certain cases:

‘The financial constrains with which this broadcaster, such as many others, is living prevents us from going to Haiti, to the refugee camps in Algeria, Rwanda, Syria. In other circumstances, with no financial constraints, we would certainly be at those immense Syrian refugee camps in Turkey. As much as we comment among us how much we would love to go there, there is no money for that, and these people are forgotten. The international Red Cross is now facing financial problems because they ‘don’t show up’ on television; therefore the donors, who also have less money, stop donating due to the lack of visibility. It is a vicious cycle.’

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

In this sense, it is possible to argue that journalists are aware of their potential to bring to light human rights violations and causes, but the newsrooms’ financial constraints are basically preventing the grounding of journalists’ ‘responsibility to report’ (Thompson, 2007), as theoretically suggested earlier in Chapter 3.

Furthermore, the distance to these human rights causes is linked to an absence of coverage or even a silence in the news. As pointed out with the content analysis explored in Chapter 6, the majority (more than 60% of the considered news) of news are about or took place in Portugal, and looked at human rights issues inside its borders. Overall, journalists acknowledge that not travelling abroad to cover international issues is causing a lack of diversity in the news programmes:

‘There is less diversity for sure. Before, we were able to send teams of journalists to report on these different perspectives, different communities and different problems; we were able to debate this and make special coverage. Now, our special broadcasts are about internal situations 99,9% of time, or also about external situations that concern us directly. I am sure that in forthcoming studies we will observe a much lower diversity and a narrower range of views over such different situations.’

(ibidem)

The fact that proximity and identification with national audiences are key news values that decide the human resources to be sent to a war scenario changes the visibility of certain conflicts and human rights violations within RTP’s news. As an illustrative example, in Chapter 7, the deputy news director explained that high costs and emotional distance were the reasons why the broadcaster has not sent any correspondents to Mali. This decision is questioned by some newsroom reporters, who claim that such editorial decisions are not contributing to a global understanding of the world.

‘I’m sorry that people are so ignorant. Humanity is all of us; the world is all of us. As a journalist, I am concerned to address events, which would transcend any borders. For years and years, we have been doing proximity journalism ignoring the world around us. For example, we still don’t understand how ‘global’ this crisis is; so if we don’t understand the world, we will never see a way out of the crisis. We are utterly ignorant.’

(António Mateus, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

‘In some occasions, editors are quite insensitive; among all news values, *proximity* is the one that is becoming more and more relevant. Syria is too far, Iraq is too far, Afghanistan is too far; but for example if there is a child whose custody is being discussed here in Portugal, because it is so close by, we’ll cover it. Geographical proximity and emotional proximity: this makes us more and more closed in our little world, forgetting that there is a world around us; a world full of reasons to ‘go there’, and where there are so many people who need us there, giving them voice.’

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

'It makes me angry – if we had a Portuguese person somehow involved in Mali, we would go there. I think we are really shortsighted. We have this blatant tendency to look only at the news at the end of our street, forgetting this global era. (...) This urge to have more and more news about everything determines the resources managing, and channelled to what is more immediate, closer and easier to cover. It is hard for me to look at Syria and Mali and see that we are not there. If you notice, there are less and less foreign news in *Telejornal*, and more and more news about our own street; or more 'stories' and less news (...). Unfortunately this is where journalism is going and our perspective on the world that surrounds us is shorter everyday. And this is mostly due to the financial constraints that we are facing.'

(*ibidem*)

Again, when contesting these editorial decisions regarding the coverage of foreign conflicts, the debate around the role of public service television is invoked. Some reporters therefore lament the effects of the financial crisis on the public service broadcaster, and the way funds are consequently channelled or news content is adapted in order to target and attract bigger audiences:

'The financial constraints make us travel less. For example, in 2009 I went to Afghanistan, in an operation that cost ten thousand euros; (...) A few weeks later there was a feature report done about some parents [in Portugal] who were fighting for their daughter's custody and that report had greater audience, and that was much cheaper. Therefore, editors decide in favour of the report that can gather more audiences and is cheaper. For this reason I believe that it is utterly important that a public service television exists; a service which is able to have this 'luxury' of going abroad and spend 10 thousand euros (...). Television either goes down to the public or pulls the public up. Public service broadcasters must pull the people up. Private broadcasters usually go down to the public – they have the right to do so; but we have the duty to pull the people up, even if that means lower audiences.'

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

8.2 – Journalists' understandings of human rights in the news

One of this study's secondary research questions explores journalists' understandings of human rights in the news, and their role regarding human rights issues. The previous chapter and the preceding section focused on the influence of professional practices and organisational dynamics on the inclusion of human rights issues in the news, and which editorial choices and news values prevail. This section points out the different professional approaches and considerations of such issues news workers offered.

Although unavoidably entwined, this study explores the separate notions of journalists' understandings, perceived roles and desirable roles (sub-sections 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4, correspondingly). In this sense, the first sub-section refers to the journalists' understandings of *how human rights are addressed or present in the news*, and involves the ethical and deontological concerns about their work. The second sub-section addresses the different roles regarding human rights issues that they connect to the social function of their own profession. Finally, the third section investigates the ideal roles regarding human rights issues journalists express they desire and aspire to, if freed from current constraints that may determine human rights reporting.

Although these three sections present different understandings, roles and wishes, it is important to clarify that these are not inflexible or contradictory opinions, and may even overlap within the journalists' testimonies.

8.2.1 – The objective approach

For many journalists, reporting human rights is mostly done unconsciously, as an intrinsic element of the news topic. Similar to the findings of the content analysis explored in Chapter 6, for many professionals, human rights are necessarily and substantially connected to other news topics. This analysis of journalists' understandings is thus connected to the earlier analysis of the different levels of presence of human rights issues within the news. Similar to the findings from the content analysis human rights are, according to some news workers, not a topic itself, but something undeniably present when addressing certain news issues:

'It cannot be forced into the news, but we do report issues that are related to human rights; and we do it even unconsciously. (...) When we talk about famine, war, refugees - there are infinite situations as such related to human rights, but we never refer to them as a human rights' situation. (...) We don't even think about it, but it is always there. And I do sincerely believe that when we want to "force" a certain frame or concept to the news reports, it will not work. Most of the time it works the other way around: we report something as it is and people at home think 'hey, this is an injustice' or 'I had no idea that this was so serious and that people suffered like this'. This approach works better.'

(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

'I believe it is possible to find human rights elements in every report. For instances, today I have done a report about justice and social state; as the right to justice is inalienable, this is of a human rights' nature. Sometimes even the most shallow, simplistic or everyday report may contain human rights elements. (...) When I go out to cover some issue I intend to tell a story; it frequently happens that this story is related to human rights, but my intention is to simply tell a story. The consequences of covering this certain event or issue are secondary.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

Human rights are therefore present in the news under different topics, not as a frame itself, but as an underlying issue. In line with this argument, there are professionals who also mention the changeable and unequal meaning of 'human rights' in different contexts:

'I'm not out there looking for where human rights are being violated. Each country has its own characteristics and the very notion of human rights is somehow floating. For example, in Portugal, human rights is about people having access to free health care and so on; in other countries that question is ridiculous, and what's in question is not being tortured if you go out in the street. So what are human rights? This is a difficult question. We cover events according to the impact that such an event has on people's lives, people from the same place we are. There are countries where the human rights issue is not even accepted.'

(José Rodrigues dos Santos, RTP *Telejornal* anchor and senior war correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

This involuntary connection between certain news issues and human rights is associated to a more traditional view of journalism, which defends an objective news style. This approach is also connected to the previously explored issue of dominant news values, which privilege the coverage of what is new:

'We don't think about reporting good or bad news; we cover what's new. We cover what is relevant; we don't think about whether it's human rights or not. We cover what we think is relevant to the public. (...) When we are reporting we are not exactly focusing on the human rights issue specifically.'

(*ibidem*)

An objective approach to human rights issues also considers the management of personal emotions, trauma and involvement with the news events or issues, despite the overwhelming conditions and contexts, as these journalists recognise:

'I manage to make a very 'normal' separation. I was in Indonesia during the Tsunami and during two weeks I saw the same corpses, unrecognisable, swollen, body parts (...). When I arrived back, I had to cut with it; I managed to do 'the cleansing' (...). There was also a report I have done about child abuse (...). Everyone was quite surprised about how was I capable of doing that report. I believe I could bare the issue because I was precisely reporting on it, but if I simply watched it on television I would be moved to tears. Maybe because I have to address it closely I am able to create a distance, which may sound like a paradox. I feel involved as a journalist, but not as a woman, a citizen, a person or as a mother.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

'I try not to get too involved. If you allow that, you lose most of your necessary distance and objectivity. Although there are no absolutely objective discourses, you need to avoid an over-emotional component, and that is not my function as a journalist.'

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

If, on the one hand, reporting human rights is linked to an objective and ethical approach to the news, on the other hand, on first formulation journalists often associate human rights issues with their own right and duty to report. Regarding some news topics journalists admit that they might feel pressured to communicate certain aspects of the news story instead of others, but they deny the existence of any kind of censorship, particularly in public service television.

'There are pressures to convey certain things, absolutely. As a journalist, and sometimes involving your editors, you have to say no. But we usually debate and discuss what should be reported or not reported. I've heard a few remarks before, from the political [class]; but personally I was never prevented from saying whatever I wrote – of course within reason (...). People trust my work; I never felt censored, even though people tend to think that this happens within the public service broadcaster. I assure you that this is true; I'm not saying this just for your recording.'

(Rui Alves Veloso, Economy senior desk editor, interviewed 24 January 2013)

'We live in an absolute free country to be a journalist, as long as the journalist wants to be free. (...) A former colleague used to say that we are freer in public service television, contrarily of what one may think. We are not silenced by economic or political power. We are free as much as we wish to be free. Obviously, a politician's assistant may try to pressure the journalist to report in a certain way, but we are the ones who say no to this. Everyday we say no, and that does not happen in the private sector. There, journalists have their jobs more at risk, so their freedom is limited. But there are several workers under those circumstances who chose to be free anyway and report whatever they feel like they have to.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

When asked about censorship, some professionals associate it with the idea of manipulation of information as professional misconduct, which may jeopardize their professional freedom and dignity:

‘I have never been censored but, for example, once I was in Tunisia, on my way to Libya, and someone whose name I won’t tell called me and suggested to me to report live on the phone pretending to be in Libya already. I told this person I would never do this because even if spectators would never know, I would. I have to live in peace with my conscience, and have my professional dignity. At that time, this person had a very high post in the directive structure of this firm (...)’

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

Furthermore, the right to report is also expressed when insisting on the access to information and sources, as well as maintaining a critical insight as a tool to avoid self-censorship, as RTP Justice correspondent argues:

‘The worst censorship is self censorship, like when you spare criticisms to a politician, for example, because you need to keep good relations with them. Today, for example, I edited a report about the judicial system, and for those who notice it, it shows a clear quarrel with the General Attorney. I didn’t appreciate the lady’s behaviour earlier today: she spent one hour in a press conference and then she refused to talk to us [journalists], using a not very democratic comment such as ‘I’m the one deciding when I want to talk’. This person is very representative, with a public position, so she must always give explanations to the public. This is not very democratic behaviour. I would never criticise this attitude in a report if I wanted to avoid a fuss. As a justice correspondent I have to deal with her all the time. But I chose not to censor myself. People can try to interfere with my work; they are free to do it. But they can never undermine my freedom to ask.’

