Bringing local perspective into peacebuilding
The case of Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission

VII Internacional Conference on Development Studies
VII REEDES Award for Young Researchers 2024

La perspectiva local en la consolidación de la paz
El caso de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación de Sierra Leona

VII Congreso Internacional de Estudios del Desarrollo:
VII Premio Reedes para Jóvenes Investigadoras/es

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Abstract

After going through an eleven years long violent civil war, Sierra Leone started its peacebuilding process in 2002. This operation has been considered a successful one. In the paper, I focus on one of its instruments: the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC). This body promoted truth telling to establish accountability and to know the needs in society. The aim was to determine to which extent it incorporated the local perspective. To this end, different ways of incorporating the local perspective have been used. At the same time, I also looked at its gender approach, where both successes and shortcomings were found. I conclude that neither of the perspective was well consolidated.

Keywords: peacebuilding, conflicts, human rights, transitional justice, Sierra Leone.

Resumen

Tras once años de guerra civil violenta, Sierra Leona comenzó en 2002 un proceso de consolidación de paz considerado todo un éxito. En este artículo, me centro en uno de sus instrumentos: la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR) de Sierra Leona. Este organismo promovió la búsqueda de la verdad para establecer la rendición de cuentas y conocer las necesidades de la sociedad. El objetivo era determinar en qué medida se incorporaba la perspectiva local. Para ello, se han utilizado diferentes formas de incorporar esta perspectiva local. Al mismo tiempo, también he examinado su enfoque de género, donde se han encontrado tanto éxitos como deficiencias. Concluyo que ninguna de las dos perspectivas se hallaba bien consolidada.

Palabras clave: consolidación de paz, conflictos, derechos humanos, justicia transicional, Sierra Leona.

1
Introduction

Sierra Leone experienced a serious armed conflict from 1992 to 2002, where serious human rights violations occurred. It also exacerbated already high rates, and its violence resulted in 50,000 deaths and the displacement of 2.5 million people. To address all of this, and bring the conflict to an end, the authorities undertook several peacebuilding activities. Most of them took place under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), whose main aim was to build a liberal democratic state. In addition, the local population promoted other actions outside the institutional sphere, in which women played an important role.

However, there was little synergy between them, because the goals of institutional action and the needs of the people were too different. All this hindered the success of the process. Apart from these, there were some actions based on the hybridity of the local and the international, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). My aim is to answer the question of whether this body was an instrument based on the theory of the local turn, or whether it was a hybrid body in which international elements determined its operation. To answer this question, I will explore different ways in which local elements were incorporated into this body.

Peacebuilding measures are of great importance, as they promote the stability necessary to overcome an armed conflict. The failure of liberal peace processes has led to a shift towards courses of different approaches. One of these new approaches is «localisation». Since Sierra Leone has not suffered from another such conflict, I decided to focus on this case. I also focused on the TRC as I felt it could have done a better job of developing localised peacebuilding.

In the paper, I tried to answer the questions of how the Commission incorporated the local perspective. To do this, I first needed to know what localisation was and to understand the body. For that, I carried out a bibliographic analysis of secondary sources. Most of the sources were research papers, but I also looked at international resolutions and standards, as well as some book chapters and reports. Although most of the authors are from the Global North, I have also looked at authors from the Global South; however, I made almost no reference to Sierra Leonean authors. The structure of the paper follows the order of the research questions: first, I explain local peacebuilding and its limitations; then, I briefly describe the TRC; later, I explore the incorporation of local elements into it, and finally I present the main conclusions.

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2
Peacebuilding model
with local and gender approach

The term «peacebuilding» was first used in the UN's *Agenda for Peace,* where it was defined as «action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid the relapse into conflict» (UN 1992). The definition does not provide a set of actions that build peace, and as a result it has been ranged from military intervention to efforts to establish liberal democracy (Newman *et al.* 2009). Due to the failures of liberal peacebuilding at the end of the 20th century, new theories of what constitutes «sustainable peace» have emerged (Trantidis 2022). One of these is the «local turn», where the local perspective has become an analytical focus (MacGinty & Richmond 2013). This theory has led to localised peacebuilding processes, where local elements predominate. In these processes, the local culture seems as equal to that of international agencies.

