

Centre of Sierra Leone Studies – Anthropology

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<http://www.sv.uio.no/sai/english/research/projects/overheating/research/pijpers-description.html> - dated 2013.

Hot spots: Land and the three crises of globalisation in up-country Sierra Leone

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Hot-spots. Due to an increasing transnational interest in land, various areas in developing countries are becoming hotspots, contested spaces characterized by accelerated change and a growing density of activities of claims. This research aims to scrutinize such a hot-spot: the Northern Province of Sierra Leone, an extremely vibrant area; full of possibilities, expectations and disappointments.

In the past, Sierra Leone has experienced periods of economic growth, but after a long civil war the country entered the 21st century destroyed and impoverished, with a dwindling economy, which (in the rural areas) mainly depends on subsistence-level livelihoods, for example small scale trade, subsistence farming and fishery. However, driven by global developments, such as the depletion of natural resources, the global food crisis and climate change agenda, the area under study has recently become the stage of an increasing transnational interest in land. The research project will focus on two large-scale land-acquisitions that epitomize these transnational developments.

Interestingly, land acquisitions are framed both as a promise and a problem. On the one hand, they are framed, portrayed and seen as solutions to global crisis and triggers for development. A promise for developing countries specifically, where job creation and value addition is much needed, as well as a promise for global challenges. On the other hand land-acquisitions can be seen as a problem, triggering or enforcing increased pressure on land and livelihoods.

This project concentrates on the nexus between land-acquisitions as both promises and problems. While doing so, the project analyses the multiplicity of articulations of the three crises of globalization in the realms of economy, environment and culture. Critical in this analysis are notions of value, power and the future. What kinds of values are attributed to land and land-related activities? Which power-discourses are at stake, which persons or institutions are claiming and given authority, and by whom? What futures are formulated and based on which principles, and how are these future projects turned into concrete situations.

The analysis will be guided by the following general research questions:

How do processes of land-acquisitions in up-country Sierra Leone trigger overheating and create contested spaces?

How do people and networks of people perceive the three crises of globalization in the realms of economy,

environment and culture? And following on this perception, how do these same stakeholders deal with anticipate on the consequences of the three crises?

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Biography

Paul Basu received his PhD in Anthropology at University College London, where he was a member of the Material Culture Research Group. His doctoral research was concerned with genealogical heritage tourism and the historical imagination in the Scottish Highland diaspora. His regional specialization has subsequently been focused in West Africa, and particularly in Sierra Leone, where he continues to work on issues around landscape, memory and cultural heritage. Most recently Paul has been working in Nigeria, retracing the itineraries of the colonial anthropologist N. W. Thomas. Paul was Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at Sussex University, before returning to UCL to take up a Readership in Material Culture and Museum Studies. He became Professor of Anthropology and Cultural Heritage at UCL prior to joining SOAS in 2015. Before becoming an anthropologist, Paul trained and worked as a filmmaker, and he continues to explore the use of different media in ethnographic research and exhibition curation.

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Paul Richards was a member of the UCL Anthropology Department from 1980 until 2006. Now retired from teaching, he continues research in Sierra Leone and Liberia, especially on post-war adaptive transitions in farming communities. Recent work includes socio-economic baseline studies of communities living around the Gola forest in Liberia and Sierra Leone intended to provide a basis for conservation-oriented livelihoods interventions. He is updating a longitudinal study of two communities in eastern and central Sierra Leone where long-term fieldwork has been conducted for the past 30 years. He also contributes to a large-scale comparative study of farmer seed selection strategies for rice across several West African countries, in cooperation with plant scientists. This work has identified a substantial number of farmer-selected inter-specific rice hybrids and other robust local cultivars relevant to local agricultural adaptation in an era of climate change. Recent publications include:

1. Grijspaarde, H., Voors, M., Bulte, E., and Richards, P., 2013. Who believes in witches? Institutional flux in Sierra Leone, *African Affairs* 112/446, 22-47
2. Mokuwa, A., Nuijten, E., Teeken, B., Maat, H., Richards, P., and Struik, P., 2013. Robustness and strategies of adaptation within farmer varieties of African rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) and Asian rice (*Oryza sativa*) across West Africa., *PLoS ONE* 8(3): e34801 (doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0034801, published online 1st March).

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2. PAUL RICHARDS 2005, 'La terre ou le fusil? Les racines agraires des conflits de la region du fleuve Mano', *Afrique Contemporaine*, No. 214, 2005, 37-57

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University of North Texas – Professor Doug Henry, Associate Professor

<http://anthropology.unt.edu/>

University of Berkeley, California – has members who work on matters related to society within Sierra Leone.