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

The objective approach to human rights issues in the news is therefore connected to the idea of having access to the news, and also being able and free to report these issues. Additionally, these issues are addressed not as human rights topics specifically, but under the aegis of other related news issues. The emphasis on the portrayal of reality ‘as it is’, independent from a deeper level of analysis, may lead to a narrower connection to human rights debates. In this approach human rights are more an underlying theme intrinsically connected to the act of reporting on such topics itself.

8.2.2 – The socially responsible approach

To some journalists human rights in the news involves a social responsibility towards the rights of others, or the people who are the object of the news. This responsibility refers again to the professional ethics and codes that guide their daily activities, but distinguishes itself from an objective approach, which safeguards the journalists' own right to report. The socially responsible approach emphasises instead the journalists' own professional conduct and correctness towards the subjects who are being reported, and involves the acceptance and application of general directives of communication law and common sense. Although rooted in the profession, some journalists argue that the acknowledgement and acceptance of such laws is now facing a generational problem:

'My generation of journalists has a good ethical formation. The younger generations (...) have more difficulties in considering ethical circumstances. *Youtube* is at hand, and it is so natural to use it that sometimes they forget the ethical dangers in using footage not done by us, or that exposes someone excessively. I'm not sure about what they are teaching in universities nowadays, or if they are not learning well, but it seems like the rights or values of the other are not being considered. Last year, I participated in a process of selection of interns (...) and I realised that they are not aware of communication law and they think that everything is allowed, like interviewing children and showing their faces without their parents' authorisation. This was perfectly normal for them. I belong to the generation who first thought about these matters (...). It is curious to realise that the younger generations have lost it (...): they have so much information available that they do not worry about other people's legal space.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

By protecting the other's image and rights, this approach may also address a conflict of interests between reporting a certain issue and not reporting it, in cases where someone's integrity or life is at stake. It is not just about having free access to the information, but measuring the advantages of reporting it, versus the implications for those who are being reported, as a war correspondent explains:

'We can never go over the limit of human life. No story is worth the life of anyone. (...) For example, Gaddafi was still in power and we were shopping at some Libyan market. The place was crowded and a man approached us and walked a few meters by our side and whispered in English *Not everybody here loves Gaddafi*. (...) I had not even seen his face, but before he walked away I told him *I know, maybe next time*. He replied *yes, maybe next time* and disappeared in the crowd. If, at that moment I had

insisted and convinced him to talk to us, I would put his life at risk. I was perfectly aware of that, and I can never put anyone's life at risk.'

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed on 24 January 2013)

In this sense, journalists claim to weigh the advantages in reporting sensitive aspects of certain news issues proactively, because they are aware of the bigger picture, selecting and mediating the information to be covered. In line with this socially responsible approach some journalists are mindful of their contribution for the overall understanding of the news:

'I always ponder before reporting violence: paradoxically, I believe we have to give love while reporting violence, otherwise the person who is watching may banalise the suffering. As journalists we should never allow the trivialisation of suffering. It is our social responsibility – as a journalist and as a human being. But as a journalist, I try to be even better than I am as a human being in the sense of this social responsibility because we always see the context of what we are reporting, something that the spectator cannot see. There is not only 'black and white'; there are the grey areas, the transition areas which the spectator cannot see; and these transition areas are the most important since they humanise the people.'

(António Mateus, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

Finally, a socially responsible approach also involves journalists' balancing their own thoughts and opinions regarding news issues. This concerns not merely the quest for objectivity, but it is also about setting aside personal opinions regarding sensitive matters, and worrying about representing all sides and perspectives.

'It is about common sense. For instance, regarding the topic of abortion, I am pro-choice. But some years ago during the referendum campaign I had to report the pro-life movement and demonstrations against abortion. I remember that in those cases I tried to interview the widest diversity of people possible; some of these people I interviewed were older women who, indeed, had a poorly elaborated and inconsistent discourse, probably due to excessive involvement in religious arguments. One member of the association that promoted the demonstrations accused me of being partial and prejudiced, but I don't admit anyone to judge my work as I do not judge their positioning. After the report was broadcast this person called and apologised, admitting that the report was correct and impartial. That moment I realised that it is possible to make this separation although it is hard (...). I tried to choose my wording wisely, avoiding double-sense words.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

In the previous section, referring to an objective approach, some journalists defended an emotional barrier as necessary in order to manage potential emotional involvement with the news issue. This socially responsible approach, however, raises awareness to the danger of increasing cynicism among news professionals, and the possible outcome of a banalisation of suffering in the news. This tendency, some claim, is increasingly evident due to the so-called over-reporting of social injustices, which is derived from the context of the financial crisis:

‘Our role is firstly to denounce. This profession can turn us into cynics, since we start to believe that we have seen everything; but things are not less important because we covered a similar thing beforehand; we need to see things from the other person’s perspective. Sometimes we get too distant and become insensitive to suffering; we become aware of other people’s disgraces and then we come back to our lives and live them as nothing happened. (...) There are people who create a barrier as journalists, (...) also so that they can emotionally overcome these everyday situations. We stop being good journalists when we allow ourselves to become immune to this.’

(Rita Ramos, RTP investigative reporter, interviewed in 23 January 2013)

8.2.3 – The interventive approach

As argued previously, these understandings are not necessarily separated from or opposed to others. Journalists may refer to more than one position regarding human rights issues in the news. A number of journalists referred to a third stance regarding human rights in the news. They believe human rights are strongly represented when journalists promote intervention beyond the news, which challenges the traditional practices of journalism. This need to interfere with the course of events will be further developed later in this chapter, when addressing professional roles regarding human rights. For a preliminary elaboration, an intervening approach wishes to promote involvement beyond the news, and actually to provoke a different disposition for care. This approach often involves other, less conventional forms of reporting, such as ‘anthropological’ journalism, as mentioned by a newsroom senior editor:

‘There is this ethical and deontological concern whether the journalist should ‘walk in others’ shoes’ but I see this as anthropological journalism. What we are able to report while living other people’s lives

is unique, from my experience, and from studies I have read about other similar experiences. And this type of reporting reaches the spectators differently. There are several reports about homeless people; I have done several in the past. But after this experience [living as a homeless person for a week], I'm sure I will not be capable of covering this issue with a different approach. I'm sure that the spectators recall my report where I lived as a homeless person for a week, but they have forgotten all the other dozens I have done before. After this report, (...) people approach me saying that they see things differently, they look at homeless people differently, and they care about small gestures (...). This brings people together; and makes us journalists more human and closer to the people. Many people see us as upper class, above everyone and with no problems; but that is not true. Being right in the middle of the problems makes our communication more effective.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

From a human rights angle the intervening approach is undoubtedly the most proactive style, because it demonstrates a deeper professional engagement regarding certain topics. This approach goes beyond conventional forms of coverage in order to promote change or awareness. This quest is connected to the self-perception of journalists' roles, as will be further developed later in this chapter.

This approach, more than reporting the news in an objective and straightforward way, carries a clear intention to change audience perspectives on certain issues:

'[Talking about human rights in the news] mostly reminds me of conflicts. However, the report I immediately remembered (...) was not about an armed conflict, but a conflict of mentalities. I was awarded with an honourable mention by the UNESCO due to a report about an association of Gypsy women whose main aim is to promote literacy and women's right to education. (...) This is an example of a report where probably the human rights issue was more evident. (...) I was mostly interested in showing who these women were. As you know, when you are reporting something you are interested in involving the spectator, or in placing the spectator closer to the 'televised', getting them closer together in a transparent way and not letting them realise that there is a process of seduction and involvement. What I wanted was that people at home somehow saw through my eyes who those women were and the merit in their work and the way they broke dogmas that were prevailing in their communities.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

8.3 – Distinct roles of journalism regarding human rights issues

Drawing from the previous distinctions in journalists' understandings of human rights in the news, it is possible to group three other distinctions of how journalists envision their role regarding human rights issues. Again, these categories arise from the in-depth interviews conducted for this research, and do not represent a static division of different opinions, but a clustering of three different patterns of responses. The first one sees the journalist as a *gleaner* of the truth, connecting them mostly to their investigative role. The second category explains journalism as a provider of the tools for an informed citizenry. Finally, the third category refers to journalism as ideologically and personally engaged with human rights causes.

8.3.1 – Snooping and investigating: journalist as the gleaner of the truth

This first group is intimately connected to the previously mentioned objective understanding of journalism when reporting human rights issues. In such cases, covering and exposing human rights issues is detached from advocacy, and is again addressed under the umbrella of other news themes:

'This is not about advocating for human rights. We know what is ethically correct, and human rights are embedded in various issues. We cover these issues, but we never take sides.'
(Cecília Carmo, RTP deputy news director, interviewed 24 January 2013)

In this sense, exposing human rights issues is possible in everyday news when covering related issues, and avoiding advocacy or subjective involvement with human rights issues. However, from another standpoint this objectivity is ultimately connected to the idealised role of journalism as a public watchdog or fourth estate:

'Journalism is the fourth estate (...). Journalists have an undeniable power. They also have a duty – I wouldn't say moral duty, but of an education duty to use this power according to common sense. Journalists are still an organiser of normality, a democratic warrantor of justice and fairness (...). There are small acts of justice, or injustice, which can be sorted with small reports; others need a deep feature.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

From this quote it is possible to see that journalists are aware of the powerful resources attached to their profession. They see themselves as *gleaners* of the truth, or someone whose function it is to collect or investigate every bit or hint that may help to expose the truth, which is based on intensive research that is not available in the public domain:

‘A journalist is a gleaner, and I do feel like a gleaner; I have a strong investigative side and that’s what I like. It means a lot of work and a lot of headaches, but that’s what I like’

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

This self-proclaimed function of public watchdog is seen, as quoted above, as a professional role within society, and as a warrant to uphold democracy and justice. By exposing human rights violations or by questioning the available data that compose or construct what is known about a certain event:

‘When I was in Libya and Gaddafi was still in charge, I tried to literally dismantle the scenarios that they would show us as being the reality. They would say: this is the reality. But it wasn’t; reality was something else. So we journalists had to go behind the set so we could observe and tell the spectators that despite the fact that they are showing us *this*, and wanting us to transmit this limited reality, it actually was not the reality. There is a permanent, daily effort to dismantle the reality as it is provided.’

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

8.3.2 – Providing the tools for informed citizenry and deliberation

As another approach to journalists’ roles regarding human rights causes defines the news workers as providers of the necessary tools for an informed citizenry. In this sense, and similar to the previous investigative perspective, journalists account for an intervening role within democracy, but exist as the conveyors of the instruments for public deliberation. The aim is to report within objective guidelines, portraying all the different elements involved and delivering various perspectives upon the same subject, in order to provide the spectator with all possible angles, and therefore allowing an informed critical engagement from audiences:

'I believe that what journalism does is to provide people with tools so they can reflect and understand better the times they live in. If we, as journalists, can contribute to that *liberating doubt* as Bertrand Russell called, maybe we are contributing to a better world; a world less dogmatic and where people question more issues that are blatantly related to human rights issues.'

