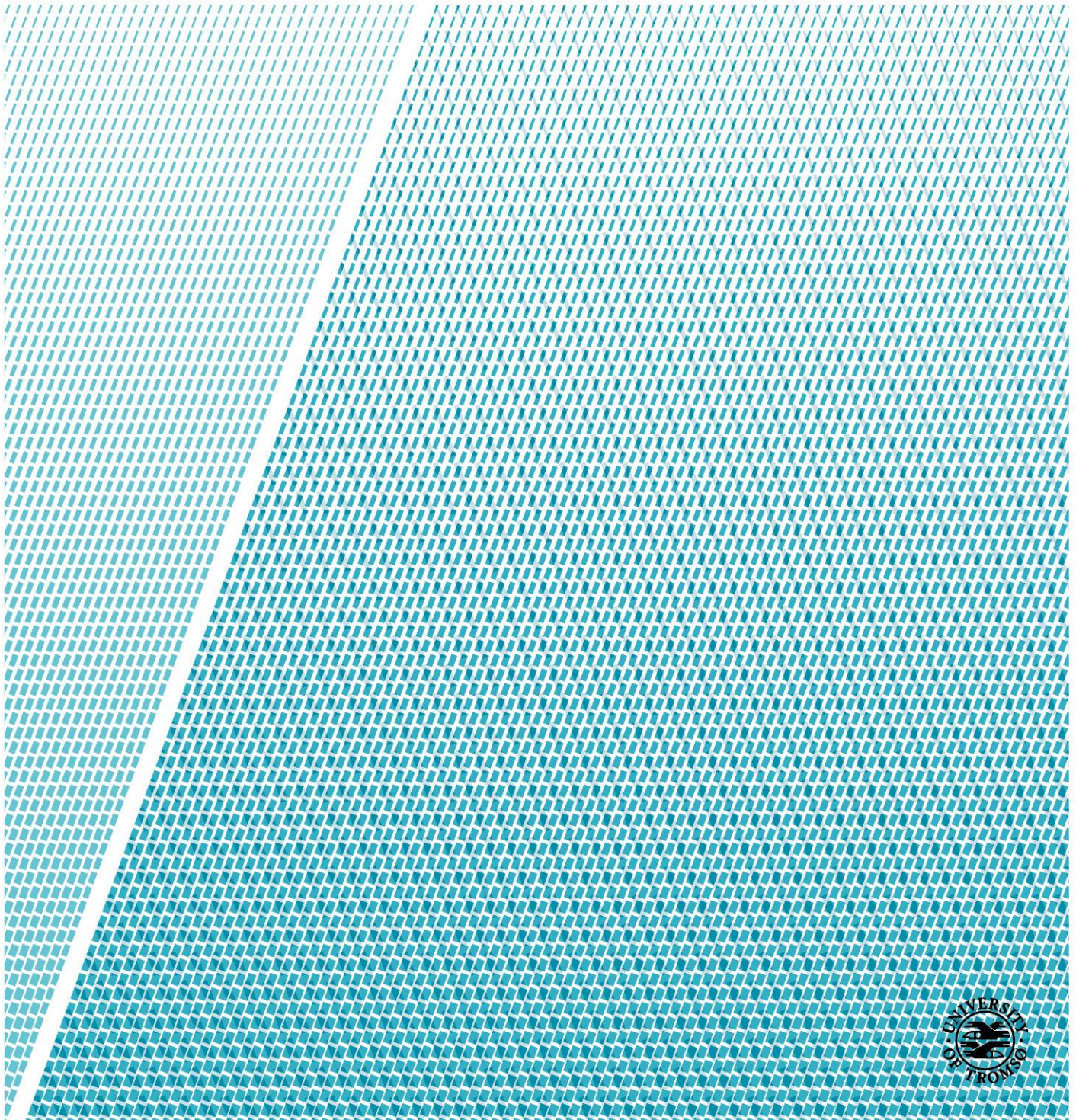UiT

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Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Youth Participation in Sierra Leone

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ABSTRACT

In the post-conflict population, youth constitute a reservoir brimming with potential energy, ready to be channelled for good or ill. What causes some young people to return to the life of a fighter while others choose to work for a better future? And what can domestic and international actors do to help youth move toward an education, work to support their families, and become active contributors to building peace and reconstructing their countries?

Although much has been written about cases of children as soldiers and slaves in recent conflicts, these cases are but one example of the impact of conflict on a subset of the youth population.

This paper underlines the roles of children and youth in post-conflict peacebuilding and the reinvention of their roles from participants of peacebuilding to active facilitators of post-conflict peacebuilding. The reinvention is based on the re-interpretation of the traditional roles of children and youth in post-conflict peacebuilding and the analysis of children and youth peacebuilding programs. This will suggest that children and youth take on a more active role, if not, a leadership role in peacebuilding programs conducted for children and youth.

Understanding what went on in Sierra Leone for 11 years and how the young people have participated will be discussed in this paper. This paper will discuss how youth themselves advocates for youth's participation argue for the importance of education and skills building. This is particularly important in a post conflict setting, such as Sierra Leone, where many youths have lost out on 11years worth of education.

Keywords: youth, peacebuilding, young people, post-conflict, Sierra Leone, roles, children, education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"If youth can be such a powerful force that can destroy a whole nation, why do people overlook our resources when working for peace?"[1]

This was stated by a youth movement leader. I think it is an appropriate quote to start this dissertation as it addresses one of the biggest challenges to youth participation. Youths are often seen as troublemakers and a problem in many contexts. In the post conflict situation in Sierra Leone they are looked at as previous soldiers who need to be kept at an arm's length.

This thesis aims to explore the roles youth play in post conflict situations, in particular in relation to peacebuilding processes. It asks the question in what ways have youth been participating in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. I've looked at Sierra Leone as a case study of how young people have been able to take part in the peace process.

The overall aim of this thesis is to look at the ways youth have participated in the post-conflict peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. It will also consider if youth's involvement in the process of building peace can limit some of the problems with youth as 'troublemakers', and if it can be argued that youth's involvement leads to a more sustainable peace.

This thesis will try to take a holistic approach by looking at multiple factors that affect youth in a post conflict context and peacebuilding process. One of these issues relates to gender, writing this thesis I will try to bear in mind the use of a gender lens to some extent.

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[1] Search for Common Ground, 2009, Children Youth Conflict: An Introduction Toolkit of Engaging Children and Youth in Conflict Transformation, Search for Common Ground, Wahsington, p.3

This thesis will also be exploring the idea that an 'age lens'. Arguing that this might be a good addition to the gender lens, when looking at areas of conflicts and the issues that peacebuilding processes face, as well as dealing with issues of youth as troublemakers. By mainstreaming youth's participation and involvement, there might be a better chance for a stable peace.

Areas which have recently emerged from conflict often have a problem with protracted conflict and outbreaks of violence. This thesis will look at how and why youth in many cases may be seen as the main contributors to this violence and how this affects the peacebuilding process. It will acknowledge and to some extent deal with theories and presumptions of 'angry young men' and that societies with high numbers of young (men) are more conflict prone than others. It will look at how these ideas and theories might be countered, both through empowerment, education and actual involvement of youth.

1.1 Research Methodology

This research was done using secondary sources only. My principal sources of materials were the United Nations Libraries in Nairobi and Geneva and the Internet. My experiences in peace building missions in Sierra Leone and Rwanda where I personally saw the role of outside influence on the civil wars in these countries also helped me to make a critical analysis of the case study on Sierra Leone.

There will need to be a thorough introduction and definition of several terms for this thesis, as well as a brief description and analysis of the implications, critiques and problems with these terms. These include post conflict situations and peacebuilding situations in addition to peacebuilding in general. Youth is a very important concept in this dissertation, but also considering age relations in different cultural settings. Gender cannot be ignored; it has been

argued that it is one of the biggest identity factors for individuals. That leads us into concepts of identity and the importance of group identity, ethnic identity, national identity and the role identity plays in conflict.

Peace is the goal of peacebuilding processes, so this needs to be defined, taking into account questions of what image of peace is desirable, when is the goal reached, who builds the peace, whose peace is it, methods used for reaching the peace? The list goes on, peace is a very positive and highly rated term, but it is also highly contested and debated and there are many different ideas of peace, both politically and ideologically based.

The basis of my interest in this has to do with youths (seemingly) endless energy for something they care about (personal experience). But also the slightly positive, optimistic (maybe a bit naive) world view youth seem to hold could be helpful to gain progress in certain conflicts where there has been little progress. Also, a notion I hold that prejudice are not as deeply rooted in 'younger people' and they might be more willing to accept these prejudice to be disproven. 'Ability to forgive and forget'

This thesis consists of three chapters. They each deal with different aspects of the research question. The first chapter looks at the definition of key terms, as well as dealing with some of the theoretical aspects of participation and peacebuilding. The second chapter looks at a general history of Sierra Leone, as well as noting some of youth's involvements at different stages through history. The third and last chapter looks at different forms of participation by youth in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, it also looks at some of the issues youth face.

CHAPTER TWO: A FRAMEWORK OF PEACE, PEACEBUILDING AND YOUTH

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will deal with the theory of the different terms in the thesis question and look at the ways in which things are defined influences the way they are practiced. First I will define the key term in this thesis – youth. I will be dealing with some of the problems linked to this term and how it can be part of determining youth's situations. I will also look at how youth is defined in terms of age group and how this relates to the study of youth's participation.

Thereafter I will look at the term peace and terms such as 'positive and negative' peace. I will look at post-conflict peacebuilding, as well as look at some of the terms that interact and influence the post conflict peacebuilding process, such as peacebuilding and peacekeeping. I thought it was important to get an understanding of the key concepts for this thesis before starting to explore some of the theories of 'youth participation'.

Many of the concepts in this dissertation are highly contested and debated. I cannot give a full review of the different concepts, but I will attempt to give an overview of the terms in a way that I find relevant to the dissertation and research question.

2.2 Youth

Youth as a theme is vigorously discussed and debated in multiple settings, both as a security threat and as an untapped resource or potential,[2] – also the idea of creative and energetic youth – as troublemakers and peacemakers.[3] There are extensive writing on children as victims and

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[2] Sierra Leone's post-war situation where the word youth is often spoken in the same sentence as security concern. Hanson-Alp, Rosalind, 2008, -Youth and Security, *Peace, Security and Development Update*, Issue 4, June, Conciliation Resources, p. 2. The -proportion of young men in a society also increase the risk of conflict. Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone (edt), 2000, *Greed and Grievance: economic agendas in civil wars*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, p. 97.