By incorporating local elements in peacebuilding processes, a better adaptability to the contexts is possible (Jackson & Albrecht 2018). Local agency is the main way to achieve this, as the locals can decide what is a «peaceful society» and how to get there (Leonardsson & Rudd 2015). Local agency legitimizes the role of locals as peacebuilders, and it reduces the international influence in the actions (Rodriguez Iglesias & Rosen 2022). This allows for a horizontal conversation between all the actors involved. As a result, each process will have its own agenda for peace, based on the local everyday life (MacGinty & Richmond 2013). In addition, the concept of the «Other» will be erased as all religious and social groups will be represented in it.

To incorporate the local elements in the peacebuilding process, the usual state-centric approach must be set aside (Jackson & Albrecht 2018). Moreover, the local will not be limited to elites, as has been the case in the past (Leonardsson & Rudd 2015), as every social group will be involved (Van Leeuwen *et al.* 2020). When a large part of society is pushed aside, the results are far from a lasting peace (Jackson & Albrecht 2018). This is because they will show their discontent and hinder peacebuilding efforts. As a result, such actions will not adapt to the changes in society. Although localisation shows some improvements compared to liberal efforts, it still reveals some limitations.

Localisation sometimes perpetuates the dichotomy between the local and international dimensions. They are considered as two different entities and, therefore, the impacts between them are not considered (Heathershaw 2013). Furthermore, these definitions do not consider the different realities and interests within each group, and diverse realities are represented as a uniform group (Jackson

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& Albrecht 2018). This uniformity leads to elites representing the local realities and not communicating the needs and problems at the bottom of society (Paffenholz 2015). In fact, nowadays the local is not only defined by the geographical factors, but also by the cultural factors (Van Leeuwen *et al.* 2020). These cultural factors are civil society, local needs and opportunities and historical legacies (Philipsen 2022). The dichotomy between the local and the international can be overcome by hybridity, where elements of both dimensions work together (Johnson & Hutchinson 2012). Localised peacebuilding does not specify which activities are included in it, and therefore the design of these processes is challenging (Sabaratnam 2010). Finally, there are some liberal nuances in some of the terms used, although the focus is on the local society, and it addresses the power relations (Sabaratnam 2010, Richmond 2022).

Hybridity allows local and international elements to work together as one entity (MacGinty 2010). It is usually referred to as a slow and long process, where two different practices interact until a new one is created, influenced by both. However, in some cases, such bodies are artificially created without this long interaction taking place (Popplewell 2019). This happens because local and international actors, rules, interests, structures, and activities work together towards the same goal (Johnson & Hutchinson 2012). This approach solves problems such as the inability to adapt to the local changes (Johnson & Hutchinson 2012), because the local and international spheres are considered equal (Rodriguez Iglesias & Rosen 2022). Despite this, some scholars argue that it idealizes the local and that this is a phenomenon that has occurred since colonial times (Popplewell 2019). For these authors, hybridity is a consequence of colonialism, and the hidden power relations are not sufficiently explored.

One of the main novelties of localisation is that it gives a voice to the social groups that suffered the most during the conflict, usually women and children (Randazzo 2016). When women have participated in peacebuilding, they have proposed new ways of overcoming conflict (Bulduk *et al.* 2022). They propose solutions to the problems of the bottom tier of society. The gender approach to this theme provides insight into the needs of the different social groups, their different roles, the power relations between them, and their expectations. It also addresses patriarchal social patterns, violence against women and gender inequalities to promote better policies (McNamee 2021). In addition, lasting peace is built when the views of more groups are considered (George 2018).

The failure of the liberal path demonstrated the need to change peacebuilding practices. To this end, part of the Academy opted for the local turn, resulting in localised processes. Incorporating local culture, values and needs is more effective in addressing the root causes of conflict. One way of doing this is through hybridity, where elements of both spheres are incorporated into a single

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intervention. This ensures access to international resources but adapts them to the conflict-affected context. This, together with the gender approach, can contribute to building sustainable peace. However, there are some limitations that need to be considered, to design better processes in the future.

3
The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone focused on three aspects: building strong democratic institutions, political-economic reforms, and strengthening the security sector (Karbo 2012). These were like previous such operations, so the institutional activities were the same ones. Those were applied without adapting them to the Sierra Leonean context (Kormoh 2016). In fact, the centralized vision of those reduced their effectiveness (Karbo 2012), because some social groups were misrepresented or not included (Koroma 2012). In response, the civil society established some other activities that did not have liberal actions (Pemunta, 2012). The civil society also played a major role in the establishment of the Commission, even though it was an institutional effort (Ekiyor 2009). These decentralized actions were appropriate to the context of Sierra Leone and were meant to respond to social needs (Koroma 2012).