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

Despite embracing the responsibility to deliver information neutrally, some journalists debate the impossibility of absolute objectivity within the news. Nevertheless, journalists refer to professional *honesty* as a more accurate word to summarise their goals:

'I always look for a more or less objective approach – although I'm well aware that pure objectivity does not exist. Without being judgemental, what I do is to mediate (...) explaining the situation within its context, or as a consequence of some other event; I care about presenting the various points of view within the report and this way helping the spectators to formulate their own judgement (...). This is a big responsibility (...) a journalist must provide all the angles so that the spectators can form their own critical ideas. I prefer to call this an honest report, rather than an objective report.'

(João Pacheco de Miranda, RTP Brazil correspondent, interviewed 20 February 2013)

Professional honesty therefore consists of the aim of providing people with the most accurate data, in order to generate an informed opinion and consequently contribute to reaching an idealised deliberative goal, more than simply displaying available information about a topic. Most of the time this incorporates a plurality of voices and perspectives, including the underrepresented, in order to clarify the complexity of the news issues, as well as to question the reasons behind certain decisions:

'I remember for instance (...) the Islamic veil⁸³. This decision was hiding to a certain point a political move. In fact, that law concerned two thousand women only, and you still see nowadays women with the full veil walking around the Champs-Élysées so therefore, why was that law approved? Why was that debate raised? (...) Sometimes certain political initiatives seem like something, but in the end are related to another; therefore we need to provide people these 'alternative' realities (...). The debate was referred to two thousand women, but it was never debated how they would deal with and apply the law to tourists from Arabia. So there are a whole set of questions that we need to pose in order to understand all the aspects of an issue, and provide people with data and tools so they can think.'

⁸³ France voted the banning of the Islamic full veil, in 2011. This case was included in this research analysed sample of news.

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

8.3.3 – Promoting change off the air: ideological and personal engagement

The most involved journalistic role regarding human rights issues is the one that actually shows a concern to promote a transformation beyond the news. This attitude encompasses both personal and ideological engagement with the news topic in question, and turns it into more than a topic, closer to a cause, to which news workers end up devoting greater effort than just investigating and reporting. They wish to promote a change, find a solution to a particular problem, and ultimately help those involved. This quest surpasses their professional responsibilities to inform or to provide the tools for an informed citizenry, as assumed by the roles previously explained, and touches on an individual and somewhat humanitarian responsibility towards the *other*:

‘I believe that we all have the obligation to do something. If people presume that we don’t have the capacity or strength to fight for a better world, then we are all addicted to the same premises. As a journalist, [we can help] by finding a report which would alert people to a certain situation. With a little push – if we all do a little something, we can all make things change. (...) We have an obligation not just because of our consciences (...) but because it is quite encouraging to be aware that we can give a small contribution for a better future for our children, instead of sitting back selfishly and irresponsibly.’

(João Pacheco de Miranda, RTP Brazil correspondent, interviewed 20 February 2013)

The awareness of this journalistic capacity to interfere is built upon previous examples throughout recent history, such as the great environmental causes in the 1980s and 1990s:

‘This happened for example with environmental issues: it was very hard to report about these issues before, but now it makes governments stoop down and re-think certain policies. Originally, only a few journalists would talk about the environment and nobody paid attention; and now this is part of the international agenda. (...) There are situations of sickening injustice, not only here in Brazil, within the poorest states, but in the whole world; look at the African countries and the absolute power of the pharmaceutical industry, the economy, the absolute power of the white people, the amorality or the total reversal of moral values. It is utterly important to repeat this.’

(*ibidem*)

This proactive journalistic role that desires to promote change off air often encompasses certain initiatives that overcome traditional professional enterprises. Among the journalists interviewed for this research there were some examples of these initiatives, such as fundraising, campaigning and even the creation of non-governmental organisations. Interestingly, several of these initiatives aimed to help children:

‘What shocks me the most now is the children’s suffering. I even started an NGO called *Missão Infinita* [translated: endless mission] specially dedicated to children. There is such suffering among the children during a war; and that I was never able to overcome. Maybe also because I have two children, and when you have children you develop this feeling. The suffering of the children and the elderly really disturb me. This is where the news is connected to human rights, maybe, since these are the less capable of defending themselves.’

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

‘Sometimes I cover certain issues in order to help people. (...) For instance, the report we have done to find a donor for Marta – the first Facebook appeal for spinal tap donors. This case boosted several other appeals on Facebook. I have no doubt that I have reported it not because of the phenomenon it was, but because I wanted to help this girl. This happens in other similar cases; there is an impetus for help, do whatever we can, and dispose our reach to those who need, in a solidarity way.’

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

‘There is this family of a grandmother and daughter of a girl with cerebral palsy who found no support in the Portuguese National Health Service. Carolina is confined to a wheel chair, and the family spent all their money and allowances to take her to be treated in Cuba. At the moment she uses a walker. She has to go there three times a year and she still has no financial support from the government. (...). In Carolina’s case me and the cameramen developed a sort of tenderness, a connection (...); we tried to raise some money among us colleagues and buy her what she wanted the most, an adapted bicycle.’

(*ibidem*)

The previous chapter (7.2.1) argued that the main concern for daily news programmes is to report what is new. However, these pressures, as well as the limited airtime, are seen as curbing factors for the mediation of certain topics. Therefore it is common that journalists disseminate their news outputs through the Internet and social media. Here, journalists admit they use a more subjective and personal tone, although there is a concern to distinguish between their own and the broadcaster’s positioning:

'I felt the need to create my blog⁸⁴ because there was so much more to tell besides what I would say in my reports. My blog, and now my Facebook page, were a way that I found to tell all that I was not able to in a two minutes-long report; and there I can be 'more me', more human. There are two ways to be a journalist: in black and white or in colours. I have always been told to make it in black and white, but I always refused it and I do it in colours. If I'm in the field, if I get emotional, within reason, I will show some of those feelings, and I don't have any problems with that (...). My blog allows me to (...) tell more of what I think – always keeping in mind that I am a journalist and I work at a broadcaster. There were many of my posts which ended with the remark that it was about my opinion and not RTP's position.'

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

Likewise, the previous chapter suggested there is professional initiative to insist on covering recurrent situations of social inequality in order to alert the audience to such problems, and also to put pressure on authorities to act upon them. An intervening professional role regarding human rights issues also encompasses this aspect, in which journalists circumvent their expected obligations, and make use of their professional assets and privileges to provoke responses from the authorities regarding certain situations, especially social disparities. On these occasions the resolution of the problem is not always publicised in the news, but there is concerted personal and professional involvement in the resolution of such cases:

'Some time ago in France, there was a woman who had a Portuguese boyfriend. (...) Once, they spent their holidays in Algarve, (...) and when they went to the beach, the wall that protected the erosion of the cliff collapsed. He died and she was paralysed. She sued the Portuguese state, which was convicted in all instances. However, the state wouldn't pay her the compensation (...). I thought this was outrageous and made a report about it (...). Later on, there was a formal meeting between Sócrates⁸⁵ and Sarkozy, so I called someone from the PM's cabinet and told them this was really embarrassing for the country; the woman had written Sarkozy, and he would probably raise this issue in the meeting. After this, the Portuguese government immediately paid this woman the compensation they owed. (...) She later wrote RTP a letter thanking me for this. (...) In such cases I'm not sure who is more motivated, me as a person or as a journalist. But I'm sure that what is behind is a basic empathy between human beings, (...) and also a citizen's revolt towards a case of injustice. I know I contributed to the resolution of this story, as a journalist, (...) and as a citizen.'

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

⁸⁴ This blog is called *Cheiro a Pólvora*, or, in English, 'the smell of gunpowder' (available at <http://cheiroapolvora.blogs.sapo.pt/>)

⁸⁵ Former Portuguese Prime-Minister

'Is [reporting about human rights] about taking advantages of these dramas, or is it about denouncing them so that the power would make something to reduce that suffering? There are many different ways to look at human rights, and we are aware that there is always someone making money during these crises, these dramas. And to be honest we as journalists are earning a good story; we also profit from it. However, we have to make sure that the consequences of our work are bigger than our own personal 'profit' of telling a good story. (...) Journalists can create pressure on institutions by exposing these situations; and this is why journalists are inconvenient in the field. I frequently feel that when I get to a country at war I am inconvenient to our ambassadors because they are so used to their routines; and the journalists come to disrupt this, but I don't care.'

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

8.4 – Wishful and rewarding reporting

The previous sections explored what journalists understand by the presence of human rights in the news and how they perceive their roles regarding these issues. In addition to these contributions, during my in-depth interviews I was interested in exploring the kinds of wishful reporting these professionals would adopt, and which news topics they would prioritise, if there were no financial restrictions or no resources and time constraints whatsoever. The aim of this was to encourage the news workers to think about their most desired professional aspirations and motivations, and explore to what extent these are, or are not, related to human rights reporting. Furthermore, I was interested in uncovering what elements news workers see as the most rewarding part of their work. This section is divided into three different and dominant outlines of responses. Once again, these three approaches are not divergent or inflexible, but reflect the most salient aspirations revealed in the news workers' responses.

8.4.1 – Reporting human rights for professional achievements

Some journalists admit that the ideal journalism is one that actually accomplishes the ultimate mission of the profession, which is to inform, to expose, and to give people access to information that otherwise they would not have. The main motivation, some argue, is not audience ratings, but the sense of a job well done:

'I wonder what really moves us. (...) When you cover such things [unemployment cases] you are not expecting a pat on the back; you cover it because it is important, it is relevant, because it is important to show what's happening. Well, if it is a very dramatic case, and the fact that you are exposing it, and somehow helping to resolve the problem, the better it is. This is rewarding, yes, but this is not what should motivate us, nor the audience ratings. This is very hard to explain. It is rewarding when you do a good job, from a journalistic point of view. Furthermore, everything is feedback: your colleague's opinions, the audiences' response (...). If you are reporting about dramatic cases, and if those cases are resolved after we air the report, great, really. But that's not what makes you cover it; not because you want to resolve a problem, but because it is important to denounce that situation. That person's case symbolises a bigger reality, and showing it, sharing it, is important from a journalistic point of view.'

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

Journalists often mention the rewarding feeling of accomplishment and recognition among peers and from the general public as more significant than external recognition and awards:

'I've never applied to any award (...) I've always thought that being a journalist is a social function and had nothing to do with awards. Awards have no value whatsoever. Much more rewarding is, for example, something that happened in my early years as a journalist: more than twenty years ago, I did a report about young people trying to find jobs. (...) More than one year later while chatting with a taxi driver, he mentioned he remembered this report. To me this was extraordinary.'