[3] McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan, 2006, *Troublemakers or Peacemakers? : Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame.

on both youth and children as active participants in violent conflicts.[4] The use of terms such as children and youth carry a certain sort of meaning and stigma. For example, children are often seen as vulnerable, innocent victims. Youth are seen as perpetrators of crime, aggressive and greedy.[5] Some argue that these negative images can easily become 'self-fulfilling prophecies' and do fit well with the resilience and flexibility youth.[6]

Some of the issues attached to youth, are marginalisation from politics, employment and other aspects of societal life. These are particularly dominant in the context of violent conflict, where youth are recruited as warriors, child soldiers and youth gang members. In conflict situations social implications linked with childhood or adulthood change, and children might be forced to grow up faster and might make young adults stay within the definition of youth because 'rites of passage' have been disturbed.[7]

2.2.1 Defining youth

Too make the research easier and clearer I have chosen to work with a preliminary age range for inclusion of the term youth, but if necessary or where I see fit I am more than willing to be flexible and go outside the age range I set up. I have chosen to define youth[8] as any person

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[4] Boyden, Jo and Johanna de Berry (edt.), 2004, *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement*, Berghahn Books, New York / Oxford. And Brett, Rachel and Irma Specht, 2004, *Young Soldiers : Why They Choose to Fight*, Lyenne Rienner Publishers, Colorado. The Impact of War on Children by Graca Machel.

[5] Yvonne Kemper, 2005, ‑Youth in War-to-Peace Transitions. Approaches by International Organizations., Berghof Report no. 10, p. 5. But also; Hendrixson, Anne, 2004, ─Angry young men, veiled young women: Constructing a new population threat and ─Fearing Africa's Young Men‖ by Marc Sommers, 2006, and ideas that ‑societies with high numbers of young men are more prone to violence'. Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone (edt), 2000, op cit.

[6] Wessells, Michael and Davidson Johan, 2006, ‑Recruitment and Reintegration of Former Youth Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Challenges of Reconciliation and Post-Accord Peace Building‖, in McEvoy- Levy, Siobhan, Troublemakers or Peacemakers? : Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame.p. 37.

[7] Stephanie Schwartz, 2010, *YOUTH in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Agents of Change*, United

States Institute of Peace Press, Washington pp. 4-6

[8] Where relevant I may use other terms such as children, adolescents, young people and young adults to be able to cover ground on age ranges that interlinks with the term youth.

between 13 and 30 years old. I have considered using United Nation's definition of youth which 'defines them as people between the ages of 15 and 24.'[9] But I think this definition is bit too limiting for what I wish to achieve in this thesis. In the case study country, Sierra Leone youth can include people in their forties.[10] The age range chosen includes teenagers or adolescents which are often seen as youth in western cultures and I have expanded the age to 30 years old so that most of those who are considered youth in Sierra Leone are taken into account thereby striking a balance between our Western concept of youth and the broadly African concept of youth.

Giving a definition on the age group of interest in this context can be a bit complicated and is often not very useful or valuable. It is important to acknowledge different cultural variations of what youth means. Who youth are often varies according to context, different places and different times.[11] Even within the same day a young person can be anything from a youth, child or even an adult, all depending on the situation. For example a 16 year old can be tried in court as an adult, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child anyone under the age of 18 is a child,[12] and according to the definition I have given of youth above, the 16-year- old would count as a youth.

Kemper argues that the term youth describes 'a distinct phase between childhood and adulthood' and that it is more useful to 'define the term according to the functional and sociocultural context' rather than 'limiting this notion to a certain age range.'[13] This

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[9] Kemper, 2005, op cit. p. 3

[10] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit. p. 30

[11] Youth can be defined to the period in a person's life when they are -in transition between childhood and maturity‖, often seen as the teenage years or used as a synonym for adolescents, this happen especially in modern Western societies, which have a strong focus on individuals, but still wanting them to fit in to the box of expected development pattern. Wessels et al., op cit. 2006, p. 29

[12] *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1990, available online: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm (last accessed 28 April 2011) and UNICEF, 2008, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, available online: http://www.unicef.org/crc/

[13] Kemper, Yvonne, 2005, op cit., p. 6,

argument is supported by Schwartz who argues that 'age-defined boundaries do not capture conceptions of 'youth' across cultures. Chronological definitions of youth common in the West promote an individualistic understanding of development outside social context: youth is determined simply by age, not in reference to one's interaction with other people or events.'[14] One might say that by limiting youth to a certain age group you can ultimately exclude people who might still have a role to play as youth.[15]

2.3   Notions of peace and peacebuilding
2.3.1   Peace

Definitions of peace may vary a lot; from meaning 'the absence of war' (and 'direct violence'[16]) or meaning 'a life of cooperation and peaceful coexistence'.[17] Johan Galtung writes about two definitions of peace where the first one is 'violence - oriented ... To know about peace, we have to know about violence' and the second definition is 'conflict-oriented; peace is the context for conflicts to unfold non-violently and creatively.' Furthermore, he argues that to know about peace we need to have an understanding of 'conflict and how conflicts can be transformed, both non-violently and creatively.'[18] This idea of nonviolent conflict resolution or nonviolent conflict transformation is ideal to avoid escalation to violent conflict.[19]   Another definition of peace, which includes the absence of war or violence, concentrates on the relationship between people or parties. Johnsons' definition of peace focus even more on the relationships between people, he writes that peace is 'a mutually

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[14] P. 5 Schwartz, op cit. 2010
[15] Kemper, 2005, op cit. p. 9. 'There exist profound differences between developing and developed countries, which put universal definitions into perspective.'

[16] Galtung's triangle of direct, cultural and structural violence. Galtung, Johan, 1996, Peace by

Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization, Sage publications, London. P. 2

[17] Fisher, R.J, 1997, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*, Syracuse University Press, New York, p. 10.

[18] Galtung, Johan, 1996, op cit., P. 9
[19] Fisher, R.J, 1997, op cit. p. 9.

beneficial, harmonious relationship among relevant parties.'[20] And seeing as relationships never can be static nor can peace 'it is a dynamic process that increases or decreases with the actions of each involved party. The long-term maintenance of peace requires that members of the disputing groups interact with each other, get to know each other, work together to achieve mutual goals.'[21]

We often distinguish between positive and negative peace. But what does this actually mean? Galtung has offered an explanation where negative peace means 'absence of violence of all kinds'[22] and positive peace, which is often considered more complicated to explain, evolves cooperation, kindness, equality and fairness.[23]

Positive peace involves 'species cooperation, not struggle',[24] and a verbal and physical kindness, good to the body, mind and spirit of Self and Others; addressed to all basic needs, survival, well-being, freedom and identity. Galtung also describes a peace where putting freedom over repression; equity over exploitation, and reinforcing this with 'dialogue', 'integration', 'solidarity' and 'participation'[25] is important.[26] In other words cooperation and nonviolence is important to Galtung's positive peace, as well as freedom and equality. He argues that by being kind to one another and to use a positive mindset in interaction with other human beings, would probably lead to less conflict and more creative nonviolent

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[20] Johnson, David W. and Roger T. Johnson, 2006, ‖Peace education for consensual peace: the essential role of conflict resolution‖, *Journal of Peace Education*, Vol. 3, No. 2, University of Minnesota, USA, p. 147.

[21] Johnson, D. W. et al, 2006, op cit. pp. 147-148.

[22] Galtung, Johan, 1996, *op* cit., p. 31.

[23] Galtung divides positive peace into four categories: 'nature peace', 'direct positive peace', 'structural positive peace', and 'cultural positive peace', 1996, *op* cit., p. 29-33.

[24] This could be interpreted as we need to be kind to nature and other species on the planet. Galtung, Johan, 1996, *op* cit., p.31

[25] Galtung, Johan, 1996, *op* cit., p. 29 - 33

[26] Within positive peace lies a philosophy of ‚sukha' (a ‖state of bliss ... enhancement of life‖) he states that positive peace goes even beyond ‚sukha'. Galtung, Johan, 1996, *op* cit., p. 29-33

methods of solving the conflicts. This philosophy of peace fits quite well with Johnson's (et al) description of peace with the human relationship in focus.

The image one holds of the ideal peace may vary a lot according to political standpoints. This will influence the path one chooses to achieve this peace. The agenda of the 'liberal peace'[27] has influenced many of the actions taken by the international society and has been the driving force behind many peacekeeping missions. Currently there is a 'major reflective and critical evaluation‖ of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, which also 'has touched upon the heart of political, economic, social and cultural systems; institutions, ideologies, and norms that have been held to the core of liberal political theory for hundreds of years; and, currently, of generally held assumptions about IR [international relations], peace and conflict.'[28] This means that the liberal idea, or 'word view' if you like, has been dominating for the past century, but is now facing a bit more critique and resistance as more 'alternative' methods of building peace are being explored.

2.3.2 Post Conflict Peacebuilding

Post conflict peacebuilding is a very complicated task. It is important to realise that 'peace processes are not clean, linear and able to be characterized solely in terms of a series of negotiation steps involving political parties and armies but rather involve many more actors in civil society.'[29] It is closely linked with peacekeeping efforts, and the general process of making peace. Nevertheless, it has been argued that peacebuilding has a bigger scope for dealing with both short-term and long-term issues of a peace process and a belief that peacebuilding can

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[27] Newman, Edward, Roland Paris and Oliver P. Richmond, 2009, *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding* United Nations University Press, New York.

[28] Oliver Richmond (edt), 2010, Palgrave advances in peacebuilding: critical developments and approaches, Palgrave Macmillian, Hampshire. P. 1

[29] McEvoy-Levy, 2006, op cit. p. 7.

better accommodate for a sustainable peace, than peacekeeping operations.[30] McEvoy-Levy argues that 'post-accord peace building refers to a crucial and distinct phase in a conflict when both violence prevention and social reconstruction challenges co-exist and overlap, and conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation measures are required in an effort to construct a 'sustainable peace'.'[31]

In a post conflict peacebuilding process it is important to address and solve the underlying problems and structural causes of the conflict.[32] It has been argued by several professionals that this is best done through an integrative framework.[33] By this, it means an integration of different approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as an integration of different actors within the society in question. This would mean that all actors in any given conflict need to be part of forming the peace agreement, not just the fighting fractions, but also the civil society, included in that are the children, youth, adults and elderly. Living through a civil war makes everyone a participant or an actor in the war, whether as a victim or a perpetrator, or both. When it comes for the time of a ceasefire and peace talks to get to a peace agreement everyone need to be involved and get a chance to participate and get their voices heard.

Peace-making, peacekeeping and peacebuilding often overlap to some extent, or sometimes they can be put forward by a combined effort. Even so it can be important to make a distinction between the three, Galtung differentiates them thus:

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[30] Keating, Tom and W. Andy Knight (edt.), 2004, *Building Sustainable Peace*, United Nations

   University Press, Alberta, p. 356.

[31] McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan, 2006, op cit. pp. 7-8
[32] Keating (et al.), 2004, op cit. p. XXXIV.
[33] Fisher, R.J., 1997 op cit. and Lederach, J. P., 1997, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies,*
United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington.

