

**PEACE AS SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION:  
INTERGENERATIONAL POWER-STRUGGLES AND THE ROLE OF  
YOUTH IN POST-CONFLICT SIERRA LEONE**

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For Musa  
Wishing you and your people a bright future

# Peace as Societal Transformation: Intergenerational Power-Struggles and the Role of Youth in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone

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***Abstract***

Intergenerational solidarity and reciprocity are fundamental building blocks of any society. At the same time, socio-generational groups constantly struggle for influence and authority. In Sub-Saharan Africa, disproportionately male, gerontocratic and patrimonial systems governing economic, social and political life lend a special explosiveness to the social cleavage of generation. This dissertation draws on the concept of the generational contract to explore whether Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war (1991-2001) – labelled a '*revolt of youth*' – catalysed changes in the power-asymmetries between age groups. Based on fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2010, I argue that youth in post-war Sierra Leone question fundamental norms of intergenerational relations and challenge local governance structures demanding changes to the generational contract. Amidst a strong continuity of gerontocratic dominance and counter-strategies from elders, youth draw on organisational forms and a local rights discourse to create spaces for contestation and negotiation. These openings hold potential for long-term rearrangements of societal relations in the medium to long-term future.

**List of Abbreviations**

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AFRSL	Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone
APC	All People's Congress
BRA	Bike Riders Association
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FSU	Family Support Unit
GNI	Gross National Income
GTZ	German Technical Corporation (now GIZ)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NDMC	National Diamond Mining Corporation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NRC	National Reformation Council
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OSD	Operational Support Division
PLP	Peace and Liberation Party
PMDC	People's Movement for Democratic Change
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
P.R.O.	Public Relations Officer
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
RUFp	Revolutionary United Front Party
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SL-PRSP	Sierra Leone's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UN SC	United Nations Security Council
UN PBC SL	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission Sierra Leone
WDR	World Development Report

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## **PART I**

### **1. Introduction:**

#### **Peace as Societal Transformation**

Sierra Leone's brutal civil war has been characterised as a '*revolt of youth*' against exclusionary patrimonial politics and gerontocratic dominance and exploitation.<sup>1</sup> It serves as a stark example of how youth's frustration about its blocked mobility, a feature of many contemporary Sub-Saharan African societies, may drive large-scale violence, as youth navigate '*between social death and violent life choices*.'<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, the international aid community made youth empowerment a focal point on its reconstruction and development agenda in the West African country. The disproportionate funding for youth policy, compared to other developmental goals, as well as the history of intergenerational conflict emphasises the importance of the social cleavage of generation and calls for a closer analysis of the dynamics between socio-generational groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Richards (1996); (2005); Peters (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Vigh (2006a), p. 50-56.

The causes and progression of Sierra Leone's horrific decade-long civil war have been extensively discussed in the literature.<sup>3</sup> Looking beyond simplistic dichotomies of 'greed and grievance' and economic drivers of the war such as the infamous 'blood diamonds', a long-term view of Sierra Leone's history unveils a complex picture of grievances, tensions and violence pervading the country's society and politics over the past decades and into the present. At the heart of these developments lay a progressive failure of traditional and modern systems of governance to incorporate and provide for increasing parts of the population leading to their unsustainable economic, political and social marginalisation and exploitation. This failure of community and state eventually erupted into a civil war in 1991. While the exact trajectory of these processes and events may be unique to Sierra Leone, individual components of the failure to stabilise societal relations are neither specific to the country nor the African continent. This thesis, then, sets out to use the arguably drastic but instructive case of Sierra Leone to explore more general notions such as inter-generational tensions and conflict, (in)stability of patrimonial and clientelistic structures, empowerment of youth, and post-conflict social transformations.