<http://anthropology.berkeley.edu/faculty>

<http://www.ebola-anthropology.net/> a platform dedicated to research on Ebola and its effects on society

<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1055/from-retribution-to-restoration-in-sierra-leone-fambul-toks-drive-to-heal-post-civil-communities>

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Between 1991 and 2002, the small West African coastal state of Sierra Leone was rocked by a brutal [civil war](#), which killed, injured, displaced, and traumatized millions of men, women, and children. In the aftermath of the [conflict](#), local political elites combined with intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations to establish the international-domestic Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC); they hoped that these hybrid bodies would respectively bring the war's chief perpetrators to justice and address victims' needs while

creating a record of past atrocities for posterity. Unfortunately, many Sierra Leonean citizens criticized these high-level institutions for possessing more symbolic than practical value and crucially failing to repair rural communities ripped asunder by loss and suspicion.

“The family tree bends, but it does not break.” - Sierra Leonean Proverb

This paper examines the birth, growth, and work of a grassroots Sierra Leonean organization named Fambul Tok (“family talk” in the national [language](#) of Krio), which has attempted to compensate for the shortcomings of the SPSL and TRC by reviving ancient communal traditions of truth-telling, apology, and forgiveness.

It demonstrates that the Fambul Tok model embraces many of the restorative justice paradigm’s core values and approaches, including its broad conception of harm, victim-centeredness, and bottom-up orientation; it argues that these facets account for the model’s overall effectiveness thus far. At the same time, though, this paper briefly addresses the limitations of the model at hand and makes recommendations as to how it could be modified to more effectively fulfil community needs in Sierra Leon and other parts of the African continent.

Eleven Years of Acute Turmoil

Sierra Leonean communal traditions such as Fambul Tok were in decline long before the de facto commencement of civil strife. Jubilation at gaining independence from Great Britain in 1961—following one and a half centuries of colonial rule—quickly gave way to disenchantment with chronic political instability precipitated by successive military regimes (Sesay, 2014).

“Decades of government mismanagement and [corruption](#) twinned with the strains of neoliberal structural adjustment, political repression within a single-party state, and the bankruptcy of institutions of justice and governance” (Park, 2010, p. 96) came to a head in 1991; the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)—a rebel militia comprised, in part, of fighters loyal to future Liberian president Charles Taylor—mobilized to seize control of the country. Importantly for the purposes of this paper, the RUF concentrated its attacks not on the national capital of Freetown but rather “isolated towns and villages... [and] farmers and artisanal diamond miners in rural areas” (Høiland, 2012, p. 33).

Despite intermittent lulls in fighting and sporadic moves toward peace and [democracy](#), “the war lingered on, fuelled by [power](#) struggles and corruption within the government, intense criticism of the dubious rules played by private security agencies from [South Africa](#) and Britain, contested claims within the [diamond] mining industry [which funded and/or instigated much of the conflict], and the complicated role of the remaining RUF in negotiations with the seemingly revolving door central government” (Høiland, 2012, p. 33).

Ordinary, rurally-based Sierra Leoneans bore the heaviest burdens imposed by these controversies and obstacles to a permanent cessation of hostilities:

“10,000 children were captured [by military forces on both sides], tens of thousands of women and girls were raped, more than 2 million Sierra Leoneans were displaced from their homes and communities, and an estimated 10,000 suffered mass amputations” (Høiland, 2012, p. 33).

Flawed Top-Down Legal Instruments for Post-war Reconstruction

Sierra Leone’s national government began disarming rebels and declared the war officially over between May of 2001 and January of 2002 (“Sierra Leone profile,” 2014). Seeking to prevent a relapse into chaos, it controversially offered all but a few of the war’s most notorious combatants blanket amnesty (Høiland, 2012, p. 33). With the backing of the [United Nations](#), it then established the SCSL “to prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law” (UN/Government of Sierra Leone as cited in Park, 2010, p. 97).

Based out of Freetown, the SCSL tried to reach out to rural communities, with prosecutors traveling to the country’s many provinces to listen to grievances; it also endeavoured to use its hybridity to strike a balance between local customs and international norms and established international legal milestones for the treatment of children and women in post-conflict societies (Park, 2010, pp. 98-99). However, many Sierra Leoneans criticized the court for indicting just thirteen men, a “puzzling” decision considering “the enormous scale of atrocities committed during the war” (Høiland, 2012, p. 33).

They thus construed it as more of a symbolic gesture than a true vehicle for justice and an expensive symbol at that: the SCSL spent approximately \$200 million on litigation (Høiland, 2012, p. 33), money that many believed “could be better used for other [public] objectives” (Fritz and Smith as cited in Park, 2010, p. 98). The Court additionally came under fire for only trying crimes perpetrated after 30 November 1996; having no jurisdiction over crimes committed by peacekeeper; and, for the most part, deliberating far away from the persons and communities most affected by the war (Park, 2010, p. 97). Needless to say, these sentiments echo critiques of the retributive justice paradigm as a whole, as articulated by Howard Zehr and other restorative justice scholars.

Zehr contends that the criminal justice process neglects the needs of both victims and offenders, if not actively compounds their injuries (2005); in a similar vein, sociologist Augustine S.J. Park sees the SCSL’s perceived and actual failings as further proof that

“adversarial processes are an obstacle to unveiling the truth, and trials are a barrier to narrating a shared history in which victims are vindicated, and through which reconciliation is made possible” (2010, p. 99).