- *Peace-keeping*: control the actors so that they at least stop destroying things, others and themselves

- *Peace-making*: embed the actors in a new formation; in addition, transform attitudes and assumptions

- *Peace-building*: overcome the contradiction at the root of the conflict formation[34]

As explained above, the ideas and understandings of peace and how to get to a state of 'peace' may vary a great deal. This is and has been reflected in different peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions around the world. Many of these ideas of peacebuilding came from the practices of international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), but also from 'individual' 'strong' states (such as the U.S.A.) with some support from other states.[35] These forms of peacebuilding has been seen as driven by 'Western states own agenda' of neo-liberal ideals as well as part of a neo-imperialist agenda.[36]

It is a very state and institutional focused way of building peace, often focused on (political or economic) elites and (self-proclaimed) community leaders – who are often elderly men. This has a huge impact on the kind of peacebuilding processes put in place and often ignores younger people and women.[37] As well as ignoring or 'forgetting about' huge chunks of the populations, this will be categorised as a 'to-down' approach to peacebuilding which raises issues on several other levels. Lederach criticises the international community for focusing on disaster management' as a way of dealing with violent conflicts. Within this he argues that there is a

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[34] Galtung, Johan, 1996 op cit. P. 103
[35] Keating (et al.), 2004, op cit. p. XXXI
[36] Paris, Roland, 2004, *At War"s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict,* Cambridge University Press, pp. 18 – 37.
[37] Miall, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, 1999, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Polity Press, Cambridge. P. 60-61, Pankhurst, Donna (edt), 2008, *Gendered Peace: Women"s Struggle for Post- War Justice and Reconciliation*, Routledge, London. (pp. 1 – 26), McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan, 2006, op cit. (pp. 14 – 15, 81 – 97)

focus on 'finding political solutions ... peace accords' without thinking long term for sustaining the peace process.[38]

There are many different approaches to peacebuilding, varying from; military strategies,[39] ideas of Liberal Peace Thesis[40] and grassroots, civil society approach[41]. Ramsbotham (et al.) argue that 'peacebuilding tries to overcome the contradictions which lie at the root of the conflict'[42]. Further to this, they argue that 'thinking about the complex dynamics and processes of post conflict peacebuilding, including the idea that effective and sustainable peace-making processes must be based on not merely manipulation of peace agreements made by elites, but more importantly on the empowerment of communities torn apart by war to build peace from below.'[43] This is arguing that it is more that matters for the peacebuilding in post-conflict situations than a politicised peace-accord between leading political, warring or conflicting fractions. This argument can be backed up by Johnson's (et al.)[44] argument of relational peace involving all people, arguing for an inclusive peacebuilding process. Even so, it is important to acknowledge the importance of peace agreements / accords to end the cycles of violence, but for them to work it seem vital to have the backing of civil society as well as their perspectives taken into account.[45] A different approach to peacebuilding might focus on what has been called 'community based

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[38] Lederach, 1997, op cit. p 73-74

[39] Either through monitoring a ceasefire, political transformation, or to avoid re-recruitment and elapse into violent groups. Roland Paris, 2004, op cit. p. 13 onwards, especially pp. 38-39. But also military negotiations around the peacebuilding process.

[40] Ibid. p.40 onwards.

[41] It is in this section that the strongest argument for youths participation in peacebuilding.

[42] Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, 2005, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. p.215. This section puts up the argument to build peace from a civil society / communities needs and wants. p. 30

[43] Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, 2005, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. p.215. This section puts up the argument to build peace from a civil society / communities needs and wants. p. 30

[44] Johnson, D. W. et al, 2006, *op cit.* pp. 147-148.

[45] John Paul Lederach has some of the same notion, saying that 'building peace in today's conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure, across levels of a society, an infrastructure that empowers the resources for reconciliation from within that society and maximizes the contribution from outside. In short, constructing the house of peace relies on a foundation of multiple actors and activities aimed at achieving and sustaining reconciliation.' p. xvi, in Lederach,

1997 *op cit.*. Some more definitions and ideas of peacebuilding can be found in Johan Galtung, 1996, AND in Tom Keating and W. Andy Knight (edt.), 2004, *op cit.*.

solutions', 'grass roots', 'civil society', 'local', and 'indigenous' solution.[46] It is a way of trying to help local projects and attempts to build their own peace, accommodating for cultural differences. It is trying to step away from a blueprint of peacebuilding and saying that there is no 'one' answer to what peace is and how peacebuilding is conducted. This has also been highly criticised for being vague, dreamy, and unachievable.[47] But still the general idea of peacebuilding is to get out of the cycle of violence and to build a society that can sustain itself and its citizens in a peaceful manner.

2.4   Tendencies of conflicts

Richards is arguing that we need to question and re-examine the 'Malthusian vision of African dystopia'[48] and to take into account cheap AK-47s and drugs. He sees some problems with Huntington's thesis of 'Clash of Civilisations' as being essentialist and not taking into account the diversity and fluidity of cultures.[49] As well as looking at arguments that the post-Cold War world has changed, where states no longer have monopoly of military force or use of violence, where there no longer are a 'balance of terror' due to the threat of nuclear war, and a world where religious, cultural and criminal organisations are 'prepared to pursue armed conflict'.[50] A world where the tendencies of wars have shifted to 'small, localized and essentially uncontrollable armed conflicts',[51] where cultures clash, competition for resources, and environmental breakdown are some of the major reasons for war to break lose. This way of looking at conflicts, particularly the wars happening outside the western or northern hemisphere, is based in western philosophies and ways of thinking,

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[46] Van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema and Juliette Verhoeven, (EDT), 2005, *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society,* A project for the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan, 2006, op cit, and Paris, Roland, 2004, op cit.

[47] van Tongeren (et al), 2005, *op cit.*

[48] Richards, 1996, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, International African Institute in association with James Currey [and] Heinemann, Oxford. P. XIII
[49] Ibid Pp. XIII - XXV
[50] Ibid . P. XIV
[51] Ibid P. XIV

it looks down at these civil wars as 'barbaric' and looks at these 'pre-modern' people fighting and using violence against each other to gain power or to control resources. Whereas putting forward the idea that here in the 'west', in Europe and North America, there is democracy and justice systems to solve our conflicts and disputes. This is a rather essentialist and superior way of thinking has been dominating journalistic reportages and in a lot of academic writings.[52]

Graca Machel points out something very obvious, but it is still important to mention she says that the 'best way to protect children from wars is to prevent conflict.' There is something curious in the quote; Machel writes that prevention of conflict is the best way to protect children from wars, but conflict theory tells us that not all conflict is bad, but the way we handle conflicts in our lives can be bad, or when conflicts get a chance to escalate without being dealt with can lead to a bad result – war.

2.5 Identity in conflict

Looking at identity in general and its links to group belongingness,[53] we can see the links to relationships[54] and the way we socialise and see ourselves in relation to others. Identity is an important aspect of culture and it links with belongingness to different groups. Youth are often considered to be an identity group open to impressions and influences. It is argued that children and youth are more easily manipulated than adults, but at the same time think more freely than adults.[55] This may help us understand how and why youth would join military groups 'voluntarily'. Military groups can provide camaraderie and sense of belonging to a

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[52] Ibid P. XIV

[53] Brewer, Marilynn B., 2003, *Intergroup relations,* Open University Press, Philadelphia.

[54] As discussed before in relation to conflicts, Johnson (et al), 2006 *op cit.*.

[55] Galtung, Johan , 2006, ‖Theoretical Challenges of Peace Building with and for Youth: A Short Story from Post-Accord Europe‖ p. 261, In *Troublemakers or Peacemakers? Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building*, by Siobhan McEvoy-Levy.

group, in addition to physical security and a source of food and shelter. Understandably, this could seem very appealing to youth in many conflict situations.

Baumann shows how ethnic identity and religion, and an idea that the 'authority on bonds of blood and decent ... are treated as if they were natural fact'.[56] That identity groups, such as rebel armies, can use both ethnic and religious identity to strengthen the bonds within a group and distance themselves further from the other groups.[57]

Further on arguing that 'ethnicity is a carefully cultivated, and not seldom a manipulated, strategy of social action lead by unelected elites'.[58] This shows how 'culture' or 'cultural identities'[59] can be manipulated and twisted to support an elite's or charismatic leader's goals of creating change and unity within a group. This seems to have been a common tactic amongst military leaders in Sierra Leone. Bauman changes the terms, so that the word 'identifications' replaces the word 'identities', and thereby changing the dynamics in which we see different group identities to be less static or beyond change and questioning.[60]

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[56] Baumann, Gerd, 1999, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities,* Routledge, New York, p. 136. Sometimes a group develop their own version of truths and logic, and ideas of your group being ‚the good' and the other group(s) 'the evil' and making the world look black and white is a tactic used to recruit people for certain causes.

[57] These bonds of belongingness are often exaggerated by distancing and contrasting your group from 'the other'. This process of otherisation can often lead to conflict between different groups.

[58] Baumann, Gerd, 1999, op cit. pp. 136-137
[59] Cultural identities seem to be considerably important for people, especially if they feel at risk or threatened. Language and different ways of expressing oneself (through anything from writing to arts and music) also seems to be strongly interlinked.
[60] It does not work to treat ‚identity as a reified cultural label‖ but rather 'a dialogical process'. Baumann, Gerd, 1999, op cit. pp. 137-138. This is further reinforced by Benhabib who argues that 'Culture has become a ubiquitous synonym for identity, an identity marker and differentiator.' Benhabib, Sayla, 2002, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Princeton University Press, Princeton. P. 1

Gender[61] has been argued by some to be one of the strongest identity factors for human being; 'Gender identity is one of the most fundamental aspects of life.'[62] Gender differ throughout cultures and time and the roles that different genders hold gets influenced by the politics and society around them. Then it is only natural to think about how gender influence conflicts. Gender roles and gender expectations also influence the situation of youth, as much in the conflict setting as well as in post- conflict settings where gender roles might look completely different than the situation before a conflict.

2.6   Theories of 'young participation' / Theories of participation

"When children are recognised as civil society actors, when they feel that their views are being listened to and taken into account, when they feel their concerns and aspirations are being addressed, only then will their rights be realised, and their full potential as active agents within society be recognised.[63]

There are several arguments for youth's participation ranging from arguments around their unique stage of development; to keep them from becoming troublemakers; based on the demographic size they make up; because they are the leaders / adults of tomorrow; both according to human and children's rights, and the fact that they are members of society. This section will concentrate on youth's participation, the different forms and levels of participation, mainly focusing on the relation to peacebuilding processes, but also considering youth participation in political and decision-making processes. Taking into consideration that youth are often seen as an in-between group, not quite a child nor a grown-

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[61] Gender is about how we learn to be men and women. It is a social aspect of our roles as human beings which is often, but not always, based on our physical biological sex.