Peace following war is often associated with a *re*assertion of social normality marked by *'[t]he displaced resum[ing] their place in a society recognisably continuous with that disrupted by war [while] disarmament, demobilization and reintegration prepares ex-combatants to return home.'*<sup>4</sup> Given that in many cases conflict erupts due to imbalances and instabilities in the pre-war societal, political and/or economic structure, a backward-looking conceptualisation of peace not only risks the return of society to the initial constellation, which ignited the conflict, but, more importantly,

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Kaplan (1994); Richards (1996); Richards & Peters (1998); Abdullah (1997); (2004); Gberie (2005); Keen (2005); Peters (2006); (2011).

<sup>4</sup> Fithen & Richards (2005), p. 117, emphasis added.

also ignores processes of social change that have taken place during war. Following Fithen and Richards,<sup>5</sup> I conceptualise peace as a process of societal transformation rather than restoring some pre-war social normality, keeping in mind that, while not returning to the status-quo-ante, social elements of the pre-war society continue to exist or are eager to reassert themselves. Within this conceptualisation the post-conflict phase presents itself as an arena of contestation and negotiation between different societal groups to determine the shape of social structures by reaching a consensus on elements of continuity and change.

Sierra Leone's communities are such arenas of contestation and negotiation today. The post-conflict state of limbo, between those social structures that have endured the war or are trying to reassert themselves and challenging social forces developed during and after the conflict, provides a fertile ground for a restructuring of society. This thesis aims to capture the dynamics of this process and examine the direction of change. To analyse the process of societal transformation in post-conflict Sierra Leone, the work at hand investigates the dynamics of social hierarchies in Sierra Leonean society during the colonial and post-colonial period focusing specifically on inter-generational tensions at the community level and in state-society relations. The term social hierarchies stands here for the social order among societal groups shaping each group's access to power and resources as well as those social, political and economic institutions, which embody these hierarchies and make them operational in daily life. The dissertation draws on the concept of the generational contract to explore the relational aspect of socio-generational categories. Juxtaposing

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<sup>5</sup> Fithen & Richards (2005).

youth and elders, it focuses on intergenerational dynamics, strategies and communication.

More generally, the dissertation aims to shed light on *(1) Which shape social hierarchies have taken in Sierra Leone during the colonial and post-colonial period, especially in regards to a generational cleavage?; (2) Which patterns of social mobility have prevailed?; and (3) How conflict and violence have affected and shaped social hierarchies?* The specific focus within this enquiry are the current and ongoing societal transformations taking place in post-war Sierra Leone. Field data documenting observable processes of negotiations and contestations regarding social transformation as well as exploring post-conflict attitudes towards and expectations of social change investigate whether *(1) Post-conflict society in Sierra Leone is changing in ways amenable to the peaceful absorption of youth?; and whether (2) Youth aim to transform social relations in rejecting traditional patrimonial structures and promoting democratic accountability?*

Clapham and Jackson contend that Sierra Leone is a prototypically poor state that should not be poor.<sup>6</sup> With fertile soils and lush vegetation, the country should be able to sustain itself agriculturally while its substantial mineral resources, including diamonds, gold, bauxite, iron ore, and rutile provide a plentiful income base for a small country housing merely 5.4 million people.<sup>7</sup> However, decades of exploitative

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<sup>6</sup> Clapham (2001); Jackson (2005).

<sup>7</sup> Even though multiple population survey exercises have taken place in Sierra Leone during the last decade, data collected remains highly unreliable. Moreover, the data (estimations) of major donors and UN agencies often display significant discrepancies. While the CIA World Factbook estimates Sierra Leone's population at 5.4 million, the World Development Indicators calculate 5.99 million. The numbers presented here, therefore, give an impression rather than precise facts. I generally chose the more conservative numbers. They are collated from seven major sources: the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU); the Human Development Indicators website; the CIA World Factbook website; the 2011