Although the process had several actions, I will focus on only one of the institutional actions: the TRC. This, together with the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL), tried the main event of the conflict (Tejan-Cole 2009). Because of their objectives, they were supported by international organisations (Friedman 2015). Although their work overlapped (Tejan-Cole 2009), they had complementary approaches (Benavides *et al.* 2018). Therefore, it was possible to successfully stop impunity by combining both without compromising other measures (Moghalu 2009). The SCSL had a punitive approach and brought the main perpetrators to justice (Tejan-Cole 2009), while the TRC had no punitive means (Benavides *et al.* 2018). The former was established in the Lomé Peace Agreement, when the conflict was still ongoing, and this influenced its path. This was because they wanted to cease violence and, at the same time, halt impunity (Benavides *et al.* 2018, Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission Statute 2000). To this end, the Commission produced an impartial document that presented all the events of the conflict and identified the perpetrators.

The body had both local and international elements, but the participation of local activists and institutions was very limited, compared to that of UN staff (Friedman 2017). The commissioners were an example of hybridity, as they were both national and international people, four and three respectively (Boraine 2009, Dough-

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erty 2004). The national commissioners were Joseph Humper, the President; Laura Marcus Jones, a Judge of the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone; John Kamara, the Principal of the Njala University College, and Sylvanus Torto, a Professor at the University of Sierra Leone. The international commissioners were Yasmin Sooka, who previously worked on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Ajaaratou Satang Jow, former education minister in Gambia, and William Schabas, director of the International Human Rights Centre at the University of Ireland. The president was criticised, due to his links to the government (Boraine 2009, Dougherty 2004). The local population did not know them, which hindered its functioning (Friedman 2017). In addition, the body was unable to carry out all its tasks, as it had more than expected.

The activities of the TRC were divided into three steps: collection of statements, public hearings, and report writing (Benavides *et al.* 2018, Ekiyor 2009). They were able to collect 10,000 statements from people who played different roles (victims, perpetrators, and witnesses). The public hearings addressed the main human rights violations and, as the main victims were women and children, their participation was encouraged (Dougherty 2004, Sooka 2009). To this end, both were protected as much as possible, but still women were stigmatized, and children were re-traumatized (Benavides *et al.* 2018). The final report was able to accurately capture the events of the conflict and identify key needs.

The Commission had to face some problems from its inception, because the interim secretariat that selected the commissioners was politically driven (Sooka 2009, Ekiyor 2009, Hirsch 2009). The election of the President is an example of that (Friedman 2017). Even though the government was criticized in the final report, its influence threatened the legitimacy of the body. In addition, the blanket amnesty granted to the rebels (Sriram 2009, Boraine 2009) reduced their participation (Mackenzie & Sesay 2012). This showed that the Commission was not collecting all views on the conflict. Furthermore, the local people did not understand how the body worked (Shaw 2005), which reduced their participation. However, the awareness raising campaigns made them understand it, but by then it was too late (Ekiyor 2009). As a result, both the local people and staff were frustrated.

As mentioned earlier, there was another body with the same task: the SCSL. Both bodies had the same jurisdiction, meaning that they had to investigate the same events, but with different approaches (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2004, Tejan-Cole 2009). The SCSL had more international support and was granted more funding, $56 million, while the TRC received only $4 million (Anders 2015, Sooka 2009). As a result, the Court was more efficient in its performance (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2004). There were no problems between the two until 2003 (Tejan-Cole 2009, Hirsch 2009). In that year,

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the TRC requested that some SCSL detainees be allowed to appear before it, but this was refused. Although both bodies were at the same level (International Centre for Transitional Justice 2004), this refusal led people to believe that the Commission was inferior (Hirsch 2009).

In Sierra Leone, no new violent conflict has happened since the end of the peacebuilding process, which is a sign of its success. However, there have been some shortcomings, which I will discuss in the next section. Overcoming them would help to build more localized institutions and probably a more durable peace.