[62] Hammarberg, Thomas, 2009, ‖Human Rights and Gender Identity‖ *Issue Paper*, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Strasbourg, available online: https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1476365 (last accessed 27 April 2011). Fiona Macaulay, from Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford also utter the same idea that gender is one of the most profound identity factors for human identity. Fiona Macaulay, (no date), ‖Gender What is the Big Deal, Gender Matters, available online: http://wn.com/Gender_Matters (last accessed, 27 April 2016)

[63] O'Kane, 2009, op cit. p. 281

up / adult, there is a need to look at children's rights as well as human rights in general, and still not forgetting about cultural relativism. Looking at theory of youth self-identification and the groups they identify themselves with can also help in the theorising of youth participation. I will also look at how important the encouragement of youth to use their voices are, as well as considering the consequences of youth who are being heard compared with youth who are silenced. I will also explore the idea that 'youth are essential to a sustainable peace'.

Graca Machel is an eager advocate for children and youth rights, she says that when we put 'children at the centre of reconstruction also means involving them as a resource. Young people must not be seen as problems or victims, but rather as key contributors in planning and implementing long-term solutions.'[64] She argues that civil society organisations are crucial for this to come true and to help facilitate the conditions for youth participants. She goes on to argue that international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) often play a major role in the emergency support, but that it is the government and national NGOs who makes sure that youth and children get a chance to contribute to the post conflict peacebuilding process. So it is important to give them support and resources so they can 'strengthen their capacity and broaden their scope.'[65]

There is more extensive writing on children's participation than youth's participation, and therefore a considerable amount of the theorising around youth participation is based on a combination of child rights and human rights. 'Each of the rights set out in the Convention [on the Rights of the Child] interrelate to each other. Participation goes hand-in-hand with protection, development and survival.' [66] So a holistic approach to understanding and fulfilling the right of children is necessary, and to not forget about youth. Save the Children

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[64] see p. 177 in Machel, Graca, 2001 op cit.
[65] Ibid p. 178
[66] O'Kane, 2009, p. 261 op cit.

Norway argue for the rights of children to take part in peace processes and peace agreements.[67] They see it as important that all members of society get a say and a chance to influence the future, no matter the age. Graca Machel says that 'putting children at the centre of reconstruction also means involving them as a resource. Young people must not be seen as ... victims, but rather as key contributors in planning and implementing long-term solutions.'[68]

"Supporting the rights of adolescents and youth, especially their participation, is not only an obligation, it is essential good practice."[69]

As debated above, the terms; youth and children, are highly politicised and so it influences the roles they play in peace processes. Youth are often the image of negative roles of children and youth, whereas child is related to innocence and in need of protection.[70] But several advocates for children and youth participation say it is important to put these aside for children and youth to reach their full potential for participation.[71] Within this lies the notion that it is very important to realise that 'youth' and 'children are not a homogeneous group' they 'will have different perspectives and experiences' according to context; age, nationality, location, time, – the socio- cultural context and 'it is crucial to recognise the diversity of children's [and

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[67] Save The Children Norway, 2005 -Listen to us! Children s rights in peace processes and peace agreements‖ (Online) Available at: http://www.reddbarna.no/soek?q=listen+to+us (Accessed on 24 April 2016)

[68] Graca Machel, 2001, op cit. pp. 177-178. Clare O'Kane (et al) 2009, op cit. p. 260 argues that the importance of children parrticipation is about 'creating the space for girls and boys of different ages and abilities to express their views and experiences, so that these can be heard, listened to and acted upon by a range of adults to further the realisation of children's rights' in particular in relation to 'the contributions of children to peacebuilding efforts such as reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation, which bring with them the hope of a more secure world.'

[69] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, *Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict,* New York.

[70] Sommers, Mark, 2006, - op cit. Hendrixson, Anne, 2004, - op cit., Urdal, Henrik, 2006, 'A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence', *International Studies Quarterly,* 50, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.

[71] 'Western concepts of childhood as a time of innocence, dependency and powerlessness need to be challenged if we are to find ways to divert children and young people from violent action to nonviolent action for positive social change.' O'Kane (et al), 2009, op cit. p. 263

youth's] experiences and to create opportunities for the views and opinions of children of all age groups to be heard.'[72]

When considering youth in a post conflict peacebuilding setting, it might be relevant to look at peacebuilding process as ways to renegotiate roles of children and youth in the political and societal sphere. As well as advocating for youth, children and women's presence in peace-accords so it can facilitate for their future participation of implementing the peace.[73] There need to be a social and political inclusion of youth in the process of transforming conflict and in peacebuilding and 'to recognise children and young people as social and political beings'.[74] This is based on the argument that youth may have experiences and capacities that can work well for the new social and political structure coming out of war. Otherwise, it is argued, they may very well stand in opposition to this new structure and feel alienated by the process and not want to participate later on.[75]

'Supporting the rights of adolescents and youth, especially their participation, is not only an obligation, it is essential good practice.'[76] Wessells argues for youth's positive participation in post conflict peacebuilding in order to integrate them so they can play a positive role in their societies in the post conflict era. 'To build peace in a post-accord environment, it is vital to engage youth in positive ways, enable them to assume a positive role in civilian society,

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[72] Ibid p. 261
[73] McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan, 2006, op cit..
[74] O'Kane (et al), 2009, op cit. p. 263

[75] 'For peace to be sustainable, the adults of tomorrow need to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the creation and maintenance of a climate of peace.' O'Kane (et al), 2009, p. 274 and Lori Drummond-Mundal and Guy Cave 'Children as the seeds of peace: Exploring children's potential contribution to conflict transformation and peacebuilding', Draft submitted to the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* (unpublished manuscript, 2006)

[76] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, op cit. *p.1.*

and integrate them into communities'.[77] To achieve this it is 'crucial for adults to support youth's initiatives and contributions to peacebuilding.'[78]

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter show some different strategies and thinking around peace and peacebuilding. It shows to some of the issues around definition of youth and how these can make youth's participation more problematic. We have also looked at how meaningful participation for youth (and children) is important, especially in situation of conflict and insecurity. Giving youth a chance for meaningful participation and a space to come together with their peers to utter their views, opinions and experiences and understanding of what has happened during the conflict. This 'can give children [and youth] strength and increase their life skills and self-confidence' Save the Children argue therefore that supporting meaningful children and youth participation is very important. 'There are many examples that illustrate how living through violent times has strengthened girls' and boys' aspirations for peace.'[79]

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[77] Wessells, Michael and Davidson Johan, op cit. P. 28.
[78] O'Kane, 2009, op cit. P. 276 -277, 'Chilren's role as agents of peace can be best fostered when the younger generation is engaged with a focus on their potential and their priorities.' O'Kane (et al), 2009, p. 260
[79] O'Kane, 2009, op cit. p. 274

CHAPTER THREE: INTRODUCING THE CASE STUDY: SIERRA LEONE

3.1   Introduction

"Sierra Leone's [civil war] one of the world's most horrifying wars"[80]

Six years ago, in the spring of 2010, Sierra Leone was awarded the African Peace Award by ACCORD (African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes).[81] It has come a long way since the end of the civil war in 2002 and has now been recognised for its effort of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This chapter seeks to give an understanding of the processes Sierra Leone has had to go through to get to where it is today. It will be focusing, as this whole dissertating on youth and especially their roles through the whole process as well as how the war has impacted on them. To understand the post-conflict situation, there need to be an understanding of the civil war and how Sierra Leone got to where it is today and how this has affected the people along the way.

"Sierra Leone's troubled history reflects a familiar pattern in post-independence Africa: a brief experiment in democracy in the early 1960s quickly replaced by thirty years of one-party civilian government or military rule."[82]

Sierra Leone is still recovering from the civil war, which lasted 11 years; from 1991 to 2002.[83] The civil war has affected all layers of society and has affected people in different ways. It is relevant to think about the history of Sierra Leone as this sets some of the context of the conflict

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[80] Wessells, 2006, op cit. p. 28

[81] ACCORD, 2010, 'The Nation of Sierra Leone shines at ACCORD 2010 Africa Peace Award', accessed online: http://www.accord.org.za/apa/2010-africa-peace-award.html (Last accessed on 29 May 2016)

[82] Hirsch, John L., 2001, *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London. P.28

[83] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2008, Country at a Crossroads: Challenges Facing Young People in Sierra Leone Six Years after the War, New York. Available online at: http://womensrefugeecommission.org/docs/sl_youth.pdf (Last accessed 27 May 2016)

in the country. Sierra Leone has an extensive colonial history and its road after the independence was not easy as we will see below.

3.2   Historical overview

Portuguese explorers gave Sierra Leone its name, they thought 'the high coastal ranges resembled lions ... the area was called Sierra Lyoa, meaning Lion Mountains',[84] and thereof came the name Sierra Leone. From this point trade started between Europe and Sierra Leone, and not long after slave trade was included.[85] This lasted until the British in 1787 helped 400 freed slaves return to Sierra Leone to settle in the "Province of Freedom" or Freetown. This also marks the beginning of the colonial era.[86] Other groups of free slaves soon joined the settlement.[87] In 1808 this Freetown settlement became a crown colony this helped 'facilitate the enforcement of the Slave Trade Abolition Act.'[88] Still most of the country where in the hands of traditional leaders but 'in1896, the rest of the country was declared a protectorate' to protect resources such as timber, palm oil and peanuts.[89]

3.2.1   Declining politics

Sierra Leone gained its independence in 1961, based on 'the 1951 constitution provided a framework for decolonization', with Sir Milton Margai as Prime Minister after the completion successful 'constitutional talks in London in 1960.'[90] Sierra Leone decided on a parliamentary system within the British Commonwealth. Sierra Leone People's Party

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[84] Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 2009, Statistics Sierra Leone, Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Freetown, Sierra Leone. P. 1 Available online at: http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/uploads/DHS%20-%202008.pdf (last accessed 27 April 2011)

[85] Ibid.