local and central governance followed by ten years of civil war have thoroughly ravaged the country so that it is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped in the world with seventy-six per cent of its population living on less than US \$2 per day.<sup>8</sup> The local currency, the Leone, has fallen sharply against the US dollar in recent years while the cost of living and the price of essential commodities, including food items, rises and inflation remains fairly high at around sixteen per cent. Sierra Leone has seen steady, if unspectacular, economic growth over the past years averaging about 5 per cent. However, the country is expected to be the fastest growing economy worldwide in 2012 with real GDP growth of 51.9 per cent (IMF; versus thirty-four per cent EIU) due to a one-off surge in economic growth and export earnings as iron ore exports take off.<sup>9</sup> In 2010, net ODA received constituted a quarter of Sierra Leone's GNI, which amounted to a little less than half a billion US \$. Sierra Leone currently runs a trade deficit with its principal imports of petrol and food outweighing mineral exports. Up to now diamonds have by far been the country's principal exports, making Belgium its main trading partner. Most imports, however, come from China (twenty-two per cent) and as the largest share of iron ore will be exported there as well trade links between the two countries are likely to intensify.

Precise and reliable population data is lacking despite enormous investments of donors into the 2004 Population and Housing Census; nevertheless important trends emerge from this and other nationally representative data sets. It is estimated that thirty-eight per cent of the population is urban, with approximately one million living

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World Development Report; the World Development Indicators website; Peeters et al. (2009); and UN PBC SL (2010). Other sources are separately referenced in the text.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed assessment of post-conflict poverty, see Fagernäs & Wallace (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Growth is expected to return to around six per cent in 2013. The mining activity will not radically alter the job market, as much of the investment is capital rather than labour intensive. Instead, the impact on employment, poverty levels and local standards of living will depend on how the government invests these windfall revenues (EIU (2012)).

in the capital Freetown. Sixty per cent of the population are Muslim, ten per cent are Christian and thirty per cent follow traditional religions; for the most part religious practice is highly syncretic with many interreligious marriages. Sierra Leone's African population is composed of some twenty native ethnic groups, constituting ninety per cent of the total population. The Mende are the second largest ethnic group in Sierra Leone, comprising around a third of the population. They live predominantly in the Southeast of the country. Slightly larger is the ethnic group of the Temne, who populate the North. Party politics have historically been dominated by this ethno-regional split, with the Mende being loyal voters of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the Temne being traditionally, politically tied to the All People's Congress (APC). Thus, the political use of 'tribe' in Sierra Leone originated in the need to find bases for electoral competition. While very real and a constant feature of every-day politics, *'tribal identity is no more than one resource among others.'*<sup>10</sup> Indeed, high rates of intermarriage exist and individuals draw flexibly on their ethnic identities depending on the circumstances of the situation.<sup>11</sup> Other ethnic groups are relatively small and include the Limba (eight per cent), Kono (five per cent), Bullom, Fulani, Gola, Kissi, Koranko, Krim, Kru, Limba, Loko, Madingo, Malinke, Sherbro, Susu, Vai, and Yalunka. While they make up only two per cent of the total population, the Krio – descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled on the Freetown peninsula in the late 18th century – are disproportionately represented in the capital's middle and upper class. A small but significant number of Lebanese has settled in Sierra Leone.