Possibly cognizant of the SCSL’s limitations, the Parliament of Sierra Leone established the TRC to ““create an impartial record of violations and abuses of [human rights](#) and international humanitarian law [and] to address impunity, to respond to the needs of victims, to promote healing and reconciliation, and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered”” (qtd. in Høiland, 2012, p. 33). These goals are much more compatible with the restorative process; in fact, restorative theorists Mark Umbreit and Marilyn P. Armour hail the value of the South African TRC—

upon which the Sierra Leonean commission was based—as “part of the healing process for victims of political violence” in diverse contexts (2011, p. 13).

Furthermore, the Sierra Leonean TRC was successful—at least to a point—at fulfilling its self-described mission: not unlike the SCSL, it worked to be accessible to the general populace and explicitly sought to channel the voices of “women and girls, children, amputees, and ex-combatants” (Park, 2010, p. 100). Once again, though, Sierra Leoneans were underwhelmed by the TRC’s staffing, short-term focus, and removal from rural communities: they criticized local commissioners for their political affiliations and their international counterparts for failing to fully appreciate local conditions and challenges; they also chided its reluctance to conduct public hearings in any of Sierra Leone’s provinces for more than a week and alleged that it was more concerned with facilitating hasty truth-telling than fostering long-term reconciliation (Park, 2010, p. 100).

Fambul Tok - “Discussing and Resolving Issues Within the Security of the Family Circle”

Human rights activist John Caulker was one of many Sierra Leoneans frustrated by the SCSL and the TRC. He probably had more reason to be unsatisfied than most: as a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Working Group (TRCWG), he made recommendations for the addition of a community justice component and the creation of mini-commissions in rural villages that were summarily dismissed by his peers (Høiland, 2012, p. 34). Exasperated and exhausted, he took a break from activism in the fall of 2007 to complete a human rights fellowship at Columbia University in New York City.

While Caulker was in New York, Caulker met Elisabeth “Libby” Hoffman, the founder and president of Catalyst for Peace, a US-based private foundation that “mobilizes locally owned and locally led peace-building initiatives and then shares those stories with the world” (Høiland, 2012, p. 34). Even though they come from vastly different cultural, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds, Caulker and Hoffman both saw (and continue to see) the “immeasurable value of trusting the wisdom of communities [to build peace in a just way] rather than seeking to dictate solutions” (Høiland, 2012, p. 35).

In contrast to the arguably imperialistic retributive interventionism endorsed by bodies like the UN, Hoffman posits that privileged persons and organizations should resist “the urge to swoop into poverty-stricken and war-torn areas [of Africa and the rest of the “Third World”] as “white saviours,”” instead supporting local solutions drawing upon local resources (Høiland, 2012, p. 35). In Caulker, Hoffman and Catalyst for Peace found “a home-grown leader who would be an ideal partner for developing peace-building programs in Sierra Leone” (Høiland, 2012, p. 35).

In November of 2007, Caulker, Hoffman, and a few of their colleagues designed and established what would eventually become Fambul Tok International (FTI), with Caulker returning to Sierra Leone the following month to start implementing their ideas. They envisioned Fambul Tok as “a new, community-led approach to post-war reconstruction that walks alongside ordinary people [emphasis added], helping them reawaken cultural practices of acknowledgement, apology and forgiveness; rebuild their communities [emphasis added]; and lay the groundwork for [development](#) and sustainable peace” (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014).

FTI prides itself on adopting a distinctly Sierra Leonean approach, “rooted not in western concepts of [crime](#) and punishment [emphasis added] but in communal African sensibilities that emphasize the need for communities to be whole—with each and every member playing a role” (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014). In practical terms, the organization helps village communities organize truth-telling bonfires and traditional cleansing ceremonies that give community members the opportunity to “come to terms with what happened during the war, to talk, to heal, and to chart a new path forward” (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014).

Fambul Tok exemplifies the indigenous traditions upon which restorative justice as a whole is based (Umbreit & Armour, 2011, pp. 4-6): it simultaneously conceives of harm in an intimate, interpersonal sense as well as with respect to a broader community, seeking to repair damaged relationships between victims, offenders, and community members. The process parallels a number of better-known restorative approaches, in that it begins with an extensive consultation to ascertain the needs of different parties within a given community; prepares and trains these stakeholders in advance of reconciliation ceremonies, so as to give them the skills they need to pick up where FTI’s facilitators leave off; encourages facilitators to play relatively passive roles during the ceremonies themselves, foregrounding conversations between community members; and employs items and acts of symbolic value and spiritual significance to commence, punctuate, and conclude proceedings (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014).