4
Was the TRC a local peacebuilding instrument?

In this section, I will look at different theories to define what «localisation» is and what it involves. I will use these theories to measure the incorporation of the local perspective, to assess the balance between local and international elements.

4.1. The TRC as a social megaphone

Firstly, I am going to focus on the participation of the local people in the TRC and look at the situation of those who have suffered the most in the conflict. According to Elisa Randazzo (2016), «localization» happens when the silenced people are heard, usually women, youth and children. The Commission had to contribute to building peace and establishing responsibilities, this social mandate encouraged local participation (Friedman 2015). Despite the problems previously analysed, the local participation was high, because people did not want a new conflict to happen. Thanks to the high level of participation, the social needs were identified, and appropriate recommendations were formulated. The willingness of the declarants to propose changes to improve their situation and how to do so also helped (Schabas 2006). These proposals concerned how to strengthen the education, health and agriculture sectors.

The TRC should have been a welcoming and accessible body, so that everyone's vision was considered, and all events were recorded. However, while international elements were central to the composition and design of the body, local elements were scarce (Svärd 2010). This made it difficult for local to participate comfortably. Nevertheless, there were some elements that followed the local tradition, such as the acts of forgiveness (Kelsall 2005). Here, the aggressors asked for forgiveness and the victim forgave, often because of the atmosphere created around them. Encouragement from local authorities and religious leaders encouraged participation and facilitated reconciliation.

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Initially, the local population did not understand the purpose of the body (Sooka 2009), but, through daily media coverage, they did, and participation increased, with around 10,000 statements collected (Ekiyor 2009). This shows the willingness of Sierra Leoneans to share their views on the conflict and its aftermath (Ajetunmobi 2011). As people of all roles (aggressors, victims, and mere witnesses) participated, the content of the final report was very broad.

The statements to the Commission were made by representatives from all the provinces, to gather as much information about the events as possible (Millar 2011). Testifiers were selected to ensure that the widest range of views on the conflict were collected, and the widest range of needs were identified. Testimonies were made in schools or town halls in the provincial capitals. There were many foreigners there, as some of the commissioners and many of the evidence collectors were not Sierra Leoneans. This hindered the participation of some marginalized groups, although women were given special spaces (Sooka 2009).

Women were very important to the Commission, because they suffered the most (Ekiyor 2009). However, the neoliberal principles only dealt with the situation in general, and no individual consideration was allowed (Unobe 2022, Sooka 2009). In addition, women were further disadvantaged by the fact that violence in the private sphere was outside the jurisdiction of the TRC. The UN made proposals to incorporate the gender approach, so that women's voices could be heard (Menzel 2020, Boraine 2009). Special spaces were created for women to do this (Sooka 2009); for example, testimonies on sexual violence were held behind closed doors (Boraine 2009). The TRC was the first body of this kind with a clear gender approach, thanks to these spaces and the rejection of the linear vision (Sarkin & Ackerman 2019). Nevertheless, women did not trust its protection, which reduced their participation; subsequently, only 36 % of the statements were made by women (Andrews 2016).

Women did not describe their individual experiences during the conflict, to avoid reliving their suffering. Furthermore, women did not make statements about sexual violence, because some believed it could hinder reconciliation (Graybill 2011), and others, because they feared retribution and stigmatization (Ekiyor 2009). The needs expressed around sexual violence were particularly important (Andrews 2016). Women conveyed the need for new legislation, to ensure support and protection for victims of sexual abuse were guaranteed. These were included in the recommendations of the Commission's Final Report. In addition, a legal system that considers their situation was recommended, to reduce the stigma suffered by women who report sexual violence suffered (Graybill 2011). Other recommendations called for addressing the wide gender inequalities. While violence against women remains a major problem in Sierra Leone (Ekiyor 2009), the gender approach in the organ is undeniable.

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Sierra Leone was the first country where children were not held accountable for their crimes in court (Moghalu 2009). Instead, they only participated in the TRC, where the protection of their human rights was promoted (Parmar 2010). Consequently, the body had a special mandate to protect them (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2000). In addition to the violence, they lost many years of education, their family support and their livelihoods (Parmar 2010); moreover, young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years lost the protection they had before the conflict and were excluded from society. To address this, and to encourage their testimonies, special conditions were designed for children and young people. Children, because of their special needs and helplessness, had a different status when they testified: they were always accompanied by their family and had people who were always ready to help them (Schabas 2006). Even if their participation was small, all these measures ensured it (Moghalu 2009). However, some children undergoing indigenous purification ceremonies were not allowed to participate (Ekiyor 2009).