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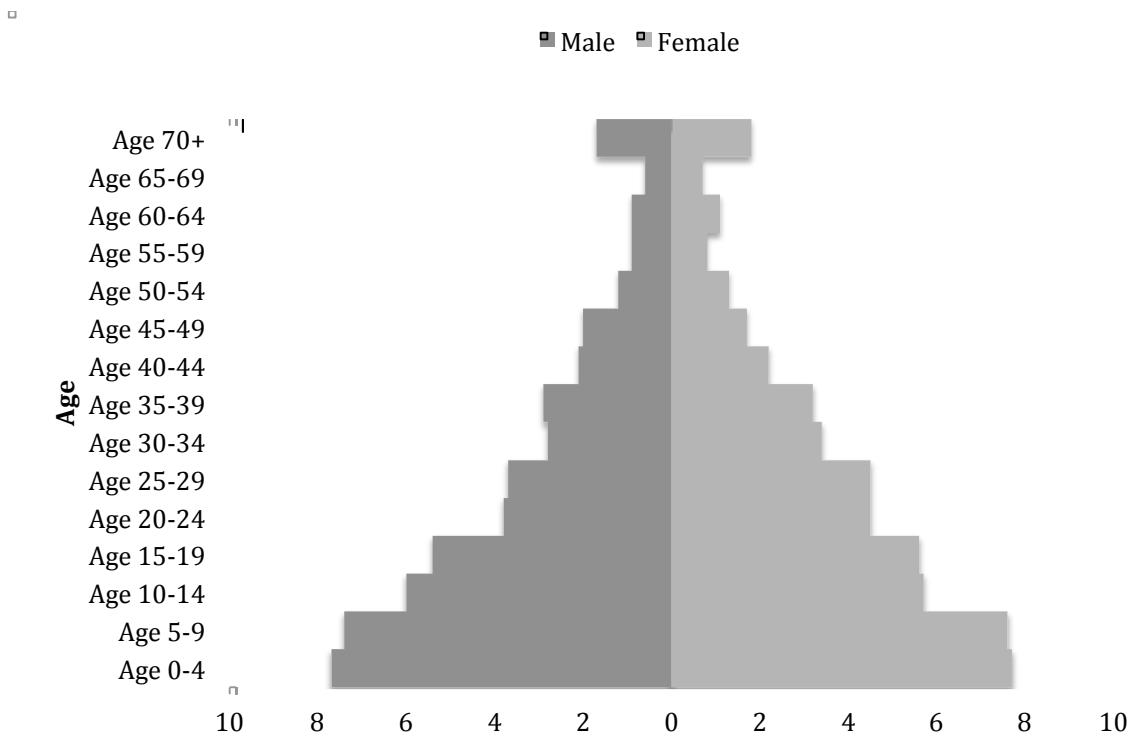
<sup>10</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 23/24. In this respect Sierra Leone differs from many of its West African neighbours as ethnicity and ethnic politics do not take on the same salience as they have in Nigeria or Cote d'Ivoire, for instance. While both of the major parties, SLPP and APC, draw their main bulk of supporters from distinct sets of ethno-regional populations, political mobilisation does not centre on explicit references to other ethnic groups.

<sup>11</sup> The most prominent example for this is former President Stevens, the founder of the APC. With a northern Limba father and a southern Gallinas mother, brought up in Mendeland but having spent most of his adult life in Freetown Clapham ((1976), p. 24) calls him the *'most thoroughly detribalized politician Sierra Leone has yet produced.'* Yet in order to claim leadership over the distinctly northern APC Stevens insisted on declaring himself a Limba.

They dominate the retail and import/export market and played a significant political role in the diamond trade during the time of the one-party state.<sup>12</sup>

As many other Sub-Saharan African countries, Sierra Leone has a very youthful population with a median age of just above 19 years. 42.1 per cent of the population were below 15 years old in 2004, while the groups of youth (15-35 years old) made up 36.8 per cent and 21.5 per cent were 36 years old and above.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 1: Population Pyramid Sierra Leone\***



\*Authors calculation from 2004 Population and Housing Census Data.

Social indicators show a rather depressing picture for Sierra Leoneans with life expectancy at birth being forty-seven years. Infant, child and maternal mortality rates

<sup>12</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 11; Reno (1995).

<sup>13</sup> 10.5 per cent of the population was above 50. Estimated data for 2011/2012 does not differ much from these numbers.

are among the highest in the world.<sup>14</sup> While the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is low (1.6 per cent) compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries, various major infectious diseases including typhoid, malaria and bouts of cholera cost many lives. Sierra Leone also shows one of the highest fertility rates worldwide (4.9 children born per woman). Thirty-eight per cent of the population above the age of fifteen is literate with female literacy rates almost half (twenty-nine per cent) of their male counterparts (forty-nine per cent). Access to senior secondary school and higher education remains very limited, with gross enrolment rates at about fourteen and four per cent, respectively. These rates are lower than the averages for low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, the quality of education is low and repetition rates are very high.<sup>15</sup> Taking economic and social factors together, Sierra Leone has consistently scored in the lowest ranks of the UNDP's Human Development Index over the past decade.

