

# Civility Analysis

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Humanity can only survive if it is aware of its shared responsibility and thus in mutual respect. But even in more limited life contexts and in small groups, at least a certain degree of mutual respect and a shared sense of responsibility are prerequisites for success - see, for example, families, work contexts or political decision-making. Society and politics can therefore be systematically analyzed according to the degree to which the participants respect each other in a responsibility-oriented manner (*civility*). Based on this insight, I present some basic concepts and sub-forms of civility analysis below. It is advisable to read the text as a supplement to the book *Civility Theory* (2023).

## 1) Civility levels

Civility exists to a certain degree:

- 1) Lack of civility: Participants treat each other disrespectfully when one actor exploits or cheats others, when one actor discriminates against or oppresses others, or when actors regard each other as enemies and want to destroy each other.
- 2) Low civility: An absolute ruler can behave respectfully towards others, but he can also degrade, exploit, oppress or even kill them at any time - a constellation of highly uncertain and fundamentally low civility.
- 3) Open civility: If actors meet as equals without binding regulations or other security guarantees, for example by negotiating with each other, the extent to which civility prevails is open, as the parties involved can engage with each other fairly or lie to each other - a constellation of open civility.
- 4) Secured civility: If actors jointly recognize the rules of their equality and freedom and are prepared to protect these rules effectively, civility is secured, because possible violations of norms can be corrected quickly and extensively enough.
- 5) Developed civility: If, building on secure civility, further dimensions of mutual commitment and freedom develop, such as factual communication, trust, empathy, reflection, wit and humor, then civility unfolds - the opposite of totalitarian rule.

Each level of civility results in special conditions of action for those involved. However, levels of civility can also be lost or gained, causing civility to rise or fall.

## 2) Comparative civility analysis

Levels of civility can be compared spatially, for example internationally, and temporally (intertemporally). Internationally, see the comparison between the European Union as an organization of assured civility with regions of low or no civility such as the Middle East, intertemporally the development of Europe from the First World War (lack of civility) through the interwar period to the Second World War, the post-war period, the Cold War with phases of *détente*, the end of the East-West conflict and finally the breach of civility caused by Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine.

## 3) Comparison of party programs

A special form of comparative civility analysis is the comparison of party programs. These can be compared according to the civility level of their dominant statements. However, other civility-theoretical criteria can also be used, such as the civic preference for multi-level state systems over unilateralist-absolutist state concepts (of an *empire*), statements on intertemporal civility, on different legal, state and political concepts including electoral systems, on economic policy, religion and science, family and neighbourhood according to civility criteria.

## 4) Civility index

Since the 1970s, indicator systems (indices) on political freedom and democracy have been developed and applied on an international comparative basis. However, the best-known indices of this kind, in particular the Freedom House Index, suffer from the fact that they traditionally present and evaluate conditions in the USA, the country that mainly finances them, in a glossed-over manner.

In contrast, a comparative index structured and operating according to civility criteria should operate strictly independently and transparently in accordance with established procedures. Considerations from the general and specific theory of civility can be used here.

## 5) Explanatory civility analysis

The usual distinction between dependent, intervening and independent variables is also helpful in civility analysis. Civility can thus be analyzed as a dependent variable that is influenced by seemingly independent determinants and intervening variables. However, levels of civility also influence themselves, either by reproducing themselves or by changing. Prevailing relationship logics and interaction styles can therefore be dependent variables as well as independent or intervening explanatory variables. Accordingly, research designs to explain degrees of civility and changes in civility are more complex - a challenge. This involves simultaneous, but also non-simultaneous (before/after) effects especially in process analysis.

## 6) Process analysis based on civility theory

Anyone who examines the history of Germany from the end of the 19th century to the 2020s according to civility criteria can deduce different levels of civility - an approach that initially seems banal with regard to the distinction between times of war and times of peace. However, the logic of narrow interests, power and friend/foe also played a role in formal phases of peace, especially in the run-up to the major world wars. Even in the Weimar Republic, a parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and civil modernity were only able to establish themselves superficially, and with the strengthening and eventual seizure of power by National Socialism, there was a fundamental regression of civility and ultimately a complete loss of civility. After the Second World War, on the other hand, a double structure developed: a) the Cold War against the respective systemic competition (East against West), b) a tendency towards growing civility up to the collapse of the mutual friend-enemy rhetoric - developments that can themselves be explained in terms of civility theory. In the meantime, Putin's relapse into crude power and friend/foe logic foreshadows bad things to come.

## 6) Conflict analysis according to civility criteria

We speak of a conflict when actors are in irreconcilable opposition, for example because they pursue opposing interests or are guided by opposing values. Recognizing such conflicts is often not easy, as those involved and those observing a conflict usually feel close to one party and then tend to make their own view absolute - making an overarching view of the conflict impossible. Civility analysis, in contrast, looks at conflicts systematically, according to their dominant levels of civility and the variables that dominate them:

- In the absence of civility, conflicts are war or warlike. Accordingly, the parties involved must confront violence in the hope of sufficient resistance or else submit or flee.
- In power constellations (of low civility), conflicts are carried out asymmetrically, be it through brutal oppression or destruction of the weaker by the stronger or through specific fighting methods of the (apparently) weaker, for example women.
- In contested situations, conflicts are particularly complex, as there is neither secure power nor secure institutions. Processes can easily self-reinforce to the top or to the bottom.
- In fairly regulated procedures, conflicts are dealt with in a strictly rule-based manner - a form of process in which overarching ties dominate and therefore and that's why we talk about competition or a match rather than a conflict.
- This applies to an even greater extent to forms of developed civility. In these, independent new dimensions, including factual dimensions, dominate. Objective conflicts are transformed into subjective conflict reflection and conflict-related games, including theater, film and other art forms. The arena is no longer determined by conflicts of interest or values, but by forms of playful, reflective coordination.

The concept of conflict is thus relativized through civility analysis.

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