The situation for victims and witnesses was similar, but perpetrators had special conditions. These were set up to encourage the participation of ex-combatants, as they made up a large part of the population (Ajetunmobi 2011). They were allowed to share why they participated in the conflict, and others could understand them, which promoted reconciliation (Friedman 2015). Despite the risk it involved, their participation was high, due to the benefits it offered (Shaw 2005). Children were also considered aggressors, so they benefited from these advantages (Souris 2017). Nevertheless, in some communities, children were not forgiven, because of the great damage they had caused, which slowed down their reintegration (McQueen 2019). To address this, and to ensure the effectiveness of the interventions, their testimonies were disseminated. Female warriors did not benefit from the above, because the Commission did not consider them aggressors (Cullen 2020). In addition, male soldiers hid them, so that more of their friends could benefit from the ex-combatant support measures (Sooka 2009).

On the one hand, the voices of children and women were collected, although there were some shortcomings. On the other hand, their testimonies did not reach many people (Hirsch 2009, Boraine 2009). This limited the impact of the Commission's work. The main shortcomings I have identified in this subsection are the abundant presence of international elements and the lack of recognition of women combatants. Considering everything explored in this subsection, the Commission fulfilled its role as a social megaphone.

4.2. Consequences of the Commission in society

The second analysis I am going to make is about the Commission's ability to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people (Brigg

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& George 2020). On the one hand, I will analyse whether their material needs were met and, on the other hand, whether one of the Commission's objectives was achieved: reconciliation of society. In the previous sub-section, I pointed out that the Commission collected a lot of testimonies; thus, revealing the main human rights violations and main needs of the population (Cahill-Ripley 2014).

After the conflict, the inequality of Sierra Leoneans deepened, and the country continued to be one of the most unequal in the world. From the inception of the Commission, it was clear that the Sierra Leoneans needed material compensation to overcome the conflict. To this end, the body offered some financial compensation for testifying there, but this was not enough (Amstrong & Ntegeye 2006). This is another of the shortcomings of the TRC that hindered the reconciliation process. This institution did not respond directly to the needs of the people; instead, in its final report, it made several recommendations that the government had to fulfil (Friedman 2015, Sooka 2009); for example, it recommended providing public housing, strengthening the education system, improving the health system, and supporting agricultural development.

The work of the TRC was, by design, limited to making recommendations. It was supposed to identify the social needs and make recommendations on how to address them, but it was the government that was responsible for implementing them (Amstrong & Ntegeye 2006, Sooka 2009). This halted the positive momentum generated by the institution. Furthermore, the expectations that the Sierra Leoneans had of the body were not met (Ajetunmobi 2011). This deficiency was prevalent among women and children (Cahill-Ripley 2014).

The needs of women in relation to gender-based violence were identified and measures were proposed to confront the patriarchal regulatory system (Park 2006, Sooka 2009). The recommendations addressed issues that were not addressed in the formal peacebuilding process, such as enforcing the gender approach in the institutions and designing educational programmes for women (Valji 2012). However, these were not enough, and gender inequality persisted (Menzel 2020). In addition, violence against women persisted, because men could not adapt themselves to the new role of women (Unobe 2020). Furthermore, the TRC did not connect women to an international support network as they had expected, which was another shortcoming (Kennedy 2018).

A similar situation occurred with children and young people, as the Commission did not meet their expectations (Shaw 2005). Although the body emphasized their importance in promoting peace and stability, they were not involved as much as they should have (Mateos 2012). They were only targeted by disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration activities, which did not solve their prob-

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lems (Parmar 2010). Their livelihoods continued to be linked to violence and to jobs that did not respect their human rights, such as mining. As a result, they continued to be excluded from society and reintegration was not achieved (Parmar 2010, McQueen 2019). As with women, the TRC did not meet the expectations of youth and children who wanted to gain access to international support networks (Parmar 2010).