Sierra Leone's history is strongly influenced by the colonial bifurcation of a coastal colony run along modern lines since its founding in 1808 and a larger protectorate, established in 1896 and ruled indirectly through chiefs. These traditional leaders established a system of exploitative and marginalising patrimonial governance throughout the colony's interior. Since independence from Britain in 1961, the main feature of Sierra Leone's political system has been increasing centralisation of power and resources in Freetown, cumulating in the creation of a one-party state under President Siaka Stevens. Ruling through violence and highly exclusive clientelism, the

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<sup>14</sup> Again, large discrepancies between donor estimates exist: current life expectancy estimates range from 47 to 56 years (World Development Indicators vs. CIA World Factbook) and corresponding to that infant mortality from 77 to 119 deaths per 1,000 live births (World Development Indicators vs. CIA World Factbook). The World Development Indicators put under 5 mortality at 185 deaths per 1,000 live births and the CIA World Factbook estimates maternal deaths at 890 per 100,000 live births.

<sup>15</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 19.

political elite proved as kleptocratic and abusive as their traditional counterparts.<sup>16</sup> Thus, state and societal failure, caused by the abusive and predatory actions of the minority elite, eventually triggered violent reactions by a large number of rural youth across the east and south of Sierra Leone. As Richards puts it a revolt against the system of social reproduction, that is the mechanism by which adulthood social, political, economic rights, privileges and resources are conferred on younger generations, had emerged.<sup>17</sup> The brutal war, then, displayed many episodes of revenge against chiefly and state institutions with youthful fighters forcefully turning the pre-war social order on its head.<sup>18</sup>

It is against this background, which will be laid out in detail in Chapter 2, that the discussion on reconstruction in Sierra Leone must be understood.

*'The extensive, wanton damage to government buildings during the war ... was part of a systemic attack on all symbols of governance. This raises the question of why such a wholesale attack should have been contemplated. ... As efforts continue to rebuild governance, serious questions perhaps need to be raised about the kinds of governance structures we are recreating. Social institutions/systems do not decay or get abandoned/destroyed without reason. Merely recreating structures, if these are in fact part of the problem and not part of the solution, would be counterproductive.'*<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Jackson warns of the danger of 're' as he observes that the language of the government and many donors revolve around '*reconstructing, rebuilding, rehabilitating*'<sup>20</sup> striving to reinstate 'business as usual' as if no major war creating ruptures and catalysing changes had happened. As stated above it is these ruptures and changes as well as the continuities, which are presented and analysed in the

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<sup>16</sup> Jackson (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Richards (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Keen (2005). The above paragraph reflects the interpretative frame I have chosen to follow as the most convincing and plausible in explaining Sierra Leone's path towards civil war. Further interpretative narratives on the war in Sierra Leone from academic and more policy-oriented standpoints are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.3.

<sup>19</sup> UN-Report, quoted in Fanthorpe (2005), p. 30, emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 56.

research at hand. To do this systematically, the study proceeds as follows.

Chapter 2 serves as the conceptual foundation of this thesis. A detailed historical analysis of the late pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era in Sierra Leone provides the narrative, while larger-scale events and processes are discussed in light of relevant theories and concepts as well as in a comparative perspective. Analysing Sierra Leone's path with regards to colonialism, state-formation, patrimonialism, and democratisation shows that processes and events taking place in the country over the last 200 years cumulated in a crisis of the system of social reproduction at the communal level as well as in state-society relations. Thus, the two interdependent processes of community and state failure triggered the Sierra Leonean civil war. Tracing the details of the Sierra Leonean civil war, a first focus lies on militia formation and structure demonstrating how fighters and civilians modified social hierarchies in the absence of traditional and state authority during the war. Relying on insights from research conducted in a previous research project,<sup>21</sup> the chapter also sketches Sierra Leone's experience with post-conflict reconstruction, integration and reconciliation, arguing that post-conflict situations are neither *'blank slates'*,<sup>22</sup> nor can they be reversed to the status-quo-ante. Rather, post-conflict countries display both profound changes as well as important continuities and, thus, can best be understood in terms of multiple arenas of contestation and negotiations between societal groups.