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

More than public recognition some news workers mention the importance of the pragmatic outcomes following the broadcasting of a report. The resolution of a situation or the impact on people's lives is, for some, more fulfilling than an award:

'I don't believe in journalism awards in Portugal even though I won two some time ago. The country is too small and we almost know in advance who is going to win them (...). I'd rather know that, after one of my reports, a certain community looked at their own neighbourhood and changed what was wrong, making people's lives easier; I feel happier to read all those dozens or hundreds of emails of people saying what changes have been done in their neighbourhoods; or about schools that organised to help western Sahara by sending pencils and notebooks to help other children there. This is much more rewarding than a prize, which only contributes to my personal satisfaction; the practical effect of our work is much more relevant.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

Some journalists reflect that the attribution of awards is mostly connected to professional status:

'I'm the worst on keeping an eye on awards. I never win them. There are colleagues who make the reports thinking already of a certain award that they want to apply to (...). This is a form of journalistic status. The financial award is tempting as well, but this is more about status.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent, interviewed 23 January 2013)

Professional brilliancy and thrill are, to some journalists, essential elements that encourage them to overcome difficulties in order to keep on reporting. These difficulties may even be related to personal security that is threatened when covering certain topics, and which involve human rights causes, as one war correspondent explains:

'By the time of the first demonstrations in Athens, two or three years ago, me and my French cameramen were involved in some violent confrontations, and our camera was destroyed to pieces (...). I knew I was in danger, and called the newsroom but no one answered (...). The cameraman insisted on leaving since we had no gear. Somehow I managed to rent a new camera although my colleague was very reluctant in remaining there (...). At some point we have been alerted by a young man that there was a big fuss near the University (...). When we got there it was an authentic battle field, tense and violent, with tear gas. (...) Editors had no idea that the situation was so serious, and that day we opened *Telejornal*. My cameraman recognised the importance of not giving up and staying there (...). This is about searching around, a mixture of professional pride of looking out for a story, of what's going on, which ends up being more than a story, it's History.'

(Paulo Dentinho, RTP Paris correspondent and war correspondent interviewed in 24 January 2013)

Being exposed to perilous situations is seen as an occupational hazard by some war correspondents, and something that is intrinsic to the job, but also as a challenge that turns into an addiction:

'It tingles inside you; it's almost paranoid. It's almost like a drug. After some time I feel the urge to go to the field and have an adrenalin discharge once again. One of my colleagues once told me, right after I came back from Israel (...), *It's amazing how you have just come back from war and it feels like you came back from holidays*. It's a bit bizarre, I know, but I've also seen the opposite in war situations, where colleagues would be driven crazy, panic and leave. We are not the same, and this happens.'

(*ibidem*)

On the other hand, experiencing such events is considered to be professionally and personally enriching, and offering a privileged vantage from which to witness history:

‘For many years people asked me if I was married, had children, ‘why would you go to war, are you crazy?’ ... Only later did I realise why I was so keen to going to war: having the opportunity to be where History is being made (...); having that enormous privilege is priceless. It enriches you as a professional and mostly as a human being (...). You learn to relativise blood, seeing a corpse or an execution; that no longer shocks you, but you start feeling other feelings strongly. (...) The fact that I am able to witness and denounce those events to those who are at home is priceless...’

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

Journalists who now hold an editorial and managerial position, and therefore mostly work inside the newsrooms, often referred to the thrill of these types of situations, and how sometimes they need these as a reprieve or break from their professional routines:

‘I miss going to these places. Ah yes, I do, absolutely! Because these are situations that are outside the routine; it is completely different; it’s complete madness’

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

8.4.2 - Reporting human rights nearby: so much to do around here

A different trend in the answers given regarding wishful and rewarding journalistic practice relates to a felt impetus to intervene within a close radius, and to help to resolve human rights injustices close by. This trend is closely related to the *proximity* value of the news, addressed in chapter 7 and at the beginning of the present chapter, although it is perhaps best understood as empathetic proximity since it is mentioned in hypothetical terms, without the pressure of any constraints. The aim is to promote change nearby, strengthening closer identification with the not so distant *other*, and engaging with human rights causes within national contexts. To these journalists, the reporter is the connection between social injustices and the general public:

‘It is very rewarding to expose these [nearby] situations. I believe that, as reporters, we end up experiencing more than a ‘normal’ person would in 10 years. The contact with these situations are real, we see them whereas the public sees them on television; this makes the whole difference. And these

situations are really close to us, and maybe the more urgent. I don't feel any need to go abroad and denounce human rights violations so I can feel professional achievement. There are some professionals who take pride in saying that they were abroad; I don't need that.'

(Rita Ramos, RTP investigative reporter, interviewed in 23 January 2013)

Such cases, journalists argue, become a mission to raise awareness of the suffering close by, and to point out that the suffering *other* is not necessarily distant, as this investigative reporter illustrates:

'I once made a report inside RTP, and only in the end I did explain that it was inside our own broadcaster's premises. This was called 'invisible army' and referred to the people who work here during the night, and are paid 2,80 euros per hour; they take four different buses at 4 am, spend 100 euros in a bus monthly pass, just to spend 3 hours cleaning. These are people that work here, and whose work we see every day. In my opinion, this is a question of human rights – how can someone survive on such a low income, and working so hard? However, people around them are not even aware of this. I wanted people to know that sometimes the hardest situations are really near us, and I wanted to raise the public's awareness of this. I was looking for the stories that are closer to me – the lady who cleans my desk, in this case. I realised that there are human rights violations everywhere and therefore we need to look at what is really close to you, and not only looking at situations in other countries. As a journalist, you need to be sensitive to this. Many colleagues commented on how surprising it was that such things would happen right under our noses (...). These people deserve some airtime on television.'

(*ibidem*)

As mentioned previously, across this study the external context of the financial crisis in Portugal is influencing both managerial decisions regarding resource expenditure and the content of news. The prevailing coverage of the consequences of the financial crisis has also provoked a growing presence of social rights issues in the news. This finding contrasts with previous studies, which claimed that human rights were most visible in the news when referring to civil rights. In this research, however, the extensive (and persistent, as argued previously) coverage of situations of social injustice, often a result of the financial crisis, is the priority for some professionals who insist on exposing such situations. In many cases, this pattern of reporting triggers some solidarity, which then helps to resolve such injustices:

‘Sometimes, after showing those reports about unemployment there are people calling us offering jobs to those people – this happened last week for example, with a case reported by us, about a man who lost his job and someone called offering him a job.’

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

‘Once I interviewed this man for a report about the crisis in the construction sector. This was one of those interviewees that somehow I felt he was feeling suicidal, and he even implied that. At that point I considered stopping the interview. (...) This was a very depressing situation. His wife was the strongest of the couple. She claimed they had no food. So I’ve done what I usually do - as journalists we have always to be a little sceptic: I asked for a glass of cold water, so I could glance inside the fridge. And that was true, there was nothing inside it, and they were not lying. (...) After this report he found a job. Some people called here offering jobs but I have only passed his contact to a man who called not offering a job but a job interview. I thought this was the most honest proposition; some of the other phone calls sounded like a scam, or could be people interested in exploiting this man – there is always someone wanting to take advantage of others’ vulnerabilities. The following Christmas this man texted me and said that if it wasn’t for the report, he might not be here right now. So there I had the confirmation that the man had suicidal intentions. I felt that we changed something. I’m sure that these small moments justify all my years in this career; there would not be any award that could do this – make me feel that I changed a family’s life.’

(Rita Ramos, RTP investigative reporter, interviewed in 23 January 2013)

8.4.3 – Embracing grand human rights causes: dissipating inequality and promoting global reach

When confronted with the hypothetical scenario of an ideal journalistic practice unlimited by any sort of constraints (financial and editorial), news workers often point out the wish to investigate grand human rights causes. More than focusing on a particular country or region, journalists ambitiously embrace outstanding news topics, mostly related to blatant human rights violations taking place in inside and outside national borders:

‘I would either go to the other side of the world to report about how the world is fed – this is an issue that worries me and it is profoundly related to human rights and environment; or I would go to the end of the road, so I could tell how people are living in Portugal nowadays. Despite the fact that we cover the latter everyday I would try to cover it in a more extensive way. I believe that the world is changing deeply and rapidly, and this might be very interesting to tell from a journalistic perspective’.

(Adília Godinho, RTP *Telejornal* programme editor, interviewed 25 January 2013)

Within this pattern of answers, journalists often claimed their ultimate aim is to ‘give voice to the voiceless’, and that such work is the most important part of reporting these human rights causes. They refer to the power and privilege inherent in their profession:

‘The fact that I am able to witness and denounce those events to those who are at home is priceless (...). You come back feeling very different and you realise that the problems you had before (...) don’t exist anymore. (...) When you come back you no longer care if you own the latest gadgets or the best car – then your priorities are right where they should be, and you realise that what is important is the suffering of those who stayed; it is to denounce injustice and give voice to the weakest. This is why when I go to war I tend to join the weakest; I’m much more exposed to danger, and in risk of not coming back, but it is there where it feels right. I usually join the weakest parties involved.’

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

As mentioned earlier, helping children seemed to be a strong motivational element that leads journalists into engaging with human rights causes. The causes of this, the journalist argues below, are the fragility of children and their inability to defend themselves regarding rights violations. When questioned about an occasion where he addressed human rights violations, his immediate examples all referred to cases of children’s rights violations:

‘The 2008 report about Talibé Children from central Guinea Bissau who are abducted and inserted in traffic networks. They are abducted by fake Quranic teachers who (...) tell the parents that they are being taken to study in the madrassas (...). In fact, they are taken to Senegal or other countries around and introduced into mendicity networks and sexual exploitation (...). We know how sensitive it is showing children’s faces; (...) but at some point I changed my mind, and thought that I should film them – and why – those were children that, up to that moment have had been rescued but not found by their parents. After the report was broadcast, one of the boys was found by his parents who saw it on RTP Africa. So, one small report changed a family’s life. This is enormously rewarding. I have never seen that child again, but I feel that my work was fundamental for that child to recover his ties, his parents, and being able to go back to his *tabanka* [village].’

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

In this passage, and in the following example, it is possible to notice both the resolution of a moment of crisis or conflict and the opportunity to put pressure on authority as a decisive element of professional fulfilment:

'There was another report about the drug addicts in Guinea Bissau who are chained to trees (...). These are young boys, chained, as the slaves used to be; they have no access to medicine, so this is how they do rehab treatments: chain them to trees. I alerted the Prime Minister of Guinea at the time – with whom I am friends – and that made them have a different perspective on both children of Talibé and the chained boys of Qinhamel. We have this role, this duty to denounce and reorient injustices, or to fight injustices. This is priceless; it is extremely rewarding. (...) You have done your job and you left a mark on someone's life. This is the best we can do: being remembered for something good that we have done.' (*Ibidem*)

The impossibility of intervention and resolution of social injustices may, on the other hand, contribute to professional frustration and disbelief. The example below also refers to children's suffering:

'Last year I did a report which shocked me a lot about a rare disease. Patients who have this do not have any support from the government, and their families have to spend three hundred euros per month in bandages and creams. This is an epidermal disease caused by a missing protein, and it makes the skin peel off. Patients suffer with horrible pain, and because it is rare, it is barely studied (...) and its treatment is not profitable for the pharmaceutical industry. Therefore patients live a horrible life with no access to health care or any type of support. This report marked me deeply; these cases leave a mark on you also because there are children who are suffering from it. The most frustrating part is that this disease remained understudied and not supported by the national health system. Sometimes we hope to make an impact and cause a change in this situation, but it has not happened.'

(Rita Ramos, RTP investigative reporter, interviewed in 23 January 2013)

In an ideal reporting scenario, journalists would like to have access to remote areas or difficult topics. These professional aspirations reveal that their ideal human rights reporting points back the real insufficiencies from which contemporary journalism, as argued in this thesis, currently suffers. These professionals' wishful reporting knows no geographical, financial or time constraints. Indeed, they approximate it to the idealised concept of universality, which is at the heart of human rights discourse:

'I would do Changing Lives⁸⁶ again; or I would go to the Syrian refugee camps in Turkey. This is where the human problem of the war in Syria lies. This is where thousands of Syrians are, and where we find

⁸⁶ *Mudar de Vida* (Changing lives)– the anthropological journalism programme which ceased to exist due to financial constraints.

human difficulties but also political activism. This is the place where we could better portray the Syrian problem; and this is what we really need to show.'