[86] Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit p. 23

[87] US Department of State, 2010, Bureau of African Affairs, Country Profile of Sierra Leone, Available online at: http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm (Last accessed 27 May 2016)
[88] US Department of State, 2010 op cit.
[89] Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 2009, op cit p. 2 and Melvin E. Page, 2003, *Colonialism: an international social, cultural, and political encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, California, pp.530-531. As well as BBC, 2010, *Timeline: Sierra Leone,* available online at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1065898.stm (last accessed 27 June 2016)
[90] US Department of State, 2010 op cit, and Melvin E. Page, 2003, op cit pp. 530-531

(SLPP) with Sir Milton in front held 'the first general election under universal adult franchise in May 1962.'[91]

Upon his death in 1964 'the pattern of corrupt politics began and accelerated' when the state no longer was seen as stewardship in the public interest 'but as the power base for personal gain and aggrandizement.'[92] Democracy did not last long in Sierra Leone. In the 1967 elections where Stevens won a contested democratic election, he seemed to have won an inconclusive general election' and therefore defeated the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).[93] An opposition party defeated the SLPP, for the first time since the independence. Siaka Stevens used a combination of tactics to gain control over Sierra Leones politics, such as 'guile, flattery, bribery, and intimidation.'[94]

This was followed by a series of coups, one was a military intervention encouraged by the previous president Albert Margai, led by Force Commander Brigardier Lansana who put both Stevens and the Governor General under house arrest,[95] before he himself 'was promptly removed from office by a group of young officers under the leadership of Major Juxon-Smith.'[96] Another coup was staged by a group of officers and Stevens was at last, in April 1968, sworn in as the democratically elected president.[97]Albert Margai continued to contest the presidency of Stevens and his military attempt of hindering Stevens from getting into power has been said to have 'paved the way for what became a military nightmare of the

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[91] US Department of State, 2010 op cit.
[92] Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit p. 28.
[93] A.B. Zack-Williams, 1999, -Sierra Leone: the political economy of civil war, 1991 – 98‖, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 20 no.1, p. 144, AND: A.B. Zack-Williams, 2008, *The Search for Sustainable Democracy, Development and Peace: The Sierra Leone 2007 Elections*, Nordiska Afrikains titutet, Uppsala, p. 9, available online at: http://www.nai.uu.se/publications/electronic_publ/978-91-7106-619-0-1.pdf. Also see; US Department of State, 2010 op cit. for descriptions of what happened around the 1967 elections.
[94] Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit p. 28.
[95] Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit p. 28.
[96] A.B. Zack-Williams, 1999, op cit p. 144, AND: A.B. Zack-Williams, 2008, op cit p. 9. Also see; US Department of State, 2010 op cit.

[97] Ibid . And Hirsch, John L., 2001, p. 28-29.

nineties.'[98] Stevens's presidency marked the start of an unstable period both politically and economically for Sierra Leone, with several coups and coup attempts. In 1978 Sierra Leone became a one-party state; All People's Congress was the only legal party.[99] Stevens ruled the country with an 'iron fist'.[100] The suppressing regime of Stevens – not allowing other political parties or 'popular political action' – he had a strong grip on society and destroyed the civil society, which lead to increasing resentment against the APC rule.[101]

The events leading up to the start of the civil war, the decline in political support and legitimacy, as well as decline in the economic situation for Sierra Leone was driven by an increasingly more forceful president, who used executions and military force against his opposition when cooption did not work.[102] Through his constant use of the military forces to stay in power, and attempting to build up an infrastructure as an attempt to gain popular support within the national boarders as well as to gain Pan- African recognition, he ended up bankrupting the state treasury and losing the confidence from the people of Sierra Leone. This was all part of the start of the declining economy and the cycles of violence in Sierra Leone. As well as fueling an increasing discontent and distrust in the government by the people of Sierra Leone, in addition to increasing the conflict and hatred between different groupings in Sierra Leone, which lead to a militarisation of the people of the country. At the end of Stevens 'Seventeen –year plague of locusts' he had managed to thoroughly corrupt 'every institution of the state.'[103]

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[98] Hirsch, John L., 2001, p. 29
[99] Zack-Williams, op cit 2008, pp. 9 – 10, And Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit p. 28
[100] Ibid.

[101] P. 145 in A.B. Zack-Williams, 1999 op cit.

[102] Stevens used executions as an example for what could happen to you if you did not follow him.Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit. P.29

[103] Ibid p. 29

Stevens stepped down in 1985 and Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh replaced him.[104] He continued the repressive, corrupt and ineffective government, leading to further economic collapse and unsuccessful involvement in the neighbouring county Liberia's civil war.[105] Throughout most of the 1980s the government expenditure seemed to 'out stripped revenues,' this lead to a 'long route to the International Financial Institutions and a series of Structural Adjustment Programmes ... worsening the economic and political situation, as devaluation and deregulation triggered widespread inflation, unemployment' and the 'effect of adjustment was the intensification of popular political action as workers resorted to strikes'.[106]

This led to a situation where the bankrupt government did not manage to pay its civil servants who in desperation resorted to ransacking 'their offices, stealing furniture, typewriters, and light fixtures' and it was 'noted that the government hit bottom when it stopped paying schoolteachers and the education system collapsed.'[107] The consequences of this was that teachers started to charge the parents of their students, which lead to only professional families being able to afford paying for the education of their children.[108]

3.2.2 The civil war

The war in Sierra Leone, begun March 23 1991,[109] 'when a small rebellion took shape on the eastern border with Liberia'.[110] The war included 'two main players, the Republic of

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104 Ibid p. 30 and US Department of State, 2010.

105 ibid P.30
106 P. 145 in A.B. Zack-Williams, 1999, op cit
107 Hirsch, John L., 2001, op cit p. 30

108 Ibid p.30

109 Wessells, Michael and Davidson Johan, op cit P. 29

110 Richards, 1996, op cit p. XV

Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and opposition forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and its ally, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)'.[111] With a situation where the state was losing the major trust and support from its people, the alternative that the rebel movements gave seemed quite favourable. Youth were unemployed, uneducated and frustrated with the current political situation. The RUF (Revolutionary United Front) advertised themselves as a 'people's movement for the national recovery'.[112]

There were several disputes around the motivation for the rebel fighters in Sierra Leone. In the previous section we saw a description of both economic and political decline. Richards argues that war in Sierra Leone was politically rooted rather than a huge amount of criminal acts committed by bandits which have been the argument of others.[113] Some have also argued for diamonds and other valuable resources have been one of the major fuels for the civil war.[114]

The lack of a functioning education system led to the number of children on the streets soared and without education or any economic opportunity they became alienated from the government and the road to the rebel group RUF (Revolutionary United Front) became shorter.[115] But also many educated youths found themselves unemployed, and attracted by the RUF. The politics of youth in the pre-war context in Sierra Leone was based on a lumpen culture, which reflected 'a mixture of reggae and genja, elements of Qaddafia's Gerrn Book,

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[111] Wessells, Michael and Davidson Johan, 2006, op cit p. 29

[112] Richards, 1996, op cit p. 1

[113] Kaplan, R. D., *1993 Balkan Ghosts: a journey through history*, Macmillian, London. And Kaplan, R.D., 1994, 'The coming anarchy: how scarcity, crime, overpopulation and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet', *Atlantic Monthly*, February. Richards, 1996, op cit. *pp*. XV – XX

[114] Collier, 2002, 'Doing well out of war: An economic perspective', in Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone (edt), 2000, *Greed and Grievance: economic agendas in civil wars*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London.

[115] Hirsch, John L., 2001, *op cit.* p. 30

and rather abstract Pan-Africanist notions, led these youth ultimately in the direction of rebellion through the Revolutionary United front.'[116] The RUF they took advantage of people's discontent and grievances, gained support and strength from them. They were also able to take advantage of the relatively easily extractable diamonds.[117]

The youth's involvement in the civil war in Sierra Leone is highly significant. They made up high numbers of the soldiers, both for the rebels, but also for the government forces. In the conflict in Sierra Leone the rebels captured youth from different villages as ways of recruiting new members. But many also joined to fight for their county and their rights, the rebel RUF advertised themselves as a people's movement which made it more attractive to join them.[118] The war in Sierra Leone was highly influenced by a globalized world. We can see this through the adaption of 'western' cultures both through the clothing,[119] music and films, and the use of media. The rebel forces used western films such as Rambo to socialise their newly recruited youth soldiers into violence. One might even start talking of cultures of violence, because violence became so normalised in Sierra Leone.[120]

3.2.3 The end of the civil war

The end of the civil war in Sierra Leone was relatively chaotic. The process of ending the conflict started with the Lome Peace Agreement in 1999, this was a third attempt to resolve

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[116] Adebajo, Adekeye, 2004, *West Africa's security challenges: building peace in a troubled region*, International Peace Acadamy Occasional Paper Series, p. 204.

[117] Keen, David, 2005, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, Palgrave, New York, p. 8
[118] Richards, 1996, *op cit.* p. 1

[119] The youth who were 'good' soldiers; who committed the worst atrocities, got 'nice western' clothes as rewards for their acts.

[120] UNESCO, 1996, *From a culture of violence to a culture of peace*, UNESCO, Paris. Curle, Adam. 1999, *To tame the Hydra: undermining the culture of violence*, Jon Carpenter Publishing, Charlbury.

the conflict and end the civil war. 'Initially, the ceasefire was successful, but the attacks and killings resumed, and demobilized child soldiers accompanied by ECOMOG were abducted once again.'[121] With support from the UN and British government forces Sierra Leone went through a DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) process which helped stabilize the country and in May 2002 elections were held. This is said to be the end of the violent conflict in Sierra Leone, even though it had many more challenges to face.[122]

Previous peace accords failed because the RUF continued fighting, to gain more power and control as well as to keep control over the 'conflict diamonds', which had funded the conflict.[123] But also lack of trust and respect kept the conflict going. The Lome Peace Agreement seemed to fail because many RUF soldiers had been soldiers and fighters since childhood and had grown up as warriors and maintained their urge to fight and RUF maintained control over large areas in the north and east.[124] The RUF conducted re-abduction of demobilised youth soldiers and could continue their fight. When the PUF captured 500 UN mandated peacekeepers the fighting started again. 'UK intervention at such a critical juncture in Sierra Leone ultimately saved both the [UN] mission and the peace process.'[125]

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[121] World Youth Report 2003. (2003). The Global Situation of Young People. New York, U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, p. 381, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/worldyouthreport.pdf

[122] World Youth Report 2003, op cit. pp. 381 – 386 and McIntyre, 2003. The 'British involvement following the near collapse of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone presented an early example of UK PSO doctrine in practice.' Ramsbotham et al. 2005, op cit. pp. 142-151. UK Ministry of Defence, 2004, The Military Contribution to Peace Support Operations (JWP 3.50), 2nd edn, Shivenham, UK, Joint Doctrine and Concepts centre.