Bonfires make up the centrepiece of the Fambul Tok approach: held in the evening, they give victims and offenders a chance “to come forward for the first time to tell their stories, apologize, and ask for, or offer, forgiveness,” after which “communities...sing and dance in celebration of this open acknowledgement of and resolution to what happened in the war” (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014). Umbreit and Armour’s description of the restorative utilization of truth-telling holds true for the intended aims and self-professed outcomes of these bonfires: “when victims tell their story directly to the person responsible for their suffering, they, in effect, hold up a mirror that makes the impact of the crime real, tangible, and unforgettable”; on the other hand, “it is the offenders holding themselves accountable to those they have harmed that allows the victim to see their “human” face” (2014, pp. 55-56). As with peace making or sentencing circles, dialogue between victims and offenders is part of a public process, wherein “the integrity of the offender’s apology or response to the victim is judged by others to whom the offender is accountable for his or her future behaviour including the completion of what needs to be done to make amends to the victim or community” (Umbreit & Armour, 2011, p. 56).

Responsibility for ensuring that offenders act upon their purported remorse and satisfy their obligations ultimately lies with the community, but FTI’s staff members try to encourage follow-through by hosting a range of activities that strive to engage all community members. These events include the planting of peace trees, which serve as both leisurely gathering spots and future meeting places for community discussions; the cultivation of community farms, which provide community members with subsistence at the same time as they generate a little extra income; the creation of radio listening clubs, which seek to bring community members together for public discourse; and the organization of soccer matches, which particularly target and discourage fighting amongst youth affected by the war (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014).

These sophisticated long-term peacebuilding and peace-maintenance strategies arguably have few institutional equivalents in Western restorative processes, possibly pointing to the depth of communality among rural Sierra Leoneans. At the same time, however, they recognize the difficulty of forgiving, especially for victims of violent crimes, and try to give victims, offenders, and community members as many opportunities as possible to get to know each other after their initial ceremonial interactions.

Successes, Strengths, and Some Areas for Improvement

In spite of Fambul Tok's relatively modest beginnings, numerous Sierra Leoneans are requesting FTI's assistance at present: during the first five years of its existence, the organization oversaw 155 reconciliation ceremonies during which over 2,700 people testified to over 60,000 neighbours and community members (Beyond Intractability); it is currently planning thousands more ceremonies in small clusters of villages across the country.

Has Fambul Tok then been a complete success? If so, why? To a considerable extent, FTI's growth and the popularity of its approach speaks to the latter's efficacy. Testimonials from participants praise the model's emphasis on community autonomy and cultural regeneration, non-punitive process orientation, provision of opportunities to laypersons for truth-telling, and sensitivity to the localized legacies of the war. One district youth chairman has gone so far as to claim that Fambul Tok "is the only project that will bring peace" to his and other communities (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014).

Fambul Tok's achievements thus far are partly attributable to the organization's openness, reflexivity, and flexibility. While [religion](#) does not figure into FTI's approach per se, administrators recognize that most rural Sierra Leoneans are very devout; staff members plan ceremonies according to local Muslim, Christian, and/or indigenous customs and endeavor to ensure that ceremonies fairly represent all faiths and other local demographic factors (Høiland, 2012, p. 36). FTI tries to be as sensitive to gendered differences in wartime experience as it is to religious and spiritual particularities at play. Not long after they began their work, FTI's leaders noticed that some women were not telling their stories at bonfires while others who did occasionally regretted their decision to participate: they felt as though their communities did not want to hear their accounts of sexual violence and/or ridiculed them when they did share their wartime travails (Cole and Norander, 2011, p. 35).

To address this conundrum, Fambul Tok brought together women from around the country to discuss how the organization could support women's participation in reconciliation activities; after meeting as a group, the women decided to call themselves "Peace Mothers," looking forward "by referencing peace...which acknowledging the vital role that women play, as mothers, in Sierra Leonean communities" (Cole and Norander, 2011, p. 35). Many Peace Mothers have garnered respect from the men in their communities for farming and organizing seed and harvest exchanges, with minimal assistance from Fambul Tok. Caulker admits that, although he didn't realize it at the beginning, "women are really key to Fambul Tok," which is making "gender mainstreaming an important focus of [its] work" (Cole and Norander, 2011, p. 36).

The case of the Peace Mothers shows that FTI's administrators would probably be the first parties to acknowledge their model's limitations, some of which continue to affect their operations. Select participant testimonies suggest that provincial chiefs wield strong influence over Sierra Leonean communities; Fambul Tok facilitators typically solicit their permission to carry out ceremonies in their jurisdictions (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014). Given that the denial of permission, however uncommon, would deny community members access to reconciliation, Fambul Tok might want to consider offering more individualized restorative options, such as victim-offender mediation or dialogue or family group conferencing.

These alternatives could pave the way to engagement with problematic chiefdoms, as citizens who benefit from Fambul Tok might rally to bring FTI to their communities; they could also channel the voices of women or other vulnerable community members unwilling to speak before large crowds. Caulker and Hoffman additionally recognize that their organization, what with its overseas donors and American headquarters—shares an innately imbalanced relationship with its community partners (Cole and Norander, 2011, p. 45); as long as they keep this recognition in mind and do not indiscriminately distribute funds and resources, they should be able to avoid fomenting an unhealthy and unsustainable dependency complex among participating villages.