(Rosário Salgueiro, RTP Senior editor, interviewed in 24 January 2013)

'I would go to Brazil and chase after a story I've been looking at. There are two Portuguese people there who, at the moment, no one knows their whereabouts. This is a very complex story. I have already suggested this topic, but there is no time to pursue this report at the moment.'

(Rita Marrafa de Carvalho, RTP Justice correspondent and former news editor, interviewed 23 January 2013)

'I would investigate about the 305 Brazilian tribes. In some of these, in Amazon, the Brazilian government has no effective power. This would be a very demanding report, also in the sense that it would test my respect for their culture and traditions. There are tribes that kill perfectly healthy baby girls just because there are quotas allowed to control the number of women. Brazil is a country that claims to be one of the greatest nations in the world – but still has no power whatsoever to prevent these rituals. (...) This could be a great report, very interesting but very delicate and complicated at the same time (...). I would need extensive travelling, time and authorisations to get into these territories.'

(João Pacheco de Miranda, RTP Brazil correspondent, interviewed 20 February 2013)

'I would get the next plane (...) and would get to Guinea Bissau, Mali, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. I would jump from war to war if I could. This is how the true reporter is: the one who goes from war to war. And we are true war reporters: we go to wars. The financial crisis we live in does not allow us to live those velleities: jumping from war to war is very expensive.'

(Luís Castro, RTP war correspondent, interviewed 22 January 2013)

Furthermore, some news professionals worry about promoting a more positive, hopeful and empathetic journalism, theoretically connected with the principles of peace journalism, as reviewed in Chapter 3. These journalists foresee the potential and reach of their job as a tool to prevent fatigue provoked by excessive coverage of suffering:

I have recently become the editor general of RTP Africa and RTP International and one of my deepest worries is to make all editors show the world in a complete way. (...) [I'm concerned about] making all editors and correspondents understand that we need to report on tough events, but we also have to open windows of hope; otherwise we will allow the society to loose the light. Journalism is killing itself, since the people, as a relief, turn the television off; it is suffocating, and there is too much suffering (...). I make war journalism; but we have to find time to also make people believe and have hope in the playful/ludic world, in a happiest world, as children do.'

(António Mateus, RTP war correspondent and RTP Africa news editor, interviewed 22 January 2013)

In this sense, journalism is seen as a tool to dissipate social inequalities and promote global reach or, as claimed, to 'humanise' the news:

'Regarding human rights, I believe that others' human rights start in us. Every day I tell the journalists that we have to be the change we want to see in the world; and as to what concerns human rights, we are not the spectators of a film, we are the pillars of human rights, even in the way we thematically structure the news. If we alienate from that fact, we are ignoring its existence. This awareness that we are structuring the news is always present in my bulletins, and I know these are quite different from other bulletins. However, I already have the status to make the bulletin I want; and I do impose my vision. (...) I believe that it is very important to humanise the news.'

(*ibidem*)

8.5 - Conclusion

This chapter further develops the second research question and the reasons human rights issues are addressed (or silenced) in RTP's news. Grounded in previous findings presented in chapters 6 and 7, this chapter further explores the journalists' understandings of human rights coverage.

In this chapter, the news workers' professional reflexivity was tested, revealing divided opinions on how news is selected depending on the position the news worker occupies within the newsroom and if they hold managerial functions. The financial cuts applied to the broadcaster have provoked an adjustment of its budget. In the news department, the most visible consequence of these cuts is in travel expenses, and the reduction of correspondents in the coverage of foreign affairs, particularly war and armed conflicts abroad. These contractions in spending have also been affecting the foreign correspondents who travel less in their designated territories. One of the deciding factors on news selection revealed here, which reinforces the arguments defended in chapter 7, is the national audiences' interest on a certain topic, highlighting once again the importance of *proximity* and *national identification* as news values. Some editorial choices are contested by news workers, who bring to light the advantages and principles of public service television. Some argue that the absence of correspondents in war scenarios abroad, and the reinforcement of the coverage of domestic issues, is somehow provoking a lack of diversity in the news, as well as threatening a global understanding of news and events.

The chapter continues by exploring journalists' different understandings and roles regarding human rights news. Although separated into different categories, these are not static or contradictory and relate to ethical and deontological concerns about their jobs. Journalists revealed three different views on the presence or absence of human rights in the news. Firstly, the objective approach claims that human rights are unconsciously reported under related topics and not as a topic alone; further, this position considers human rights as a contextually changeable concept that needs to be objectively transmitted. Therefore these journalists also defend a necessary emotional distance to these news issues. Within this mode, journalists point out their freedom of expression as a right on its own. Secondly, the socially responsible approach raises the principles of communication law and ethos regarding the rights of the others, or the subjects who are the object of coverage. While believing in a necessary objectivity, this approach is concerned with the professional risk of journalistic cynicism, and defends a certain degree of sensitivity regarding recurring issues about social inequalities. Thirdly, the intervening approach, which is the most engaged towards human rights issues, challenges traditional fast-paced forms of journalism, and stands for journalism as a vehicle for changing minds and an invitation to care.

Deriving from such positioning, journalists also elaborated their own perceived roles regarding human rights issues. These roles are also displayed in a triad. The first role portrays the journalist as a *gleaner of the truth*, engaged in deep investigation but detached from advocacy, defending the idealised journalistic role as a *watchdog*. A second formulation sees journalists as the ones expected to provide tools for informed citizenry, providing the different angles and perspectives from the full range of different voices. More than an objective tone, the advocates of this standpoint defend an *honesty* tone that allows the informed and critical deliberation of the public. The third role regarding human rights issues depicts news professionals as deeply involved in and concerned with promoting change on and off air. These journalists argue for their responsibility towards the other, and proactively promote certain initiatives beyond their journalistic functions in order to resolve a violation of rights or a social injustice. These journalists are also aware of and take advantage of their professional connections and perks in order to promote this change.

Lastly, this chapter explored journalists' ideal or wishful reporting, and which news topics would be a priority without financial or editorial constraints, teasing out

their most desired aspirations and motivations. This endeavour also revealed three different outlooks. Firstly, journalists work for professional achievement, and find it more rewarding to inform and expose human rights violations than to win any award. They look for recognition of their work by the public and by their peers, as well in the pragmatic outcomes of their reports. They believe in deep investigation even in dangerous scenarios. This type of reporting is seen as both professionally and personally enriching. Secondly, there are journalists who look forward to act upon injustices close by, defending that there is a lot to be done 'around here'. Connected to the prioritisation of news proximity, these journalists are alerted to the fact that the distant sufferer may not be so distant after all, and that they have the obligation to raise awareness of social injustices nearby, mostly as a consequence of the effects of the financial crisis. Finally, a third type of wishful reporting is the one that embraces grand human rights causes at home or abroad. These journalists wish to report about outstanding human rights violations, and give a voice to the voiceless. This mission is seen as a privilege inherent to the profession, and journalists who defend this type of reporting are revealed to be especially sensitive to cases of children's rights violations. Criticising the state of current journalism and its financial and editorial limitations, these professionals ultimate desire is to reach remote and under-reported areas and news topics. Furthermore, they refer to the need to also include more positive and hopeful news in the daily broadcasts.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

This thesis studied the connection between human rights and journalism, and the importance the latter has in informing citizens about the world they live in. Journalism, along with governments, courts, government and non-governmental organisations, holds the cultural authority to define human rights and promote public argument and deliberation (Benhabib, 2007; Nash, 2009). History has shown cases of successful intervention of the media by putting pressure on governments to solve cases of perpetrated human rights violations⁸⁷; but it has also revealed cases where the media were used precisely with the opposite purpose, the so-called hate media, to incite racial, national or religious hatred and genocide⁸⁸. Given this double-sided potential of media and news journalism to influence the course of conflicts and human rights violations, it becomes essential to conduct mindful research and analysis of media outcomes, effects and production.

Of all possible approaches, this thesis examines the Portuguese public service television (RTP) as case study, and as an example of the functioning of a mainstream broadcast newsroom, running in a democratic country with a free press. Despite some particularities intrinsic to the national characteristics in which this newsroom is located, the study and its findings may be replicable or applied to other newsrooms with the same structure and similar operational conditions.

Considering that the role of journalism regarding human rights must be examined not only by analysing media content and its effects on audiences, this research set out to observe and analyse journalistic production and practice, testing and questioning the nature and possibilities of human rights reporting in the field. The study developed multidisciplinary contributions to the definition and debate around the role of journalism with regard to human rights, and has been informed by noteworthy contributions to the field. The objective was mainly to comprehend how journalists are

⁸⁷ Such as the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, or the Kurdish crisis in 1991

⁸⁸ As in the former Yugoslavia in 1990, and in Rwanda in 1994

covering human rights, why do they do so, and the implications that such journalistic choices have upon human rights and their enforcement in day-to-day life.

This culminating chapter presents firstly a summary of key findings and arguments debated across this study, and moves on to reflect on the thesis' limitations before finally presenting suggestions for future research.

9.1 – Summary of arguments

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this thesis aims to answer two overarching research questions that are *How are human rights represented in the news?* and *Why are journalists covering human rights issues the way they are?* These two questions refer to concern about both news content and news production practices, and therefore, as explained in Chapter 5, the research adopted a combination of methods that would fulfil the proposed investigation. The key arguments and findings of this empirical analysis are recapitulated along the following sub-sections.

9.1.1 – *The nature of human rights reporting: the prevalence of economy and finances news and the reliance on international news agencies when covering war*

The first research question *How are human rights represented in the news?* aimed to examine and document the nature of reporting on human rights. Chapter 4 stated the difficulties of operationalising the identification of human rights topics and issues in the news. The revision of previous research lead to the argument that there are limitations in selecting a research sample according to a specific or related key lexicon, since a limited lexicon may exclude a significant number of news items that are fundamentally connected to human rights themes, although not presented as such. Therefore, in Chapter 6, content analysis extended the study to more than a lexical choice and determined that the sample of news would be inspected according to three levels of presence of human rights issues in the news: *i) news that includes the words 'human rights' specifically, ii) news that contains correlate terms to 'human rights' and iii) news*

under a substantive human rights' theme or area. This distinction allowed the inclusion of a significant number of items to the list of news related to human rights, and demonstrated that the majority of human rights issues are covered under a substantive human rights' theme or area.

The examination of the four prevalent and generic topics of the news sample, independently from the aforementioned levels of presence, concluded that the predominant topic covered in the daily news is *Economy and Politics*, namely focusing on *financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout or financial rescue)*. These results suggest a contextual influence on the journalistic agenda, mostly due to the financial crisis and its impact on Europe. The influence of the external milieu may explain the evident importance that the issue has on news agendas of the affected countries, and brings to light consequential aspects that involve human rights issues.

The importance of economy and finance news is also mirrored in the news production resources chosen for reporting. For the coverage of both *Economy and politics* and *Social issues*, the broadcaster mostly mobilised correspondents to the news scene; in contrast, the coverage of *armed conflict or war* and *disaster* news was principally based on international news agencies' contents. The analysis of one year of daily newscasts revealed that the news that relates to distant scenarios of armed conflict or disaster are processed from a distance as well as from inside the newsroom, whereas economy and politics and social issues are addressed more closely and *in situ*.