Drawing on the above framework, the remaining chapters are based on qualitative and quantitative data collected between 2007 and 2010 to present several arenas of contestation and negotiation in present-day Sierra Leone. Exploring these arenas,

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<sup>21</sup> Boersch-Supan (2008).

<sup>22</sup> Cramer (2006).

community and state failure are revisited analysing continuities and change from the pre-war period and asking whether the *'revolt of youth'* catalysed changes in the power-asymmetries between age groups in Sierra Leone. As these processes are very much in flux, constantly influencing power-dynamics and the structure of social hierarchies, the data presented here offers an open-ended look at the dynamics in a post-conflict society.

After a methodological interlude (Part II, Chapter 3) laying out the data collection and analysis process,<sup>23</sup> Chapter 4 (within Part III) provides a general discussion of intergenerational conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa. Part III of the dissertation strongly draws on the concept of the generational contract to explore the logic behind intergenerational relations and conflict.

The dissertation then proceeds with the empirical findings in three steps. First, the basics of the generational contract in Sierra Leone are explored. Agreement on an intergenerational division of labour at community level emerges while management of these tasks is hotly contested (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 presents organisational strategies youth employ to improve their social status in general and regarding local governance institutions in particular. In the last empirical chapter (Chapter 7), I analyse the effect youth organisation and the rights discourse have on two central local governance institutions traditionally dominated by elders, namely chiefly courts and the organisation of communal labour.<sup>24</sup> While overall power dynamics in communities display a continuity of gerontocratic dominance, an improved social

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<sup>23</sup> Interview and survey tools can be found in the appendices section.

<sup>24</sup> In this sense, the research at hand seeks to complement the current debate on changes and continuities within Sierra Leone's local institutions (cf. Jackson (2005); (2007); Hanlon (2005); Fanthorpe (2006); Chauveau & Richards (2008); Sawyer (2008); Fanthorpe & Maconachie (2010); Mokuwa et al. (2011); Labonte (2011)) by adding an analysis of interpersonal communal relations.

status of youth is paralleled by a decrease of power elders hold over essential local – informal as well as formal – governance institutions.<sup>25</sup> A rights discourse, which has locally emerged and is supported by international actors, moreover, serves as a powerful rhetorical and normative tool to push for an even broader set of changes to intergenerational norms and values.

The negotiation among societal groups in Sierra Leone, fought out between their respective elites – elders and youth leaders – as well as in ordinary day-to-day interactions of youth, adults and elders, will shape the social transformation of peace during the coming years and ultimately determine post-conflict social hierarchies and prospects for a stable democratic society and institutions. Amid these emerging changes, the dissertation concludes not only that continuities in Sierra Leone's political, economic and social systems prevail but also that youth follows only a limited agenda of change, namely the inclusion into existing structures of governance and control rather than their wholesale transformation. These summary findings are presented in the conclusion (Chapter 8) discussing the stability of societal relations in post-conflict Sierra Leone as well as lessons the Sierra Leonean case holds on a conceptual and thematic level and for other countries.

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<sup>25</sup> A more detailed summary of the empirical chapters stands at the beginning of PART III.