The Future of "Family Talk"

Since it burst onto the scene in 2007, Fambul Tok has "generated a substantial amount of interest throughout Africa," having been contacted by "individuals and organizations from Liberia, Guinea, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and others inquiring about the applicability of the... model in those settings" (Catalyst for Peace and Fambul Tok Sierra Leone, 2014). Clearly, more and more African persons and communities are acknowledging the failures of the retributive approach—often a holdover from the colonial era—and turning to Fambul Tok as a viable restorative alternative. As long as FTI remembers its roots and indebtedness to the thousands of courageous Sierra Leoneans who have made the model work, it could play a vital role in addressing the social rifts that have plagued modern Africa for decades—one bonfire at a time.

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Detailed analysis of the effects of Ebola on Sierra Leone

<http://files.enonline.net/attachments/1638/FEX-21.pdf>

An article on Social Anthropology in Sierra Leone, dated 2004

[http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/352/ending-ethnic-conflict-and-creating-positive-peace-in-rwanda-and-](http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/352/ending-ethnic-conflict-and-creating-positive-peace-in-rwanda-and-sierra-leone)

sierra-leone

By [Katherine J. Wolfenden](#) graduated in 2012 with a concentration in Culture and Politics from *Georgetown University* in Washington, DC.

Although peace and pacifism are familiar ideas to most students today, for much of human history these concepts have been relegated to the religious domain and excluded from the study and practice of politics.¹ At the same time, war--organized violent [conflict](#) between different groups of people--has traditionally been considered a natural occurrence, based on popular assumptions about the inclinations and limitations of human nature.² Of course, many today still believe that peace is idealistic and war is inevitable, but other theories have emerged in modern times to explain the existence of war while also allowing for the possibility of positive peace (which entails the absence of war *and also* the presence of justice).³

Using a social constructivist framework, and invoking the Rwandan genocide and the [civil war](#) in Sierra Leone as real-world examples, I will argue that today's intrastate, ethnically-based conflicts stem from unjust political systems in which ethnic identity becomes a marker of difference and division that privileges some over others. The international community must intervene after violence erupts, but more importantly, peacemakers must act before aggression comes to a head. As Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated, non-violent direct action can address and diffuse the root causes of war; however, for peaceful methods to be effective, we must renounce our misguided, pessimistic ideologies and forego military [power](#) to create positive peace in its place.

Before we can theorize the end of violence, we must understand how it arises. In their book *Peace and Conflict Studies*, David Barash and Charles Webel elucidate many of the theories commonly used to explain why humans go to war. Barash and Webel write that the major justifications for war are grounded in assumptions about human nature: the idea that biologically, we have evolved to be violent and aggressive creatures, for example, or the theory that humanity is fundamentally nasty and warlike.⁴ Nevertheless, it can be argued that these theories do not hold up to the criticisms levied against them. As Barash and Webel point out, war is widespread, but not universal, so if humans have some sort of genetic coding that leads us to war, peace must also be an intrinsic part of our nature, given that peacemakers are just as human.⁵ Aggression among animals is often cited to show that war is "natural," but human beings have a unique capacity for rational and intelligent thought as well as the ability to suppress and overcome our primitive instincts.⁶

While human nature theories cannot effectively explain the manifestation of war, social constructivist theories provide a rational explanation for both the absence and presence of violent conflict. These theories argue that what determines our behavior, what leads us to choose between war and peace, is our circumstances and the social experiences we live through.⁷ In this framework, peace is not viewed as some sort of miracle occurrence defying humanity's evil nature, but instead as one of the many different behaviors humans may exhibit with supportive social experiences under causative circumstances.

The Rwandan and Sierra Leonean conflicts are both excellent examples of how violence can arise from particular social conditions, specifically in reaction to pervasive political injustice. Originally, the Sierra Leonean civil war began as a movement fighting the [corruption](#) and inequality its founders saw in their country's division of resources. As the student leaders' own ideologies became more radical and they needed soldiers to fight, they inculcated hatred and violence in the minds of child soldiers by making a false association between the people they attacked and those who had killed the young boys' families.⁸ In addition to redirected aggression, the Revolutionary United Front also employed socialization to aggressiveness as a tool to toughen their boy soldiers. They created a [culture](#) in which violence appeared to be good, necessary and normal. After two years of fighting, Beah said, "killing had become a daily activity."⁹ The UNICEF workers at the rehabilitation centre expected them to behave like children, but Ishmael and the other soldiers had been "brainwashed to kill."¹⁰

The Rwandan genocide was also begun and furthered through totalism, alienation, and socialization to aggressiveness and other social constructions. Before the country was colonized, the Rwandan people lived as one cohesive group, made up of multiple cultural identities, but the Belgians taught them to view one another as different, as enemies.¹¹ The Belgians had a primordialist sense of ethnicity – they issued each Rwandan an identity card, which solidified Rwandans' previously fluid ethnic identities and allowed the Belgians to arbitrarily privilege one ethnic group over another. As each group vied for political power, then, individuals redirected their aggression towards the other ethnicity as a whole, and their traumatic experiences with injustice led many Rwandans to embrace extremism. Those in power then escalated the conflict by promoting this antagonistic culture; as Gourevitch writes, "genocide, after all, is an exercise in community building."¹² Leading up to the Rwandan genocide, propagandists preached over the airwaves and "conscious-raising meetings" were held by local leaders, backed by the state. These officials described their opponents as devils, unworthy of dignity or respect and criminals, deserving of punishment. They conditioned laymen into joining their case by "[rewarding] them with petty spoils" of war.¹³