The content analysis disclosed that most of the reports regarding human rights issues, regardless of the topic, rely solely on one single news source, and *politicians and leaders* are the most prominent source of news, specially in news about armed conflict and economic issues. This information reiterates, on one hand, the relevance of primary definers in the news (Hall *et al.*, 1978) and the reliance on power or authority figures when reporting human rights issues (ICHRP, 2002). Likewise, these news reports fail to report the victims' perspectives (*ibidem*), as the low numbers of victims cited confirm. Exceptionally, victims are the main source of social issues news, which include education, health, elderly issues, court cases or police investigation news stories. Given the fact that, as aforementioned, social issues are mostly covered by correspondents in

the field, it may be argued that the closer the reporter is to the news events, the more the victims will be heard.

Scrutinizing the scope and the location of the news items enabled us to identify the geopolitically influenced news values that shape and select news reports regarding human rights issues. The research has shown that the large majority of human rights related news take place in or are about Portugal which, together with the previously claimed prevalence of *Economy and politics* as a news topic covering the financial crisis and its consequences, suggests a strong domestication of this issue, and concerns the proximity and interest of national audiences. This tendency is further reinforced with the information that the national perspective is still the most visible while reporting on news regarding human rights issues.

Three general communicative frames stemmed from the combination of these analysed characteristics of human rights news items. These frames correspond to three levels of journalistic/professional engagement to human rights issues, or different *levels of depth* (*shallow, medium* and *deep*) in human rights reporting. The delineation of these levels of depth, thoroughly elaborated in Chapter 4, was backed by a blend of the theoretical suggestions of different *levels of pity* (Chouliaraki, 2006), and the concept of *communicative frames* (Cottle and Rai, 2006). This way, these defined frames refer to both the content of the news, which establish a disposition of care with the *other*, and the journalistic production routines. Given this, the framing analysis disclosed that human rights issues are generally covered in a *shallow* manner, and only rarely a *deep* approach is adopted.

Finally, based on the legislative formulation of rights, explored in Chapter 2, content analysis revealed *economic and social rights* are now practically as visible as civil rights. This finding contradicts previous research that claims that this type of rights was mostly ignored in the news (Ovsiovitich, 1993; Ramos, *et al* 2007).

Overall, the content and framing analysis of a sample of news allowed documenting the patterns in the coverage of human rights related issues. Together with the key theories and concepts on the epistemology and sociology of journalism, revised in Chapters 3 and

4, the data obtained informed the later ethnographic study of the newsroom and the in-depth interviews with news workers. From here, it was possible to explore the second research question of this thesis: *Why are journalists covering human rights issues the way they are?*

This question is clearly connected to the observation of the professional and organisational routines that determine news production processes daily. The most relevant findings of the empirical research will be further discussed in the following subsections. In summary, this thesis discusses the tangled connection between the effects of the financial crisis on news content and also on news production routines. This thesis argues that there is a growing tendency to privilege *proximity* and *national interest* as criteria for human rights reporting. Consequently, this trend is promoting the domestic approaches to human rights problems, instead of fostering a global approach to these news and, ultimately weakening the chances for a *global moral order*, as suggested by Silverstone (2007). However, the effects of the financial constraints on such editorial choices and the general *state of the news* is differently understood and contested by news workers.

These arguments are closely intertwined, and are visible through the study of the professional practices presented by this case study, but most likely applicable to the reality of other newsrooms operating under the same structural circumstances. As abovementioned, the following sections clarify these arguments and lay out the conditions and constraints that shape the news production practices.

9.1.2 – The *immediate and the new*: the daily journalistic routines fomenting a shallow approach to human rights topics

Chapter 6 disclosed that human rights issues are generally covered in a *shallow* manner and that a *deeper* approach rarely features in the daily news. The reason for this relies in the nature of the daily news programme itself, which is highly defined by the criteria of immediacy, novelty and time constraints. This thesis analyses the daily newscasts, due to the centrality of these newscasts to the broadcasters' news production, and due to its popularity among audiences. Despite being planned in combination with the other news

formats and platforms, the 8pm bulletin is the most substantial regular production within RTP's news department. However, from a human rights analysis, daily hard news coverage demands a low level of professional engagement. A more profound approach to these issues is found within other news formats such as feature stories and reportage, in-depth interviews, or analysis that all introduce embedded discussion and engender deeper understandings and insights. Recent editorial changes to the structure of *Telejornal* introduced daily topic-based studio interviews and analysis within the news rundown. Initiatives like this one demonstrate some managerial concern to provide the spectators with explicative and analytical content regarding significant news issues. These initiatives challenge the routinised daily practices and potentially increase the depth of the coverage of human rights issues.

Still, what makes into the daily news is *what's new*, and the programme's contents and rundowns are perpetually altered according to what breaks in or is considered more relevant. These decisions rely mostly on professional instinct rather than logic (Harcup and O'Neill, 2009), and time-juggling is part of the routine. However, these fast-paced alterations are unfavourable to a deeper journalistic engagement with human rights issues, and daily news often obliterates background context or analysis of events. On the other hand, some journalists argue that the insertion of human rights related news, despite being reported in a shallow manner, is itself a form of involvement with human rights problems. The importance of the new and the immediate is also strictly connected to the external context or environment (Wolfsfeld, 2004) surrounding the news production processes. Chapter 6 displayed the prevalence of economic and finance news, linked to the external financial crisis affecting the country. Chapter 7 argued that these news topics are consequently and increasingly entangled with other news themes, particularly connected to human rights issues such as poverty, unemployment and social protests, among other topics. Economic news are therefore now often linked to other recurrent social concerns besides traditional finance reporting. The research also showed some editors' resilience in including repeated topics (especially when connected to social rights), arguing that there are always new angles to address. This is also seen as part of the bigger picture, or their social role as journalists to uncover such stories. Again, such initiatives disrupt routinised practices, interrupt the instinctive process of decision-making, and suggest a deeper involvement with human rights causes. Advocates of such stands believe that exposing these recurring situations may put

pressure on leading authorities and trigger responses to the problems. In this way human rights issues, some journalists claim, even if approached superficially, are embedded in the daily news contents, even though daily news is not about human rights specifically.

Yet, economy and finance is the dominant topic and focus of the news stories. The recent appointment of the former Economy editor as general news director, as well as the expansion of the specialty desk mirrors the awareness of the growing importance of this news theme.

9.1.3 – *Financial crisis outside and inside the news: how the financial crisis is influencing news content and production practices*

The context of a financial crisis is not only influencing the content of the news, as mentioned previously and given evidence in Chapter 6, but it is also affecting the news production practices. Over the last years, RTP has been implementing measures in order to overcome the budgetary cuts imposed by the Portuguese government. These actions include a synergy-based policy merging radio and television, optimizing resources both in terms of manpower and contents, and downsizing and reducing staff (Deuze, 2004; Singer, 2004). It is often common that reporters produce content both for radio and television or that journalists are flexible enough to report about areas they are less familiar with. Journalists are expected to be versatile, and news outputs are reused within different formats and platforms.

Regarding the news contents, and despite the prevalence of economic and finance news, as mentioned before, one of the most visible effects of the financial constraints in the public service news department is the manifest reliance on news agencies' news contents, particularly when reporting distant war and disaster news. News directors are reluctant to send correspondents to cover any human rights issues abroad. Sending a team to a war scene is grasped as an extremely expensive investment that therefore needs to be carefully pondered. Further, these financial difficulties are also affecting the settlement of foreign correspondents, and the ones who are already displaced travel less frequently now, despite being expected to cover wide geographical areas. However, as

the framing analysis demonstrated, sending correspondents to the news scene (home or abroad) tends to inspire a deeper engagement with human rights problems. Indeed, the majority of news stories covered in a deeper engagement communicative frame were done by correspondents *in situ*, and none of these news stories was based on news agencies content.

Chapter 4 suggested that there is an increasing dependence upon international news agencies as they cut resources (Paterson, 2011). This thesis's empirical research findings are in line with this statement, and show that news editors are aware of this reliance. Their opinions regarding this are disparate and highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of using such content. On one hand, the reliability of the news agencies is not questioned, and these are seen as a safer and more informed way to report on international affairs. International news agencies are also seen as more trustworthy than alternative media coverage or citizen journalism, which are rarely used. On the other hand, journalists are conscious that having someone in the field is more likely to provide more profound and accurate understanding of the conflicts and human rights violations at stake. Further, editors also recognize that this reliance on news agencies' contents limits the angles available to report war and conflict. As a result, in general, not covering such issues on location where they happen aggravates the silencing or the absence of certain human rights issues in the news. This is thus in line with Sonwalkar's argument that dominant socio-cultural values promote the marginalisation of certain conflicts within news texts (2009). This selectivity is also determinant on the decisions regarding the coverage of on-going and long lasting conflict, as well as attention to aftermaths of conflicts and subsequent reconstruction periods. If a conflict takes place over an extended duration, some editors argued, it might undermine the relevance of the topic and cause the audience's disinterest. Therefore, continuing conflicts are most likely to be covered when exceptional developments occur. Otherwise, news directors decide to withdraw correspondents from a war zone as soon as the ruling power is overthrown and the conflict is over. The pressure of audiences is seen as essential by news directors, but as unimportant for news workers with no managerial functions. The latter argue that such pressure should not exist within the public service broadcaster, which should permanently pursue quality reporting.

As claimed in Chapter 7, editors try to avoid spending money with correspondents in periods and in locations where, as they consider, 'nothing happens', arguing that this provokes the routinization of war coverage. However, a central argument of this thesis is that these are not necessarily empty or meaningless moments, and these are opportunities to look at timeless stories within a war context. As some war correspondents mentioned, when closer to the news scene, there are more opportunities to capitalise on the coverage of marginal issues, often related to human rights violations victims. Finding such stories, they argue, is more likely to happen while working in the field. However, this involves a significant level of professional engagement and investigation, pro-active journalistic performance and, consequently, substantial expenses in production resources. Additionally, this approach would be highly beneficial for the exposure of human rights violations, providing in-depth understanding, background information and analysis and, thus, tools for audiences' informed understanding and action. Again, and reviewing the suggestions of the advocates of peace journalism, the financial constraints suffered in the newsrooms are endangering and impeding journalists' creativity to transform coverage of a conflict and 'ride the high road' to adopt a fascination with peace (Galtung, 1993, 1998; Manhoff, 1998).

As journalists admit, the financial cuts are preventing 'us' from looking at human rights beyond our borders, and such causes abroad are forgotten. Therefore, it is possible to argue that while journalists are aware of their potential to bring to light human rights violations, financial constraints are preventing the efficiency of journalists' alleged responsibility to report (Thompson, 2007).

Despite the fact that the budget cuts to the news departments are bulldozing the chances of covering human rights issues abroad, there are exceptional cases where the editorial decisions seem to contradict and disrupt the pattern of minimising costs. An example of such exception was analysed in Chapter 7, and refers to the DSK sex scandal in 2011, which interrupted editorial policies of costs reductions and mobilised a significantly large number of production expenses (news workers, travel costs and extended satellite time for live broadcasting). The reasons behind such investment were most likely the

identification with national interest and *proximity*, since the story involved the president of the IMF, a structure that has been supporting Portugal's financial bailout since that time.