The TRC was only responsible for identifying the people's needs and accompanying the healing process. However, the local population was not aware of this, and they thought it was a way to meet their material needs (Kennedy 2018), but the organ's resources were not enough to achieve this as these were so great (Svärd 2010). Instead, the organ tried to convey the message that it was a place where everyone's truth could be stated to facilitate the reconciliation process (Kennedy 2018, Ekiyor 2009, Hirsch 2009). This resulted in the inability of the Commission to meet people's expectations, which hindered the reconciliation process it was supposed to promote. In addition, many people believed that the Commission was the investigative arm of the Court, which increased the distrust of the people (Sooka 2009, Boraine 2009).

Implementing the recommendations of the Final Report would be enough to overcome inequalities in Sierra Leone. However, they were not implemented, and inequalities remained, hindering the total peace that the Commission sought. According to Gearoid Millar (2011), total peace is like a home, not just a building, but a place where everyday life is lived. Therefore, total peace will be achieved when everyone can carry out their daily tasks without fear. Because the structural inequalities persisted, total peace was not achieved in Sierra Leone.

The Commission wanted to achieve reconciliation, but as I said it did not happen. Even when the truth was told and the root causes of the conflict were identified, not everyone was satisfied and, therefore, reconciliation was delayed (Mateos 2012). The body promoted three types of reconciliation (Friedman 2015): the individual, between aggressors and victims; the communal, between aggressors and the community, and the national, which takes place when the nation is rebuilt. In addition, Joseph Humper, President of the Commission, stated that intra-reconciliation, the forgiveness of ex-combatants with themselves, was also necessary. If they did not forgive themselves, he said, the rest of the reconciliation would not be possible.

For total reconciliation, all people with all their identities had to participate, but as mentioned before some identities were not recognized (Sooka 2009). Furthermore, some of the perpetrators of the conflict did not participate, which shows that not everyone benefited from the reconciliation (Friedman 2015). The traditional events of forgiveness acted as a kind of individual reconciliation

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tool between aggressors and victims (Kelsall 2005). Often, this only happened because of the atmosphere surrounding the act, but it helped to promote communal and national reconciliation.

4.3. Institutional analysis of the Commission

In this sub-section, I will analyse the hybridization of the body, following the classification made by Gearoid Millar (2014). According to her, there are four types of hybridization: institutional, practical, ritual, and conceptual. The first type refers to institutions with greater international influence, where the design and planning are in the hands of international agents and local elements are scarce. The second type, practical hybridization, refers to the situations where the design of the process is in the hands of local agents, but international ones must accept it. The third type, ritual hybridization, emphasizes the importance of local culture, and external elements are scarce. Finally, conceptual hybridization is determined by daily activities, where international and local spheres are mixed spontaneously, so it cannot be planned.

The TRC was established by the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999, while the conflict was still ongoing. This demonstrated the willingness of the population to end it (Hollis 2015). All parties had equal power to influence its content, even the rebels, and therefore civil society showed some resistance (Amstrong & Ntegeye 2006, Tejan-Cole 2009). Nonetheless, civil society played a key role in the establishment of this body and was empowered by this participation (Ekiyor 2009). Nevertheless, its constitution was influenced by international actors, to meet international standards (Friedman 2015), as they wanted to stop impunity in Sierra Leone (Hirsch 2009). This limited somehow the local participation.

Since UN was the main financial supporter, the international elements were more than the local ones (Anders 2015). For this reason, the foreign elements conditioned its formation and design, and they were central to its operation. Their influence can be seen in the fact that the Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Sierra Leone and the High Commissioner for Human Rights elected three of the commissioners. Local authorities were less able to provide funding, which limited local agency (Schabas 2006).

Another limitation to the localisation was the tradition that the body followed: the South African Truth Commission. This one promoted the importance of truth-telling to achieve peace (Kennedy 2018), which was a novelty for the local population. They did not understand it to overcome the conflict, and this limited their agency (Ekiyor 2009). Meanwhile, the promoters of the Commission emphasised the importance of a shared narrative, as has been done in South Africa (Millar 2011). However, according to Rosalind Shaw (2007), the Sierra Leonean instrument was a new kind of such in-

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strument, because it incorporated more local elements. Indeed, the government played a greater role in shaping its composition.

The commissioners were a hybrid component, as they were both local and foreign, in accordance with Article XXVI of the Lomé Peace Agreement. The members had to be accepted by both the international and local decision makers, which was not a problem until the election of the president (Friedman 2015). The government's candidate, who was not accepted by external actors, was elected. However, as civil society was not involved in any decision, this cannot be considered as an indication of local agency (Menzel 2020). In Liberia, local agency was greater, because no member was elected before the opinion of the local population was sought (Amstrong & Ntegeye 2006), which they could have done here.