Social constructivist theories not only explain the ways in which violent conflicts begin and are continued, but they also tell us that we can prevent violence and achieve positive peace if we work to create different circumstances. However, this requires us to take a different approach. The international community tends to intervene after conflicts have started, or worse, to lend tacit approval or even concrete support to war wagers. Once violence has broken out, though, and entire generations of children have learned to kill senselessly, it is too late to save the lives of countless victims and the psyches of many participants. It is not impossible to restore positive peace after violence has erupted, but intervening earlier can prevent conflict from becoming violent in the first place.

Both the Rwandan and Sierra Leonean conflicts arose in reaction to political injustice, when the concentration and abuse of power led to social and economic inequality and eventually, the structural violence became unbearable for the oppressed. We can think of these wars, then, as structural violence made physical; it follows that if we can eliminate structural violence and promote equitable social systems, we can prevent violent conflict through the creation of positive peace in its place.

Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated how unjust political systems can be challenged and changed through non-violent direct action. Although many around them questioned the effectiveness of their tactics, both successfully used moral persuasion and social pressure to make negative peace positive. Conflict is natural, but as Martin Luther King Jr. explained in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," it does not have to become violent. In King's eyes, non-violent direct action can prevent this from happening. He wrote, "The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides – and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history."¹⁴

Instead of allowing tensions to erupt into violence, we must use peaceful methods to resolve conflicts, on the individual, nationwide and international levels. Instead of teaching young children to hate, for example, through the example of adults around them, we must socialize them so that they learn cooperation and peacefulness. Organizations such as Peace Games that teach conflict resolution to schoolchildren should be expanded and replicated worldwide. In addition, microloans and other [development](#) programs should be better funded, political inequities must be challenged and addressed, and free trade must be made fair for less powerful nations, so that all people have the opportunity to better their quality of life.

While some work towards peace, the international community cannot stand on the sidelines; intervention is often viewed negatively, but if you are not part of the solution, you ultimately allow the problems to continue and worsen. Of course, foreign countries must stop supplying weapons to warring peoples, as the French did in the case of Rwanda,¹⁵ but they must also stop tolerating violent conflict in the world, which was the case for most countries in "the West."¹⁶ Countries such as the United States who hold an incredible amount of political and culture power must actively promote peaceful behavior and also model peacefulness themselves. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, President Obama quoted Martin Luther King Jr. when he said, "Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones."¹⁷ The president called for international agreements to limit the use of force, institutionalized respect for [human rights](#), and increased investments in [international development](#) - at the same time, though, President Obama maintained that "war is sometimes necessary."¹⁸ He characterized this position as "a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."¹⁹

The underlying assumptions behind such statements, that mankind is fundamentally dissolute and violence is inevitable, serve only to justify war's existence and discourage peace-making movements. Regardless of the compliments President Obama gave the leaders who came before him, his viewpoint belittles the work of peacemakers and rationalizes the military-industrial complex that the U.S. maintains. Such a defeatist mentality constitutes cultural violence, which makes it difficult to progress towards positive peace and ultimately becomes another obstacle to peace that must be overcome.

The violent, ethnically-based conflicts in Rwanda and Sierra Leone demonstrated that war occurs when repressed peoples' tensions violently come to the surface. Structural violence becomes physical when societal tensions are

ignored and allowed to fester and grow; however, as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. showed us, conflict can be dealt with on non-violent terms. Non-violent direct action is an effective and realistic means of accomplishing change, but we must invest in educational programs and political reform movements in order to make it effective. Human nature theories espoused by political leaders today – that mankind’s nature is depraved, that violence is necessary – become self-imposed limits on what we can achieve, but if powerful countries put their political and cultural hegemonic power behind peace-making worldwide, progress towards positive peace would be made possible.

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Special Interests

West Africa and Sierra Leone; sociocultural theory and methods; history of anthropology; the political imagination; access to justice and transitional justice institutions; materiality; rural livelihoods.

University of Makeni, Sierra Leone

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<http://www.brown.uk.com/birth/jambai.pdf>

Amara Jambaia, District Medical Officer Pujehun District, Sierra Leone, Carol Maccormack, Department of Anthropology Bryn Mawr College.

'Maternal Health, War, and Religious Tradition: Authoritative Knowledge in Pujehun District, Sierra Leone'

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/dasa/cline-cole-reg.aspx>



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I am a (human) geographer by training and multi-disciplinary researcher by choice; and have, to date, had the good fortune of practising these 'trades' within the three related disciplines of Geography, Environmental Studies and, currently, Area Studies.