Further, this research confirms that there is a scarce use of the RTP's production resources in Africa, precluding the chances of a wider geographical diversity within the news content. Additionally, as reasoned in Chapter 7, RTP Africa's news production contributes to the prevalence of national interests but from an African perspective, and its contents are mostly directed to African communities.

The importance of proximity and national interest as news values, and its consequences on the possibility of a global debate on human rights causes will be further contended in the following section.

9.1.4 - The *national versus the global*: how *empathetic or forced proximity* is undermining a global understanding of human rights problems

There are various factors contributing to the significance of proximity and concordance with national audiences' interests as essential criteria for news production decisions. Firstly, the prominence of economic and finance news within the daily news and the increasing connection between traditional finance news and social rights issues is leading to more nation-focused news coverage. This is both product of the domestication of global crisis coverage, on one hand, and the visibility of social rights issues as consequence of the external crisis context, on the other. Secondly, financial cuts to the news department's budget prevent journalists' allocations abroad, and therefore prevent the reduction of the distance from remote human rights causes. As a consequence, restricting reporters from travelling overseas limits human rights issues to coverage within national borders or, as one journalist mentioned, *in our neighborhood*. A crucial argument here is that this is both empathetic and forced proximity: on one hand, there is a growing and persistent interest in human rights issues at a local or national level but, on the other, there is not much choice, since severe budgetary cuts limit coverage of human rights causes abroad. Focusing on national

issues, as several journalists mentioned, is more cost-effective. However, as reporters admit, not travelling to cover international human rights issues is causing the a lack of diversity in the news, and silencing the voices of the distant sufferers.

Regarding distant conflict, general news directors argue that the decision to place a news crew on war scenes is, in its turn, utterly dependent on proximity and identification with national audiences' interest. The example often given was the conflict in Mali, seen as an uninteresting to Portuguese national audiences. However, these editorial stands are not shared and often contested by some newsroom reporters and war correspondents, who claim that such decisions are undermining a global understanding of the world. Previous media research, as reviewed in chapter 4, has argued that distant conflict situations are related differently to domestic audiences, and the more distant these are to the conflict, the less interested they may be, and that the impact that such news have upon spectators is reduced. This assessment weakens the possibility of a *global public sphere* or a *global civil society* defended by media scholarship and revised in chapter 3 (Volkmer, 1999, 2002, 2003; Silverstone, 2007). In the same line, chapter 7 argued that the financial constraints suffered by the broadcasters are compromising the idea of the media contributing to rising *cosmopolitanism*, as theorised by Beck (2003) or Benhabib (2007), and consequently augmenting the distance between the 'us' and the 'other'. The limits and constraints that condition the news production practices are also impeding the solidification of an aspirational global journalism (Bergelez, 2008, 2013).

As exemplified in Chapter 7, there are occasional attempts to creatively overcome the impossibility of sending reporters abroad. The smaller case study, which focused on the use of Skype to reach out and include different voices in the daily news, showed that this practice in fact reinforces the aforementioned criteria of proximity and national interest. This internet tool, the research has shown, is frequently used to interview the 'one of us amongst them', as in the coverage of Fukushima nuclear meltdown and Bahrain uprising.

Figure 9.1 elucidates the interrelation between the factors interfering with the coverage of human rights issues and its effects:

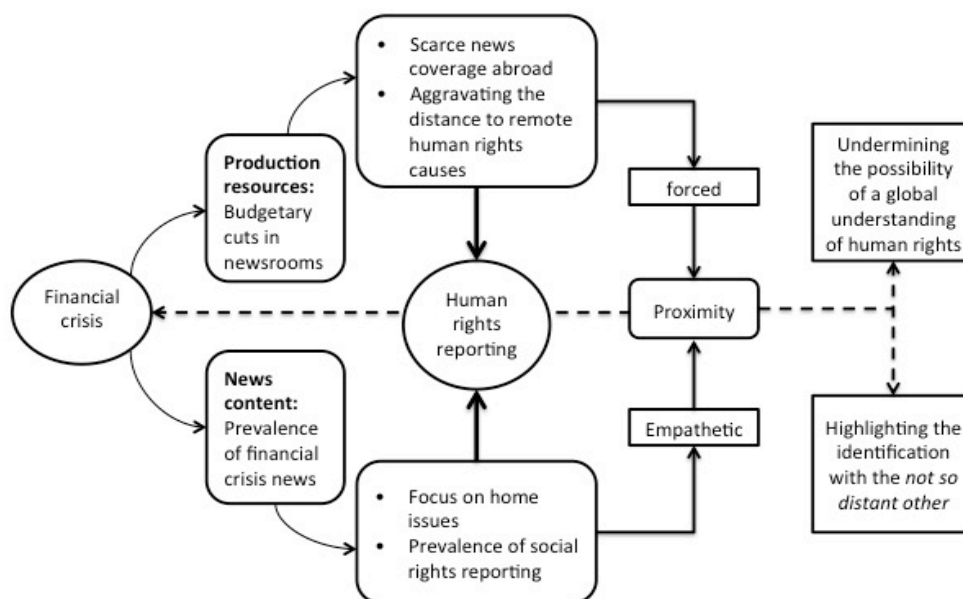


Figure 9.1- The factors interfering with the coverage of human rights issues and its effects

As for the journalists' understandings of their own roles regarding human rights, as well as their most desired forms of reporting, Chapter 8 scrutinised the different patterns of responses, separating different categories of approaches, understandings and wishful reporting. In this concluding chapter, it is possible to group these into three general stands.

Firstly, with regards to human rights, journalists often evoke the classical perception of journalism as the practice of objective investigation and surveillance of the ruling elites, highlighting the self-proclaimed role of the journalist as a watchdog or as the fourth estate. This perspective is highly connected to the ethical guidelines of the profession, as well as to enshrined rights and duties to report and, using a reporter's phrase, be a *gleaner of the truth*. This standard is guided by the ultimate goal to inform and expose undiscovered facts, and is mostly motivated by the accomplishment of a 'job well done', or by recognition among peers, and within the general public.

Secondly, many journalists refer to their social responsibility to audiences and to the subjects who are heard or featured in the news. Greatly concerned with the acceptance and application of general directives of communication law and common sense, this standpoint also points out the perils of an increased cynicism among journalists with regard to certain human rights problems. The outcome of this attitude is the banalisation of suffering in the news. This tendency, as some journalists claim, is due to the over-reporting of social injustices, derived from the context of the financial crisis. In this sense, there is a stated *fatigue*, not from the audiences regarding distant suffering, but from some journalists who reflect a degree of weariness derived from such reporting routines. Contrarily, the social responsibility of journalism regarding human rights insists on the exposure of such cases, even if these are recurrent and not new. In the same line, some journalists perceive themselves as providers of the tools for an informed citizenry and as conveyors of instruments for public deliberation. Such notions are connected to an intervening role within democracy, by providing spectators with all available angles and portraying all involved parts, in order to clarify the complexity of the news issues, as well as the reasons behind certain occurrences.

A third understanding of journalists' connection to human rights issues is the one that involves intervening ends beyond the broadcasting of news. This standpoint envisions journalists as capable of interfering with the course of events and provoking a different disposition for care. This also involves a deeper professional engagement regarding certain topics, which most of the time means going beyond conventional forms of coverage in order to promote change and awareness. Chapter 8 established a division between journalists who consider that such intervention is much needed in 'nearby causes', and other groups who were not so specific about the radius of intervention. The first group mentions a necessity to intervene within a close range, a need that is closely connected to the empathetic proximity mentioned previously. This group aims to promote change nearby, affirming that the suffering *other* may not be at a distance. A second intervention-based approach is not specific about the range of action, and is more inclined to embrace ambitious and outstanding news topics and to promote a global discourse. These journalists claim that their ultimate wish is 'to give voice to the voiceless' and to advocate for grand human rights causes, to pressure authorities in

order to promote solutions, and to have access to remote areas or sensitive topics. These professional aspirations reveal that their ideal professional practices point back to the insufficiencies from which contemporary journalism, as argued in this thesis, is currently suffering. Furthermore, some journalists defend the promotion of a more hopeful, positive and empathetic journalism, normatively identifiable with the principles of global journalism and peace journalism.

9.2 – Thesis limitations and suggestions for future research

Although the data and findings obtained have helped to secure answers to the proposed research questions, on the basis of some of these findings the thesis could have possibly benefitted from further methodological refinements. As explained in Chapter 5, the study followed a rolling or composite week scheme for sampling, which consisted of examining the news broadcasted during one year. This choice enabled a thorough look at the newscasts as a whole, selecting a sample of various news that were related to human rights issues (the aforementioned levels of presence). This thesis has demonstrated the evident effects of the financial crisis in the news, both in content and in professional practices, as broadly explored in the previous chapters. Therefore extending retrospectively the span of news across a longer period of years would also have been productive. This would allow the researcher to observe these changes in the news gradually, comparing the different coverage patterns and editorial understandings across time.

Additionally, if, on one hand, focusing solely on one broadcaster's news output and professional dynamics has given this thesis a comprehensive depiction of how and why human rights are covered the way they are, a comparative study with other media could also help to explore human rights coverage in different formats and platforms. Observing the dynamics of other media's news reporting, namely in the private sector, would help to base this research on a political-economy foundation and theoretical background and deliver further understanding on the effects of the financial crisis in the newsrooms.

The outcomes of this research provide the grounds for other pertinent questions that would justify further academic investigation. For example, this thesis focuses mainly on the production of the daily news inserted in the context of the whole department's news production, articulating and examining the interconnectivity of the daily news with other news programmes. Though this thesis included ethnographic observation of these programmes as well as interviews with news workers that deliver such content, it could be relevant to examine other formats' news content, such as in-depth interviews, debates and investigative reports or documentaries. These other formats are ruled by different timelines and production resources, but they also deal with different and not so wide spectatorship. Still, these programmes present other types of content that might provide deeper understanding, analysis and investigation with regard to human rights issues.

In addition, the findings of this study suggest the importance of international news agencies for the coverage of international news. Despite existing research on these organisations, it could be useful to analyse their production practices and routines from a human rights perspective, possibly delving deeper into the debate over the different cultural understandings of human rights as well as their articulation with the media outlets to which they provide content.

Furthermore, this research briefly explored the potential of other forms of alternative journalism, such as community and citizen journalism. Having examined performances and constraints in one example of a mainstream media organisation, the study of these alternative forms of journalism could elaborate on possible different understandings, roles and outputs with regard to human rights problems. These non-mainstream and non-profit news, as argued in Chapter 3, are seen as a challenge to conventional media practices and discourses, providing counter-hegemonic visions of current news; and therefore the examination of their production processes and contents may offer valuable insights to an alternative approach to human rights reporting.

Finally, having suggested a methodological model for the examination of human rights issues in news outputs and in professional performances, this research could be extended to the observation of journalistic practices in other countries. This may be

particularly relevant in order to test the effects of (or immunity from) the financial cuts affecting newsrooms. A geographically extended research might systematically assess the professional attitudes and working conditions of journalists in various countries. A broader study of human rights in the news could provide a comprehensive and comparative analysis of different realities, showcasing the various different societal, organisational and contextual constraints in news coverage. This study would also engage deeply with the debate around global understandings of human rights and the possibility of a global arena for awareness and debate.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that the media strongly contribute to the creation of discursive spaces for empathy, civic engagement, and for the (re)negotiation of commonly accepted understandings of human rights. Journalism in particular plays a crucial role in informing citizens about the world, contributing both to awareness and debate. This thesis argues for the importance of grasping how journalists are reporting human rights, and the repercussions that such journalistic choices have upon these issues.