[123] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit p. 28.
[124] Ibid, p. 28.
[125] Ramsbotham et al. 2005, op cit p. 153

3.3   Definition of youth in Sierra Leone

"It is a misnomer in many parts of Africa to call a fourteen-year-old carrying an AK-47 a child soldier since local people may regard that young person as an adult"[126]

The Sierra Leone National Youth Policy from 2003, after the end of the conflict saw youth as any person between the ages of 15 and 35,[127] 'this does not exclude any young Sierra Leonean liable to Youth related needs, concerns and influences.'[128] Even so, there are many that argue that defining the age group 'youth'can be quite difficult for many different reasons, see previous chapter. So finding the exact number of child or youth soldiers can be challenging. Michael Wessells and David Jonah write that 'the definition of 'child' and 'youth' soldiers is culture bound and needs to be problematized'.[129] In rural parts of Sierra Leone, as well as many other rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa, 'people regard childhood as having ended when a young person has completed the culturally scripted rite of passage'.[130] In Sierra Leone, as many other African countries, has a wider definition of youth that 'can include people in their forties.'[131]

So setting exact age ranges for the terms children and youth proves difficult. Limiting these terms to a specific age range is also very typical approach for western societies.[132] So determining the percentage of youth in the population can be problematic. There are several different suggestions of the percentage of youth in Sierra Leone varying from 20% to over 50%.[133]

The politics of terms and its meanings means that youth often meet many prejudices in form of the labels given to a person; youth, from several angles makes reintegration of youth even

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[126] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit p. 29
[127] Lahai, 2008, p. 5. Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, 2003, available online: http://www.youth-policy.com/Policies/SLENational_Youth_Policy.pdf (Last accessed: 19.06.2016) p. 1
[128] Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, 2003, p. 1.
[129] Wessells, Michael and Davidson Jonah, 2006, -op cit. P.29
[130] This usually occurs at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Wessels et al. 2006, op cit, p. 29
[131] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit p. 30
[132] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit, p. 29
[133] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit, p. 29

harder. There are several negative analyses that both doubt that former youth soldiers will be able to return in light of what has happened, others characterize the youth soldiers as hardened killers 'who have become traumatized, numbed to violence and have become 'damaged goods' who have little or no prospect of returning home or recovering'[134] Some argue that these negative images can easily become 'self-fulfilling prophecies' and do not fit well with the resilience and flexibility of the Sierra Leonean youth and community.[135] This is a very negative prospect for youth in post-conflict areas. This does not fit in with an inclusive peacebuilding process.

3.4   Participation patterns in Sierra Leone prior to the civil war

As the historical overview suggest, the participation in Sierra Leones politics prior to the civil war was rather limited. Even so called democratic elections were contested. The political sphere seemed to be influenced more by the politics of force and power, than by the power of the people.

Youth participation was not at all recognised before the civil war.[136] The government system in Sierra Leone before the outbreak of war has been categorized as a dictatorship, and some of the contributing factors for the war have said to be 'centralization of power; massive state corruption, including maladministration by traditional chiefs; massive unemployment, particularly among young people.'[137]

'Prior to the outbreak of hostilities between Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the government in 1991, Sierra Leone's youth were already facing prospects of an uncertain future

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[134] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit p. 37.
[135] Ibid p. 37.
[136] Lahai, 2008, p.5.
[137] Dyfan, Isha, 2003, ‖Peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and ensuring participation of women – A framework of model provisions‖ Expert Group Meeting, *United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women* (DAW), Ottawa, Canada.

due to a combination of factors.'[138] This uncertainty made youth an easy target for recruiting soldiers willing to fight for a better future. Youth themselves see poverty and lack of education as some of the root causes of civil war in Sierra Leone, as well as 'believing that the conflict stemmed from social inequality, the mismanagement of Sierra Leone's natural resources and the political marginalization of young people'.[139]

3.5 Participation during the civil war

Youth have been said to have been a significant part of the fighting forces during the civil war in Sierra Leone. A concrete example is that RUF the end of the war consisted of 50% children,[140] so under 18 year olds. There are no clear records of the number of youth as a group in the rebel forces but we can only imagine the numbers they made up. On the gender perspective 25% of the children in RUF were girls. Children, youth and adults, boys and girls, women and men all play different roles and participate in different ways during conflicts and war time. A report from Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children says that during the civil war in Sierra Leone many youth 'were forced to fight, to flee or to work as commercial sex workers or in the diamond mines.'[141] And during the conflict almost half of the population in Sierra Leone ended up displaced.

There are several factors that made numbers of youth participation in the civil war in Sierra Lone so high, some of them are explored here. Youth's participation 'in the politics of violence in Sierra Leone has its roots in the country's political past. The mobilisation of youth in politics was a strategic move that targeted the group that was arguably most affected by decades of

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[138] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, -op cit
[139] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, op cit pp. 6-7.
[140] Wessells, 2005, p. 363.
[141] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2008, *Country at a Crossroads: Challenges Facing Young People in Sierra Leone Six Years after the War*, New York. Available online at: http://womensrefugeecommission.org/docs/sl_youth.pdf (Last accessed 27 June 2016)

economic decline and social degradation.'[142] It has also been argued that youth's 'participation in armed hostilities is facilitated through the trade of small arms and light weapons.'[143] The combination of political motivation and the availability of small arms made it practically possible for youth and children to participate; and are some of the reasons for youth's involvement in the war.

The biggest reason for the high number of young participants in the war seems to be due to forced recruitment and abductions. There are academic arguments for both voluntary and forced recruitment of children and youth for armed groups in Sierra Leone.[144] The living conditions both prior and during the war 'often blur the boundaries between voluntary and forced recruitment ... entry of child soldiers by militarized group, invites reflection on multiple causations and linkages of macrosocial and microsocial processes that influence the process of entry into soldiering.'[145] Child and youth soldiers own testimonies often offer a more complex image of the recruitment process, as well as showing variations between and within the RUF and CDF.[146]

Wessells warns against thinking of all young soldiers or 'youth soldiers' as similar, and having had similar roles and experiences during their time spent with the armed groupings.[147] This kind of thinking can make the DDR process problematic, it is important to understand that youth were taking on different roles and participating in different ways. Still it can be useful to look at some of the typical ways youth participated during the conflict. These include according to Wessells; 'combatants, cooks, spies, and bodyguards,' it was not uncommon for the youth to have several duties or roles at the same time. However there were

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[142] McIntyre, Angela, 2003,
[143] World Youth Report, 2003, p. 371
[144] Wessells,2005, op cit pp. 364-366
[145] Wessels et al. 2006, op cit p. 30.
[146] Ibid pp. 30-33.
[147] Ibid p. 33.

some individuals who had 'Specialized roles such as torturers or sex slaves.'[148] Drug use was not uncommon among youth and they were often forced to use different drugs, it was used to prepare them for combat. For girls and women the most common role was as sex slaves.[149] In RUF there were certain levels of forced participation in violence; Wessells writes that this has had a psychological effect 'of normalizing violence and reducing one's inhibitions against harming others.'[150] With this said, we should still not jump to the conclusion that 'all atrocities committed by youth were in response to direct orders.'[151] The armed forces often took drastic measures to keep the newly recruited members in RUF from running away to go home again the rebel forces used a number of tactics. One of the tactics was to stop the harvest for the village so that food would not be a reason for the youth to try to escape to go home. They did this by cutting of the hands off the women in the village so they could no longer take care of the harvest and therefore the village would not have much food. Even the frightening stories of women getting their hands cut off was enough to scare women from other villages from going out into their fields, which further ceased the harvest.

A second tactic used by the rebels to stop the youth from running home was to make them commit atrocities or commit murder towards their own family, neighbour or fellow villager. This would make the youth too ashamed to ever return home. This also served another purpose; to start the 'socialisation into violence'[152] for the young people.

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[148] Ibid pp. 33-37.
[149] Ibid, p. 36.
[150] Ibid, p. 34
[151] Ibid, p. 34

[152] Zack-Williams, Tunde B., 2006, 'Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone and the Problems of Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration into Society: Some Lessons for Social Workers in War-torn Societies', *Social Work Education,* Vol. 25, No. 2, p. 125.

3.6 Participation in the post conflict setting

"Sierra Leone, young former soldiers have contributed directly to ongoing cycles of political violence by remaining with military forces and fighting even following the signing of a ceasefire."[153]

The ceasefire in the quote above refers especially to the Lome Peace Agreement, which seemed to work for a while, but soon the fighting resumed. Wessells argue that it is crucial in a post-conflict or post-accord[154] setting to engage youth in positive ways to enable them to participate positively in civil society and their communities.[155]

The civil war was declared to be over in 2002. I will now look at participation after this event. At that point in time Sierra Leone was still facing major challenges to keep the peace, and had a huge task of building a sustainable peace in Sierra Leone. One of the biggest challenges it was facing was dealing with the legacy of youth soldiers and their reintegration into the society.

Even with the high numbers of youth participation during the conflict, the civil war has resulted in marginalisation of youth,[156] both in employment and the political life, as well as lack of education and a general lack of opportunities. Social marginalisation due to scepticism and fear of previous youth soldiers is a big problem. Having to face scepticism and prejudices makes youth's participation in the civilian life difficult.[157]

In 2008, six years after the war, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children launched a report that argued that:

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[153] Wessells, 2006, p. 27.

[154] McEvoy-Levy, 2006, pp. 1-2. She makes a distinction between post-accord and post-conflict, arguing that an accord is not enough to end a war, but argues it is a political agreement that often involve a form of ceasefire and a framework that can help to end the war/conflict. She see peace- accords as a turning point and an opportunity to start building a lasting peace and a new era.

[155] Wessells, 2006, p. 28

[156] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, -Children and youth

[157] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, -Children and youth + troublemakers or peacemakers.

"Greater investment in and attention to young people are urgently needed, in particular:

- *quality education, which requires that teachers get paid a living wage;*

- *opportunities to get back into the formal school system through catch-up classes to make up for years lost because of the war;*

- *investments in keeping young people in school, including income generation for families to make up for lost income when their children go to school; and*

- *skills training that is directly linked to market demand for young people for whom formal school is not an option.*

Young people will continue to play an important role in the country's stability and reconstruction and, as such, demand much more attention and support."[158]

Their emphasis lies on education and skills training to give youth the opportunities, skills and knowledge they need to be productive and positive participants in Sierra Leone. The report argues that young people require much more attention than what they are currently getting for them to be part of a stable peace in Sierra Leone.

Peace Building Initiative[159] also argues that for peace education and education in general as being a key tool to increase and improve the positive participation of youth.

In Peace Building Initiative's section on 'Children, Youth and Peacebuilding Processes'[160] they write about how 'youth are asserting themselves as true actors in the [peace] process' rather than focusing on peacebuilding as ways of dealing with victimization and marginalization. It

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[158] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2008,

[159] Peace Building Initiative, official web page, www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/

[160] Peace Building Initiative, 2009, 'Chidren, Youth and Peacebuilding Processes', available online:

http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index.cfm?pageId=2026 (Last accessed 28 Jine 2011)

focuses on the positive aspects of youth participation in the peacebuilding process and the kind of roles they take on.

"Young people interviewed their peers about a range of issues to answer questions central to this research: What are the main problems of adolescents in your society? What are some solutions to these problems? What is adolescence, and how does someone become an adult in your society?"[161]

In Sierra Leone youth have been active participants in research conducted by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. This series of research designed and led by adolescent research teams are field-based and action-oriented studies. Many of these youth have ended up 'in intensive follow-up advocacy and related youth-led programs.' During the research the young researchers 'worked closely with adults ...[who] later used the young people's results to shape policies and programs.'[162] So in relation to the Women's Commission, the youth in Sierra Leone have been active participants in shaping their future and possibly the future for participation for other young people in different parts of the world, by helping to shape policies for big agencies.

3.7   Conclusion

This chapter have been exploring the history of Sierra Leone and its links with the current context. It has looked at youth's participation at different stages in history and especially relating to the civil war. It shows active youth who have been keys to shaping the political life. This chapter has shown the links between a corrupt government, economic decline and a failing

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[161] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, *Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict*, New York, p.1.
[162] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, *Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict*, New York, p.1.

educational system have contributed to high numbers of youth participation. The next chapter

will look closer at youth's participation in the post-conflict peacebuilding.