Local perspectives are not incorporated into the process until hybridization occurs in everyday life (Millar 2014). Indeed, the local tradition should have been more important than the international influence in the Commission, so that its impact could reach everyday life. The fact that this did not happen shows that the Commission was only an example of practical hybridization. Not only did the international actors have a greater control over it, but it also did not influence the everyday life in Sierra Leone. Everything analysed in this subsection demonstrates the lack of local ownership of the body (Ekiyor 2009).

A better example of a hybrid body with a wider local perspective was that of Fambul Tok. The Commission did not achieve total reconciliation and some of the social problems remained, as I have said. Some private initiatives were set up to deal with them, of which Fambul Tok was one of the most important (Martin 2021). This NGO was established in 2007, and it went to the places that the TRC did not reach (Friedman 2017). It mainly worked in the 10 provinces where the Commission has worked less, especially in Kailahun, Koinadugu, and Pujehun. Its name translates as «family talk», and it is based on the traditional local reconciliation. In it, victims and perpetrators faced each other around a fire to experience a process of forgiveness and reconciliation, with the former regaining his or her dignity (Bøås & Tom 2016). Compared to the TRC, this initiative shows a greater respect for the local tradition (Langer 2017), so it can be seen as an example of ritual hybridity.

4.4. Frictions between the local and the international

Hybrid instruments or techniques overcome the understanding of the local and the international as two different spheres, because they work together towards the same goal. However, there is sometimes friction between them, as their visions clash (MacGinty 2010). In this sub-section, I will analyse some of these in the TRC.

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The first friction was over the concept of «justice», something that occurs in almost all peacebuilding processes (Sriram 2009). While the international agents wanted to establish accountability, the Sierra Leoneans did not see this as justice (Millar 2011). The international actors wanted to replicate the South African Truth Commission and did not understand the local tradition. Not all Sierra Leoneans wanted to tell the truth to achieve peace, but they rather advocated for a forgive and forget attitude (Kennedy 2018, Ekiyor 2009). While the Commission was trying to promote truth-telling, communities were encouraging their people to forgive ex-combatants and forget what happened during the conflict. As a result, there was less testimony about what happened in the conflict and more about their needs, which was not what the Commission wanted (Kelsall 2005). This hindered the reconciliation that the Commission wanted, because they did not know everything that had happened in the conflict. People were focused on looking forward and promoting economic development. The TRC made some efforts to communicate its benefits, but this was not enough and sometimes it was too late (Kennedy 2018, Ekiyor 2009).

The design of the organ did not allow for the incorporation of local knowledge, which prevented the incorporation of local traditions and hindered reconciliation (Svärd 2010). This happened because the organ was a cosmopolitan organisation with no space for different wisdom (Kennedy 2018). Even the local representatives had no influence to implement the local tradition in their work. The only events that were celebrated following local tradition were funerals, commemorations, and the like. This shows that there were also some cultural frictions.

But the biggest friction between the international and local authorities was the amnesty. The amnesty was a decision by the local government that the international agents did not agree with (MacKenzie & Sesay 2012). The rebels would not accept any agreement if it did not include an amnesty, as they argued that facing the consequences of the conflicts was the only way to achieve peace. However, the international agencies did not agree with it, and they promoted the creation of the TRC and the SCSL, to try the events of the war (Hirsch 2009). The SCSL was a response to the continuous attacks by the rebels, despite the amnesty (Tejan-Cole 2009) and had more international support, due to its punitive approach (Hollis 2015). In principle, the amnesty would depend on the objectives of the actions, but in the end all events were included (MacKenzie & Sesay 2012, Sriram 2009), due to the way the peace agreement negotiation was conducted (Hirsch 2009).

The amnesty helped people participate in the Commission, because participants did not fear reprisals (MacKenzie & Sesay 2012). Not only that, but it also helped because there was no requirement to report anyone in the statement. While in South Africa the amnesty was conditional on making a statement, in Sierra Leone

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a blanket amnesty was granted (Sriram 2009, Boraine 2009). As a result, many perpetrators did not come forward, because they had no incentive to do so (Mackenzie & Sesay 2012). In consequence, victims and witnesses were trusted to construct the full story.