By examining the example of the Portuguese public service broadcaster's news department, particularly the news content and professional practices around the production of the daily news, this thesis demonstrated that the financial crisis is powerfully influencing the content of the news, shifting human rights coverage to more social rights-focused reporting. Further, the financial constraints are blatantly determining the professional practices and impeding the dislocation of correspondents to cover human rights issues abroad. This tendency, in its turn, is 1) reinforcing the broadcaster's dependence on international news agencies; and 2) emphasising *proximity* and national interest as decisive news values. Consequently, this proximity to human rights problems *at home* is both empathetic and forced.

Further, news professionals have different and sometimes contradictory understandings of the editorial choices regarding reporting and some argue that the current practices are undermining the possibility of a global understanding of human rights causes; others defend that this is now the time to expose the sensitive situations nearby, displaying some perseverance in covering recurrent topics about the deprivation of social rights,

and highlighting identification with the not so distant *other*. Overall, journalists are conscious of their potential impact as well as their social responsibility concerning human rights and the implications of their outputs for citizens, and generally demonstrate a disposition for care. Nonetheless, they are also aware of the determining limitations that are influencing how human rights are identified, portrayed, ignored or even misrepresented in the news.

This empirical research has taken the epistemological and sociological approach to journalism studies, observing the effects of wider organisational forces and surroundings that are contributing to a change within the culture of news and professional practices. By highlighting the impact of financial cuts upon the newsrooms, the thesis has showcased the resulting shifting patterns and understandings in human rights reporting. The findings have shown how the production of news is structurally and deeply limited by political and economical factors that have been transforming the broadcaster's news department. This hints at a profounder discussion about the future of news making, and how the wider global crisis has been moving governments to sacrifice and threaten the functioning of public service news production. This thesis has potentially diagnosed a particular problem on human rights reporting, by exposing the budgetary limitations in which news production takes place and its consequences upon the idealised *global understanding* of human rights. Further, it has argued that the persistent inclination for *proximity* is shaping editorial policies (and, consequently, the content of news) into an increasingly self-absorbed human rights reporting. The worrying possibility of further downsized news staff may lead to an even more pessimistic scenario for the coverage of human rights by deteriorating the working conditions and capacity of the public service broadcaster. On the other hand, the same financial crisis that is sweeping away the broadcaster's resources is the most visible news topic, bringing to light resultant social rights issues. Nonetheless, the research has also pointed out some relevant cultural and professional resilience in a deeper approach to human rights problems either 'in our neighbourhoods' or 'at the end of the world', particularly at a non-managerial level. Journalists' understandings of their role towards the *other*, distant or not so distant, demonstrated in this research ethical, social and even interventive concerns about human rights problems. They also demonstrated a will to 'do what they can' with 'the little they have', in consonance with the classic

understanding and belief in journalism as a vigilant actor within society. Under the striking threat of financial restraints, this might not represent a lever of change in journalism practice. However, against this seemingly insurmountable problem, these professional initiatives and understandings may demonstrate at least an effort for a journalistic ethical or moral commitment to human rights issues.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Coding sheet

Case number _____ TITLE: _____ (for coder's reference only)

1. General

1.1 Date	1.2 Day of the week	1.3 Time Code	1.4 Position/Fraction	1.5 Length
1.6 Journalist/author				

2. Format

(1) Anchor reading (no visuals)		(5) Report in the field/package	
(2) Presenter reading over footage		(6) Report edited in newsroom	
(3) Presenter intro and quote/sound bite		(7) Interview	
(4) Live report		(8) Other	

3. Production resources

(1) Sent correspondent		(6) Stringer	
(2) Foreign correspondent		(7) Journalist in newsroom	
(3) Pundit, Commentator, Expert		(8) Presenter	
(4) Agencies, other journalists		(9) Citizen journalism	
(5) Archive		(10) Other	

4. Topic and Focus of news item

4.1 Topic	
(1) Armed conflict/ war	
(2) Disaster	
(3) Economy and Politics	
(4) Social issues	

4.2 Hook (intro)	4.3 Focus of the story	4.4 Subsidiary subject of the story
(1) Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout or financial rescue)	(1) Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout or financial rescue)	(1) Financial crisis (effects, consequences, bailout or financial rescue)
(2) Celebration, tribute, success	(2) Celebration, tribute, success	(2) Celebration, tribute, success
(3) Celebrity appeal	(3) Celebrity appeal	(3) Celebrity appeal
(4) Combat, battle, war developments, strategy	(4) Combat, battle, war developments, strategy	(4) Combat, battle, war developments, strategy
(5) Death, human tragedy	(5) Death, human tragedy	(5) Death, human tragedy
(6) Demonstration, protests, strike	(6) Demonstration, protests, strike	(6) Demonstration, protests, strike
(7) Deprivation, poverty, famine	(7) Deprivation, poverty, famine	(7) Deprivation, poverty, famine
(8) Discrimination, Racism, Intolerance	(8) Discrimination, Racism, Intolerance	(8) Discrimination, Racism, Intolerance
(9) Governance, policies debate, elections	(9) Governance, policies debate, elections	(9) Governance/Policies debate/Elections
(10) Human rights awards, events	(10) Human rights awards, events	(10) Human rights awards, events
(11) Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue	(11) Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue	(11) Humanitarian aid, solidarity, rescue
(12) International law mechanisms, application policy, debate	(12) International law mechanisms, application, policy, debate	(12) International law mechanisms, application, policy, debate
(13) Migration, refugees, asylum seekers	(13) Migration, refugees, asylum seekers	(13) Migration, refugees, asylum seekers
(14) Repression, confrontation, violence	(14) Repression, confrontation, violence	(14) Repression, confrontation, violence
(15) Scandal	(15) Scandal	(15) Scandal
(16) Education, health, court cases, elderly	(16) Education, health, court cases, elderly	(16) Education, health, court cases, elderly
(17) Threat, Risk	(17) Threat, risk	(17) Threat, risk
(18) Women and children	(18) Women and children	(18) Women and children
(19) Other	(19) Other	(19) Other
(20) N/a	(20) N/a	(20) N/a

5 - Human Rights presence in the news

5.1 - How is 'Human Rights' present in the story?

(1) include the words 'human rights specifically'	
(2) contains correlate term(s)	
(3) news with substantive human rights theme	

5.1.1- In case of 1), who uses the words? (Indicate the source's numbers used in 6.2, displaying its order of appearance)

News Presenter's text		Report	
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5.2 - Types of rights in question (by order of appearance - use numbers accordingly)

	Report
(1) Civil Rights	
(2) Political Rights	
(3) Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	
(4) Collective Rights	
(5) Non Stated	

6. Sources of the news

6.1 Number of sources/actors used in total	
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(Note: code by order of appearance - use numbers accordingly and matching between columns)

6.2 - Sources: quoted directly or indirectly	6.3 - Sources in report: Context	6.4 - Sources in report: type of knowledge provided by source
(1) Politicians, leaders	(1) Interview	(1) Primary/factual
(2) NGOs, organised civil society	(2) Official event/ meeting/visit	(2) Secondary/ explanatory
(3) Public sector sources or institutions	(3) Vox pop	(3) Tertiary/ descriptive
(4) Rebels/ militia	(4) Press release, official note, report	(4) Evaluative/moral
(5) Demonstrator	(5) Press Conference	(5) Recommendation
(6) Unions, strikers	(6) By discourse of others	(6) Decision
(7) Rescuer	(7) Actual event	(7) Other or mixed
(8) Private sector sources or institutions	(8) Other or mixed	
(9) Victims, relatives of victims		
(10) Ordinary citizens		
(11) Military, police		
(12) Journalist		
(13) Experts		
(14) Witness		
(15) Celebrity		
(16) Reports, statistics, surveys, research		
(17) Other		
(18) News agencies or other media		
(19) Perpetrator		
(20) amateur video		

7. Mode of reporting

7.1 - Angle of the story:		7.2 - Valence	
(1) Personalised/Human interest		(1) Positive	
(2) Collective/ analytic/ statistically corroborated		(2) Negative	
(3) Factual/ neutral		(3) Straight	
(4) Mixed		(4) Mixed	

8. Location (Region or Country)

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9. Scope

(1) National		(3) International	
(2) National and International		(4) Global	

10. Special Features

(1) Breaking news	
(2) Self-promotion/exclusive (broadcaster)	
(3) N/A	

Communicative frame

(1) Shallow	
(2) Medium	
(3) Deep	

Appendix 2:

The dates selected for the content analysis' rolling random sampling

2011		
Month	Days	Number of news items analysed
April	Saturday, 2	6
	Sunday, 10	5
	Monday, 11	13
	Tuesday, 19	16
	Wednesday, 27	5
May	Thursday, 5	10
	Friday, 13	13
	Saturday, 21	6
	Sunday, 29	3
	Monday, 30	6
June	Tuesday, 7	10
	Wednesday, 15	10
	Thursday, 23	8
July	Friday, 1	12
	Saturday, 9	9
	Sunday, 17	11
	Monday, 18	6
	Tuesday, 26	8
August	Wednesday, 3	8
	Thursday, 11	16
	Friday, 19	8
	Saturday, 27	11
September	Sunday, 4	9
	Monday, 5	11
	Tuesday, 13	6
	Wednesday, 21	12
	Thursday, 29	14
October	Friday, 7	2
	Saturday, 15	15
	Sunday, 23	8
	Monday, 24	6
November	Tuesday, 1	5
	Wednesday, 9	8
	Thursday, 17	8
	Friday, 25	12
December	Saturday, 3	7
	Sunday, 11	8
	Monday, 12	6
	Tuesday, 20	8
	Wednesday, 28	9
2012		
January	Thursday, 8	8
	Friday, 13	5
	Saturday, 21	6
	Sunday, 29	11
	Monday, 30	14
February	Tuesday, 7	7
	Wednesday, 22	9
	Thursday, 23	6
March	Friday, 2	8
	Saturday, 10	12
	Sunday, 18	10
	Monday, 19	14
	Tuesday, 27	14

Appendix 3:

List of in-depth interviewees

Adília Godinho – *Telejornal* news editor, Arts desk editor and weekly arts programme presenter

António Mateus – RTP Africa’s general news editor, former South Africa correspondent and war correspondent

Cecília Carmo – RTP Deputy news director

João Pacheco de Miranda - RTP Brazil correspondent

José Rodrigues dos Santos – *Telejornal’s* news anchor and senior war correspondent

Luís Castro – War correspondent and former general news editor

Manuel Menezes – International affairs’ desk editor and weekly international affairs news programme (*Olhar o Mundo*) presenter

Miguel Barroso - RTP Deputy News Director

Paulo Dentinho – RTP Paris correspondent and senior war correspondent

Rita Marrafa de Carvalho – RTP justice correspondent

Rita Ramos – Investigative reporter; non-daily news section

Rosário Salgueiro – *Newsroom* senior desk editor and former general news editor

Rui Alves Veloso – Economy desk editor