Chapter FOUR: Youth's participation in Sierra Leones peacebuilding process

4.1 Introduction

"Until recently, children have not been recognised formally by peace agreements. In July 1999, the Lome Peace Agreement in Sierra Leone included several provisions relating to children ... it remains a precedent in recognising children's importance within the peace and reconstruction agenda."[163]

Youth have participated in various different ways in Sierra Leones post-conflict peacebuilding process. But in much of the literature there is much written about youth marginalisation, exclusion and non-participation in the post-conflict context in Sierra Leone. Many of the challenges youth face in the peacebuilding process is linked to youth's participation in the conflict. There is still some evidence of youth's contribution to the peacebuilding. This is perhaps more true in the unofficial peacebuilding, at a local level and through youth led organisations. Youth's participation has most often been with and for their peers, and not as much for national peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the local level peacebuilding has a huge influence on the wider peacebuilding.

In the post-agreement period, after the Lome Peace Agreement,[164] people from the younger generation, under 25 years old, (including children) have been active participants of various peace strategies. Among others in truth commissions, contributing to justice restoration, and

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[163] Machel, 2001, p. 176.

[164] The Sierra Leone Web on the Loma Peace Accords, http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html (Accessed on 4 July 2016) and Sierra Leone UNOMSIL, (Online) http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unomsil/UnomsilB.htm#LOME Accessed on 4 July 2016.

demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration. [165] Youth participating and conducting research on challenges facing adolescents in their own setting.[166]

It has been argued that 'the linkage between youth and post-accord peace building are nowhere more apparent than in Sierra Leone'.[167] Youth and children have been used in the conflict in Sierra Leone as political actors of violence. It has been argued that the involvement of youth and children have directly led to their marginalisation and limiting them to an apolitical role in society.[168] During the conflict youth often held or took on very important political roles, and being vital to the political situation in the country.[169] The marginalisation of young Sierra Leoneans has not properly addressed through the DDR process.[170] Though there has been some initiatives and projects focusing on the wider term youth and not just the child soldiers.

This chapter will be looking at some of the concrete examples of youth's participation in the post conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. First I will look at some of the difficulties that youth face. Thereafter I will examine the ways youth have been participating in spite of the challenges they face.

[165] Claire O'Kane, Clare Feinstein and Annette Giertsen, 2009, Children and Young People in Post- conflict Peacebuilding, pp. 274-275.

[166] In cooperation with Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children. L. Randolph Carter and Michael Shipler, 2005, ‒Youth: Protagonists for Peace‖ in People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society, Edited by Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema and Juliette Verhoeven. P. 151

[167] Wessells, Michael and Davidson Johan, ‒Recruitment and Reintegration of Former Youth Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Challenges of Reconciliation and Post-Accord Peace Building‖, in McEvoy-Levy, Siobhan, 2006, Troublemakers or Peacemakers? : Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame. P. 29
[168] McIntyre, Angela and Thokozani Thusi, 2003, ‒Children and Youth in Sierra Leone's Peace-Building Process‖, African Security Review, Vol12, no. 2. Numbers from 1996.
[169] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, "Children and youth"
[170] Hanson-Alp, Rosalind, 2008, ‒Youth and Security‖, Peace, Security and Development Update, Issue 4, June, Conciliation Resources, p. 3

4.2 Difficulties facing youth in the post conflict era

Youth in Sierra Leone have been facing many challenges and difficulties in the post conflict peacebuilding process. They are stigmatised as violent monsters, they lack education and life skills, seen as victims, they have low self-esteem, and trauma of the war. 'The children and youth of Sierra Leone had eleven years of their lives taken from them. Some youth perceive themselves as war criminals that are shunned by society. Further stigmatisation and social and economic marginalisation could increase their resentment of society.'[171] Angela McIntyre also argue that there might not be much use for rebuilding schools that youth have no sense of ownership over, that this may lead to more frustration and end up in destructive actions. She argues for more youth participation in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. Youth are a greatly stigmatised group in the post conflict setting in Sierra Leone (and West-Africa), this is partly linked to the politics of the terms 'youth' and 'children'.[172] Youth or young people are often associated as combatants even when this is not the case – there seem to almost be a general fright of what youth can potentially do.[173] Because of this association as ex-combatants 'they are excluded by society from the category of childhood and denied all the benefits normally associated with that category.'[174] This is part of the marginalisation of youth; they are seen as a symbol of the bad things that happened.

There are many adults who find it difficult to acknowledge children and youth's involvement in the war. Not just because of the horrific acts of violence, but also because this, disregarded the 'accepted norms about appropriate behaviour in childhood. Many adults have only been able to come to terms with children's part in the atrocities by holding that they were drugged

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[171] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, "Children and youth"
[172] See chapter 1 for more information.
[173] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, "Children and youth"
[174] Children and Poverty, Christian Children's Fund, pp. 22-23

during this time and hence not fully conscious of what they were doing.'[175] This adds a further difficulty for the youth to face in the post conflict setting. The differentiation of youth and children has also had a major consequence in the DDR programs, where many focused on demobilising child soldiers, and the youth over 18 years old were left in the DDR program designed for adults. 'This means that some of their specific needs for things such as therapy for trauma suffered during early years of recruitment are neglected.'[176] The fact that they were recruited as children does not seem to have been relevant in the DDR policies in Sierra Leone. Youth often end up in a grey area of the law where their specific needs, separate from those of adults, cannot be met and they become more vulnerable.

Youth who are quite dependent on adults' assistance and support have been disappointed on many occasions. Women's Commissions report show that 'young people also highlighted many situations where decision-makers failed to act, and emergency, post-conflict and development teams failed to systematically support their rights and roles with devastating consequences.'[177] This show one of the many errors that are pointed out in written works on youth participation, where the support network for youth is not in place. The disappointment in lack of support and follow-up of promises led 'demoralized adolescent soldiers threatened to return to war if international promises made to provide education and skills training were not kept. The absence of educational opportunities and jobs also drove some girls into commercial sex work, early marriages and continued poverty.'[178]

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[175] Children and Poverty, Christian Children's Fund, pp. 22
[176] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, "Children and youth"
[177] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005. P. 3.
[178] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005. P. 9.

4.3   Youth-led initiatives

'Despite limited support, many young people undertook livelihood initiatives on their own and with help from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Former adolescent soldiers began a bicycle cooperative in Makeni, Sierra Leone, supporting one another and providing needed transportation within the community.'[179]

Even though it is argued above that youth are quite reliant on adult's support, they 'will find variety of ways to cope with their circumstances. In some situations, as in Sierra Leone, young people are highly aware of their power and potential to force the changes they require through violent means.' Still youth will 'need guidance and support to identify healthy paths to a better life.'[180] This illustrates youth's resilience and vulnerability in an excellent way. It demonstrates how important it is for adults and agencies to support youth for them to use their energy in a positive and nonviolent way, and thereby be positive contributors for the society they live in and be part of building a sustainable peace.

Youth-led initiatives have the advantage of working with children and youth at a peer level. Patricia Ray argues for a peer and role-model approaches to behavioural transformation of children and youth in difficult situations, such as Sierra Leones post conflict situation. She writes that as 'children grow, the importance of their peers and older children in guiding their behaviour and forming their values increases.'[181] She shows that sharing experiences of having

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[179] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005. P. 13.
[180] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005. P. 15.
[181] P. 69 in; Ray, Patricia, 2010, ‖The participation of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations‖ in Percy-Smith, Barry and Nigel Thomas (edt.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from theory to practice*, Routledge, Oxon.

survived difficult situations with other young people is important for motivating other young people to take positive action and prevent risks.[182]

In *People Building Peace II* there is a story of two youth in Liberia that could also relate to the conflict in Sierra Leone. One was a child soldier and the other was a 'young leader' who participated in the study of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children as well as being 'a peer mediator for a local program funded by the U.S Agency for International Development.' What they have in common is that they were both participants in the conflict and they wanted to have an impact on the world around them. But they found profoundly different ways of doing so.[183] This shows that with adult support and adult facilitated initiatives youth can be engaged to find positive ways of contributing their societies and find alternatives to violent responses. Over time these two young people developed a friendship and through conversations and informal interactions the young soldier started to step away from the violent identity of a soldier; 'He switched from his alias to his real name, refused to take the daily ration of drugs that he had been given in order to control him, and left his AK-47 permanently under his bed.'[184] This is an example of how peers can influence each other in positive ways.

4.4   Youth organisations

Youth-led initiatives or programs often hand in hand with youth organisations.   Youth organisations often exist in a network of civil society organisations and they achieve best results when they cooperate with other organisations. 'Civil society groups play a key role in conflict

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[182] P. 69 in; Ray, Patricia, 2010, -The participation of children living in the poorest and most difficult situations‖ in Percy-Smith, Barry and Nigel Thomas (edt.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from theory to practice*, Routledge, Oxon.

[183] L. Randolph Carter and Michael Shipler, 2005, -Youth: Protagonists for Peace‖ in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, Edited by Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema and Juliette Verhoeven, pp. 147 – 148.

[184] L. Randolph Carter and Michael Shipler, 2005, p. 150,

resolution ... helping to build relationships between warring parties and training participants in diplomacy and conflict resolution.'[185] Machel argues here for youth in cooperation with civil society groups as key to building a stable and peaceful society. These youth-led organisations are often well situated to facilitate interactions (between peers) 'that help create viable alternatives to violence.'[186] These positive role-models can have a more profound impact on youth than many adult-led initiatives. In 2002, Sierra Leone 'had a large number of civil society youth organizations ... these groups gave voice and body to young people's concerns and capacities as principal actors in their individual and community recovery. They also formed solid focal points for constructive interaction with adults and adult-run programs, as well as with their peers.'[187]

"The large number of youth-run organizations in Sierra Leone is testament, however, to the commitment and desire of young people to participate in shaping the recovery of their society."[188]

4.4.1 Peacelinks

"Youths are not only the target beneficiaries, but they are valued as vital and integral members of the organization who guide the direction of the programming. We bring hope where there is despair, we bring laughter where there is sadness. We empower the disempowered through the teaching of life skills to the most disadvantaged of young people."[189]

The quote above is from the principles Peacelinks holds. Peacelinks is one of these youth-led organisations. They have 'utilized the arts to help other young people overcome their war

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[185] See p. 184 in Machel, Graca, 2001
[186] L. Randolph Carter and Michael Shipler, 2005, p. 150
[187] Women's Commission, 2005, p. 17.
[188] Women's Commission, 2002, p. 6.
[189] Peacelinks official web page. "About us": http://peace-links.org/new/about_us.html

trauma, learn new skills, and lead productive lives.'[190] They use visual and performing arts both to help young people overcome trauma, but also to address some of the issues in their society; 'such as violence, poverty, discrimination, hunger, illiteracy, joblessness, and military recruitment. The group uses creative arts to deglamourize warfare and to bridge the gap between the 'victim' and the 'perpetrator'.[191]