Although there was more friction, it demonstrates the influence of international elements had in shaping the body. Local people wanted to deal with the aftermath of the conflict and forget the war, but foreign interests forced them to do just the opposite. Even if the outcome was positive, the local agency should have been greater to talk about a localized instrument. This shows the power of international culture had in shaping the instrument. Amnesty was the instrument that best matched the vision of a large part of the local society. Nevertheless, the international influence and some local organisations reshaped it to suit international interests. As a result, the process promoted truth telling and the trial of the main events, which differed from the local vision.

5
Conclusions

After war, every country needs peace, to move forward and overcome the consequences of it. The various peace-building processes have shown that not every kind of peace guarantees this outcome. After the failure of liberal operations, the Academy has developed the theory of the local turn. The theory has led to localisation, *i.e.,* processes where local elements predominate. The peacebuilding operations in Sierra Leone followed an institutional course to deal with the violence of the war. However, it failed to address social needs which reduced its legitimacy. In fact, the civil society had to promote other types of action to address these problems.

Among the institutional actions with almost no local elements promoted by the government, there were some hybrid ones, such as the TRC. My analysis shows that the local elements included were less important than the international ones. I have considered various approaches to make this analysis, but all of them have some shortcomings in terms of incorporating the local perspective. The only exception here is that the body allowed the silenced social groups to express their needs, their perspectives on the conflict and their suggestions on how to overcome it. The Commission did a very honest job of listening to the voices of those who have suffered the most from the conflict, such as women, youth, and children. This is clear when analysing the content of the Final Report, where the Commission did a good job of listing the needs that were expressed to it.

Although the Commission identified the social needs, it could not respond to them. This is a clear shortcoming in the inclusion of the

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local perspective. There were two main reasons for this: on the one hand, the Commission was only responsible for identifying the needs, not for responding to them; secondly, it did not have the financial means to do so. It was up to the government to implement the recommendations of the TRC, and it failed to do so. The people did not understand that the TRC was only responsible for identifying their needs, and this was because the body was not able to communicate its functions properly. As a result, the body created some expectations that could not be met. This raised a new question that needed to be answered, to come to a better conclusion: if the Commission was not able to communicate its tasks accurately, does this mean that it did not adequately consider the local perspective? In my opinion, the answer is «yes». The miscommunication created false expectations, which is one of the ways in which the local perspective is miscommunicated. Even if the government had to do it, the fact that the population believed that the Commission was responsible is one of the biggest weaknesses of this body.

The main needs identified in the Final Report were related to the youth and children. However, the only measures taken to improve their situation were disarmament and reintegration policies. As their situation remained insecure, they continued to work in dangerous jobs, mostly in mining, where their human rights were not respected. In the paper, I have not gone into details about their situation, but the points I have made show that the young people were not a priority in the formal process.

Another shortcoming was the influence of international agencies on the TRC in defining its components and the way in which it was to be conducted. This happened because the body was heavily dependent on international funding, particularly from the UN. The international influence also determined who would represent the local society in the formal activities and these were the local elites. So, there were some difficulties in identifying some needs. International agents also played an important role in the drafting of the Lomé Peace Agreement. However, the President of the Commission was appointed by the government and did not represent the local views. All this demonstrates the lack of representation of Sierra Leoneans in the body.

Furthermore, some of the activities that could contribute to the localisation were discarded by the TRC. One of the main examples is that they made it compulsory for the people participating in the body to recall the events of the conflict, when the local people wanted to forget and forgive. Most of the local people wanted to express their needs to overcome the war without assigning blame. This approach was more in line with the amnesty included in the peace agreement, which the panel did not fully respect. The truth-telling process meant that women, young people, and children were revictimized as they had to testify against their will. On the contrary, the soldiers were allowed to tell their stories, which allowed

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their neighbours to understand why they did what they did. Apart from revictimization, women and young girls were sometimes stigmatized, because of what they had suffered in the conflict. This shows that the Commission was appropriate for one section of society, but there were huge gaps for the majority.

In conclusion, the Sierra Leone TRC took some steps towards incorporating the local perspective in such bodies. However, there were some major gaps that should be addressed to future commissions to be more localized. Moreover, addressing these shortcomings will help to achieve the main goal of such operations: lasting peace.

6
Acknowledgements

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