<https://culanth.org/articles/83-violence-just-in-time-war-and-work-in>
Article by Daniel Hoffman.

<http://anthropology.nd.edu/news/38215-cat-boltens-book-illuminates-sierra-leonean-war-and-the-role-of-love-2/>

Published: October 07, 2012

Author: Joan Fallon

When Catherine Bolten first considered studying the city of Makeni in Sierra Leone, many people—government officials, professors, the U.S. ambassador—warned her to stay away. It's a dangerous and immoral place, they told her, infamous because residents refused to fight the rebels who occupied Makeni for three years (1998-2002) during the decade-long civil war.

Undeterred, Bolten spent 18 months in Makeni talking to hundreds of people. Her new book, *I Did It to Save My Life: Love and Survival in Sierra Leone*, just published by University of California Press, illuminates a very different kind of community—one in which residents struggled to survive and care for each other within a social order based on love, compassion, material exchange, and nurturing.

"Writing this book was an act of balancing the narrative," says Bolten, assistant professor of anthropology and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and a Kellogg Institute for International Studies faculty fellow.

"People in Makeni were making choices that the outside world called 'inhumane.' I wanted to show how they found a way to get through horrific circumstances by making alliances that allowed them to survive and feed their families and friends. Far from 'inhumane,' this kind of love is proof of humanity, and it is allowing Sierra Leoneans to heal and move on with their lives."

After introducing the history and culture of Makeni, the book then presents the narratives of seven ordinary people who explain their actions and moral choices during a devastating war. One chapter, for example, titled "I held a gun but I did not fire it," focuses on David, a schoolboy captured by rebels and forced into a life on the run. In another chapter, "The government brought us death, the rebels allowed us to live," we meet Kadiatu, a mother who befriends rebel leaders so she can trade looted goods and feed her dying children. Another chapter, "It was the Lord who wanted me to stay," follows Adama, a widow whose faith becomes an instrument of survival when she preaches to and feeds dying rebels.

What all these narratives have in common, Bolten says, is the Sierra Leonean practice of love. "In Sierra Leone, people use the word 'love' to describe long-term reciprocal relationships—putting yourself out there to invest in people's survival and hope that they do it for you." The stories, she says, also call into question the government's own narrative—that Makeni residents openly collaborated with the rebels. Residents argue instead that it was the government's disloyalty to its people, rather than rebel invasion and occupation, that destroyed the town and forced uneasy co-existence between civilians and militants.

"Ethnographically rich, these accounts come to life in beautiful prose," writes anthropologist and author Catherine Besteman. "These are inspiring and at times heart-breaking stories. ... This will be a valuable contribution as well as a welcome counter to the more popular images of war zones as places of total immorality."

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseviewofbooks/2013/04/03/book-review-war-and-embodied-memory-becoming-disabled-in->

[sierra-leone/](#)

Book Review

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/cas/members/anthropology/>

Various members of staff have an interest in Sierra Leone.

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/anthropology/staff/academic/>

Various members of staff have an interest in Sierra Leone

<https://polioinsierra.wordpress.com/>

A blog on Ebola and the impact of this on various aspects of the anthropology of Sierra Leone

<http://www.elrha.org/news/3493/>

A platform dedicated to discussions on public policy and anthropology

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/anthropology-news/mary-douglas-memorial-lecture-2014>

A lecture analysing IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICTS?

Civil Wars From The Perspective Of An Institutional Theory Of Culture

Professor Paul Richards
Njala University (Sierra Leone)

Post-Cold War armed political conflicts have been called many things: asymmetric wars, insurgency, terrorism, new barbarism. These are civil wars where group values rather than national interests are at stake. Such conflicts, Mary Douglas thought, were especially hard to resolve because any compromise appears to the parties a threat to their continued social existence. What then should be the peacemaker's approach to civil wars? Douglas departed from the mainstream in pointing out that violent political conflicts are often irreconcilable through bargaining approaches. She

advocated two analytical moves in such circumstances. The first was to undertake a cultural audit, in order to pinpoint the institutional roots of non-negotiable social values. The second move, as exemplified in her late work, was to return to ethnography, to understand how civil wars do eventually end. This threw a spotlight on the importance of complex (so-called "clumsy") institutional arrangements in post-conflict settlements, and drew renewed attention to ritual ordering as a means to "compose" the unprecedented social taxonomies required by such durable settlements. For Douglas, "listening to the enemy" was a way to allow radically different social taxonomies to mesh, and not a tool for bargaining-based compromise. The lecture applies this perspective to three concrete instances of civil wars and their aftermath: the Dutch revolt, the "culture wars" in France at the end of the 19th century, and the recent civil war in Sierra Leone.

<http://ase.tufts.edu/anthropology/people/shaw.htm>

Rosalind Shaw
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Degrees

Ph.D. University of London; B.A. University of Leicester

Expertise

Violence, memory, and futurity; the anthropology of post-conflict; children and youth; transitional justice; West Africa; Sierra Leone.