Kanyako writes about how Peacelinks uses *art as a multipurpose peacebuilding tool*. They use arts in numerous ways to achieve various aims. One of their main aims is to empower youth and to unite them with their communities. They have employed a program of youth mentorship based on the idea that 'children tend to talk more easily about their traumatic experiences with other young people than with elders.'[192]

McIntyre writes of some other youth-led organisations in Sierra Leone. MOCKY – Movement for Concerned Kono Youth 'was formed to articulate the grievances for youth and challenging their energies in a constructive way.' They have been said to be 'playing a very positive role in consolidating the peace in the area through mediation of disputes.'[193] Another one is YOSUPA – Youth for Sustainable Development. They have been 'involved with peace projects immediately after the end of the war to reflect the dynamism and potential energy of young people to take responsibility of the future of Sierra Leone. It is this energy that needs to be nurtured and resources provided for the development of young people of Sierra Leone in order for peace to be sustainable.'[194]

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[190] Kanayako, Vandy, 2005, -Using Creative Arts to Deglamorize War: Peacelinks in Sierra Leone‖ in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, Edited by Paul van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema and Juliette Verhoeven, pp. 293-300

[191] Peacelinks official web page. "About us": http://peace-links.org/new/about_us.html
[192] Kanayako, Vandy, 2005, pp. 293-300.
[193] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, "Children and youth"
[194] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, "Children and youth"

4.5   Youth as researchers

As mentioned in previous chapter, youth in Sierra Leone has been very active participants in research on youth and adolescent's situation in their societies. This has led many of them into advocacy work and related youth-led programs. The significance of youth as researchers has been that they have affected changes in policies and they have increased the 'awareness of the rights and capacities of young people among governmental, non-governmental and United Nations decision- makers'. A concrete example of what the young researchers in Sierra Leone achieved is within The United Nations Security Council. They incorporated the recommendations made by adolescents in Sierra Leone on HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation of children by aid workers into Resolution 1460 (on Children and Armed Conflict.[195] 'The research conducted by the adolescents confirms the abilities of young people to work successfully in partnership with adults. The participation of young people in activities that affect them must go beyond consultation to support their leadership and ideas.'[196]

4.6   Truth and reconciliation

UNICEF produced in 2004 a special report on the truth and reconciliation process for children. This report focused on themes like 'remembering the war', what truth and reconciliation commission is, what happened to children and youth during the conflict and what they do now.[197] In the report it is written:

"One of the wise men said, "If the children do not understand, it would not be proper to continue. They have suffered most during the war and they are the future of our country.""[198]

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[195] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, p. 31.
[196] Women's Commission, 2002, p. 6.
[197] UNICEF, 2004, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: For the Children of Sierra Leone,* online: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/TRCCF9SeptFINAL.pdf
[198] UNICEF, 2004, p. 1

So a 'wise woman' said she would explain. This report seems to be aimed at quite young children, and still leaves youth on the side. A report by Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children show that: 'overall, young people are willing to forgive what happened in the war if the lives of *all* children, adolescents and youth are improved through comprehensive education, livelihood and health support.'[199] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was open for all citizens to participate.

4.7   Education and skills building

As mentioned above, during the war many youth and children lost the opportunity to attend regular education and have therefore lost some of the possibilities of obtaining employment. McIntyre and Thusi wrote that 'youth in Sierra Leone need to learn life skills in addition to livelihood skills ... giving the youth multi-purpose capabilities that will ensure that they become complete citizens with psychological, intellectual and social skills that allows them to survive in society.'[200] These skills will help them take part in the political life in a non-violent manner.

Wessells argue that 'peace education is an essential element in a holistic approach to the reintegration of former child soldiers and to the prevention of youth's engagement in violence and terrorism.' He uses Sierra Leone as a case study to illustrate his points. He also argues that 'in the post conflict context, effective peace education has a stronger practical than didactic focus, and it stimulates empathy, cooperation, reconciliation, and community processes for handling conflict in a nonviolent manner.'[201] A combination of peace education and practical skills training seems to be what youth in Sierra Leone needs. Women's Commission writes that

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[199] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2002, -PRECIOUS RESOURCES:Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone‖, New York, p. 6.

[200] 'More importantly, such an approach will require working with the donor community to change some of the focus in their funding and realise that Sierra Leone has a challenge of re-orientating its youthful population to new ways of living and behaviour.' McIntyre, Angela, 2003, op cit.

[201] Wessells, 2005, op cit. p. 363

many young people in Sierra Leone expressed concerns 'about access to education (formal and non-formal, as well as vocational training), livelihood and health care to ensure their recovery and avoid further war... [youth] called education *the top solution* to the problems they face across all conflicts.'[202] This shows how important education is to youth and how they see it as the best solution to the problems they face.

Addressing problems of poverty and marginalisation, through employment and education is vital for youth's survival and dignity. Youth in Sierra Leone has expressed that said that 'access to education opportunities would help them feel less excluded from society.'[203] Reconstruction of youth's identity, away from a combat identity is important for them to find their place in societal life. This links in with the lack of positive civilian roles for youth to take on in the post conflict setting. And spiritual life of the youths is important for them as much as for their local communities and to help link the other aspects together.

4.8   Media and communication

In Sierra Leone there have been several programs involving both youth and children in radio programs. 'Search for Common Ground (SCG) supported Talking Drum Studio in Sierra Leone, engaging young people as producers, reporters and actors who identify issues for and about young people and advocate on their behalf using radio.'[204] Save the Children have also written a report on young voices on the radio, this were mostly 'based on children reporting events around them and talking freely about what they feel should be done about building and cementing peace in Sierra Leone'.[205] This again states a way of young participation in the

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[202] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005. op cit. P. 2.
[203] Ibid , p. 9.
[204] Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005, op cit. p. 27.

[205] Save the children Norway, 2005, op cit. P. 16

peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. Also the government of Sierra Leone has recognised the important role radio programs can play for youth's participation:

"The Ministry of Youth and Sport has identified the establishment a 'Youth Radio' as a platform where youth will be involved in the development of programmes and be able to articulate their needs without interference, as well as convey their views on the future of Sierra Leone. The ideas are that the programmes should not focus on the past and lament history but on the rediscovery of 'youthness' and give the youth back their worth. This can take form of promoting youth talent and exporting it by tapping into such art forms as the unique 'Bubu music'."[206]

4.9   Reintegration as means of building peace

There are several difficult areas for the reintegration of youth soldiers, they include; reconciliation, poverty, identity, lack of a positive civilian role and spiritual contamination.[207] The reintegration of youth needs to take these challenges into account. Reconciliation with local communities is crucial for successful reintegration and a thriving peace. Wessells and Jonah writes about the task of reintegrating youth soldiers as means of building peace at the grass roots level.[208] They focus on the wider term youth rather than child soldiers 'since a wider emphasis on youth is necessary for post-conflict peace-building.'[209] This is based on the problems Sierra

Leone face in regards to youth marginalisation and alienation from the peace-accord process. Involving youth in their society in positive ways mean that these youths would be less inclined to fall back into the cycles of violence.

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[206] McIntyre, Angela, 2003, op cit.

[207] Wessells, Michael and Davidson Johan, 2006, op cit. 37 – 40

[208] Ibid. p. 29.
[209] Ibid. p. 29.

4.9.0 Conclusion

"Young people participated in destroying Sierra Leone in the war; this is an urgent call to the adult world to engage young people in the constructive redevelopment of their communities in peacetime. Young people say this is best done through efforts that support and develop their capacities and that allow them to play a direct part in decision-making, project implementation and evaluation. Young people from all sides of the conflict — rebel and pro-government forces, civilians and youth activists — must work together to take action for a unified Sierra Leone."[210]

Youth in Sierra Leone have been mostly participating in localised projects or projects aimed at their peers. They have been active in starting youth-led organisations to help each other economically, socially and mentally. Peacelinks were mentioned as an example of youth's active use of arts both for dealing with trauma, as well as commenting on addressing different issues in society. Through youth-led research in cooperation with the Women's Commission youth have been able to find out a bit more about some of the problems they face and to come with recommendations for policy-makers of solutions to their problems.

Education seem to be overwhelmingly important to youth, they see this as a solution to their problems. With an education they will have opportunities for jobs and thereby find a way out of poverty.

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[210] Women's Commission, 2002, op cit. p. 6.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This thesis started with a quote by a youth leader who stated that youth are often overlooked when the peace comes and the war is over. This thesis has been looking at different terms connected to youth's participation in post conflict peacebuilding, and has discovered and noted that these terms are quite complex. There are many different aspects that influence the terms and how they are used. There is not just one way of building peace, but multiple tactics at different levels of society. It is often argued that a holistic approach is very necessary for a successful peace.

The findings for the research question suggest that there are many ways in which youth participate in the post conflict peacebuilding. But youth also faces many challenges to their participation. There are many obstacles that they have to climb to get to the highest level of participation. Among these are perceptions of youth's role in society. These perceptions often change during armed conflicts. Even in societies that have not gone through a war, youth are often looked at negatively. In the case of Sierra Leone youth are often associated with the armed forces and as (ex) combatants. Many believe that the violent identities that youth (were forced to) took on during the civil war will always be part of their identity, and that they will never be able to participate as full, peaceful civilians in the society.

Youth themselves and advocates for youth's participation argue for the importance of education and skills building. This is particularly important in a post conflict setting, such as Sierra Leone, where many youths have lost out on 11years worth of education. Many of them have also lost out on family life and learning general life skills due to the war. So a broad scale education and skills building is a very important way of building a sustainable peace in Sierra Leone. This strategy along with a political willingness to provide jobs for all these youth is essential for them to become full members of society and to be able to participate in a positive way.

Youth's involvement in media channels, such as radio can help them learn from their peers. Radio can be used as a platform for youth to get together and share their experiences, and help each other find solutions to the problems they face. One example from Makeni, Sierra Leone, were some former youth soldiers began a bicycle cooperative, they supported one another and provided needed transportation within the community. This is just one of many positive initiatives taken on by youth.

It has also been argued in this thesis that it is important for adults in the youth's local community to support the young people in positive ways and gently guide them in a peaceful and nonviolent direction.

Within this holistic approach is where I suggest that we can start adding an 'age lens'. By this I mean to keep one's eyes open for the different age groups participation on different levels in society. Asking questions of who the active participants are can help us realise who is getting marginalised or left out. By noticing who has been left out, and who have participated where can be very important for policymaking and implementation of programs.

As a final remark for this thesis I want to say that youth is, and should not be, the only participants in a peacebuilding process. I think that all members of society need to have a say and a chance to participate in a meaningful way in their societies, no matter, age, gender, ethnicity, dis-ability etc.

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