Major Awards

Tufts University FRAC Senior Research Semester (2013); Visiting Fellow, Uppsala Forum for Peace, Democracy, and Justice, Uppsala University, Sweden (2012); Rockefeller Foundation (for international conference at Bellagio, Italy, 2006); John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Research and Writing Award (2004-05); Fellowship, Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard University (2004-05); Jennings Randolph Senior Fellowship, United States Institute of Peace (2003-04); finalist, Herskovitz Prize for the best scholarly work on Africa (2003); Senior Fellowship, Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University (1994-95); Visiting Fellowship, Institute for Advanced Study and Research in the African Humanities, Northwestern University (1994-95); Fellowship, Bunting Institute (now Radcliffe Institute, 1992-93); Research Associate, Women's Studies in Religion Program, Harvard University (1992-93); Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research grant (1992).

Scholarship & Research

My current research concerns the work of memory during post-conflict interventions. My book in progress, *Disarming Justice, Demobilizing Memory: Producing "Post-conflict" Life in Sierra Leone*, examines the emergence of new forms (and new contradictions) of memory through engagement with Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). I locate the TRC's practice of "truth telling"—the recounting of memories of violence—within the liberal project of international peacebuilding. Through truth telling, for example, individuals are encouraged to assume responsibility for a national vision of progress toward reconciliation, peace, and democracy. I also locate this memory work within an opaque and unpredictable post-conflict economy. In Sierra Leone, people sought to redirect the TRC's planned route from truth telling to national peace through a path of labor and reciprocity. This re-routing has a significance that extends beyond the clear need for economic justice and reparations. It reframes transitional justice within participants' struggles for "post-conflict" lives—struggles that inflect not only the work of memory but also the meanings of "justice" and "peace" long after transitional justice mechanisms have been dismantled. This publicly engaged scholarship builds upon my co-edited volume with Lars Waldorf and Pierre Hazan, *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities After Mass Violence* (Stanford University Press, 2010). Here, the editors and contributors examine the challenges that "local" engagements pose to the transitional justice paradigm, and critically address the discourse of locality in transitional justice itself.

My current work also builds on my earlier exploration of memory in Sierra Leone through the lens of the slave trade. In *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), I examine the ways in which layered historical experiences are made present in ritual ideas and practices. Through the sedimentation of "palimpsest memories" from different historical periods, each of which shapes the next, memories of the slave trade are made to speak to present experiences of marginality and extraction even as they are reworked by these.

Books and journal editing

2007-present. Editorial Board, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* (Oxford University Press)

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West African Warscapes

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/can.2007.22.1.66/abstract>

Rosalind Shaw

Abstract

In this article, I seek to locate the anthropology of social recovery within the work of memory. Following a decade of violent armed conflict in Sierra Leone, displaced youth in a Pentecostal church write and perform plays that are silent on the subject of the war, but renarrate it in the idiom of spiritual warfare against a subterranean demonic realm known as the Underworld. Ideas of the Underworld are part of a local retooling of the Pentecostal deliverance ministry to address Sierra Leone's years of war. Through their struggle against the Underworld, these Pentecostal youth reimagine Sierra Leone's war, reshaping experiences of violence that have shaped them and thereby transforming demonic memory into Pentecostal memory. Just as their own physical displacement is not an entirely negative condition, their displacement of violent memory is enabling rather than repressive. By "forgetting" the war as a direct realist account and reworking it through the lens of the Underworld, they use war itself to re-member their lives. Although they do not lose their memories of terror and violence, they learn to transform these in ways that allow them to create a moral life course in which they are much more than weak dependents.

<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/anthropology>

Some of these are relevant to Sierra Leone.

<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/plantain-island-sirens>

<http://www.africa.upenn.edu/sherbro/sierraleone.html>

Photos from 1930's.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02757206.2016.1222524?journalCode=ghan20>

In 2006 the iron mines in Marampa Chiefdom, in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone, re-opened. This event sparked a widespread feeling of excitement and hope among the local population, and gave rise to a landscape of expectations in which memories of both relative prosperous and "dark" pasts were invoked and imaginations of a better future flourished. However, soon after the re-opening and initial development of the mines, it appeared that the expected opportunities would not materialize everywhere and for everybody. Frustration, disappointment and loss of hope became part and parcel of the dynamics in this place, which is seen as a hot-spot, a notion that is applied to highlight the numerous frictions and negotiations within this investment landscape. This paper examines this momentum of rising expectations in the hot-spot by scrutinizing its connection to the area's recent past of boom and bust, the increased global demand for raw materials, especially from China, national development agendas and life-cycles of mining operations. Subsequently, some spatial and social dynamics of accelerated change in Marampa will be discussed. Exploring these dynamics allows to see accelerated change in these investment landscapes from a diverse angle. Through highlighting these temporal, spatial and social dynamics of change in the hot-spot, the paper argues that overheating, a phenomenon often associated with accelerated change, may play out not only as a result of

accelerated change, but also as a result of deceleration and the experience of being excluded from the potential

opportunities of change.