## **2. The Making of the ‘Crisis of Youth’:**

### **A Short History of Community and State Failure**

#### **in Sierra Leone**

The historical analysis provided in this chapter offers a conceptual framework within which the current post-conflict phase is assessed in the subsequent empirical chapters. It aims to accomplish three things. First, it offers an in-depth historical analysis tracing how Sierra Leone arrived at its present position. It is important to acknowledge that history is not destiny. No single event in Sierra Leone’s past triggered an unstoppable collapse of dominoes determining events right into the present. Rather, civil war in Sierra Leone arose as the consequence of a specific combination of processes and events, which came together at a certain time. Thus, distinct events as well as the particular choices made by individuals set Sierra Leone on a certain path, limiting subsequent options for action. It is in this respect that a deeper understanding of the country’s history matters. Moreover, past experiences and the transmissions thereof create a repertoire of memories, which future generations may fall back on when making choices to move forward.<sup>1</sup> Second, Sierra Leone’s history is situated within several conceptual themes drawn from the political

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw (2002). The chapter is necessarily a selection of those historical processes and events which illuminate and contextualise the following empirical analysis. Comprehensive works on Sierra Leone include the following monographs. Fyfe (1979); (1993) offers a historical overview; central ethnographies are Little (1951); Finnegan (1965); Ferme (2001). For a political analysis of the colonial and post-colonial period see Kilson (1966); Cartwright (1970); Barrows (1976); Clapham (1976); Reno (1995). The war in Sierra Leone has attracted a wide variety of scholarly research. Major works include: Richards (1996); Abdullah (2004); Keen (2005); Peters (2011).

science and sociological literatures; these include colonialism, state formation and state failure, neopatrimonialism and civil conflict.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, it is important to see Sierra Leone's experience in a comparative perspective. Although the historical trajectory of the above factors combined may be unique to Sierra Leone, the individual components of failure are neither specific to the country nor the African continent. Understanding the processes and events, which led up to the war and subsequently sustained it, thus, holds lessons for other states and societies while at the same time drawing out the specificities of the Sierra Leonean case.

Authors writing on the war in Sierra Leone have commonly either taken a more state-centric perspective or focused on developments connected to rural and agrarian issues. Thus, for conceptual clarity this chapter distinguishes between community and state failure, the two concepts, which have been widely used by researchers analysing the root causes of Sierra Leone's civil war. *Community failure* is understood as the failure of traditional, community-level social, political, and economic institutions to incorporate increasing numbers of community members, especially youth. In the early 1990s this cumulated in a crisis of rural youth, with parts of this group joining the armed struggle. From this perspective, war was fought to overturn the prevailing social system.<sup>3</sup> *State failure* refers to processes and events that rendered the institutions of the state incapable of providing even the most basic public goods, including security. Most apparent in Sierra Leonean urban centres, in the course of the 1980s a crisis of 'lumpen' youth and educated youth emerged. A

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<sup>2</sup> Relevant theoretical concepts and comparative literature will also be introduced and discussed in the empirical chapters to contextualise the data on contemporary Sierra Leone.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Richards (1996); (2005); Peters (2006); (2011); Keen (2005); Chauveau & Richards (2008).

small number of individuals from these groups eventually formed the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel movement, which started the civil war.<sup>4</sup>

As will become apparent, both processes, community and state failure, are tightly interlinked and reinforced each other in the run-up to the war. They can only be fully understood by looking at long-term historical continuities and changes, reaching into the pre-colonial and colonial time. Moreover, the international and regional context is critical for understanding developments in Sierra Leone. This includes the country's links to and dependencies from regional and global markets.

## 2.1 Violence as Community Failure

### *Political Authority and Economic Control – Warfare in Pre-Colonial Sierra Leone*

Warfare and political leadership was intimately linked in nineteenth century Sierra Leone.<sup>5</sup> As Abraham points out, *'[t]here is no question that warfare has been rightly recognized as part of Mende<sup>6</sup> cultural pattern. ... war continued and was a recurrent theme in West African history throughout the nineteenth century.'*<sup>7</sup> War was fought for economic reasons to acquire or defend control over trade routes and trade centres as well as the slave trade.<sup>8</sup> In turn, the access to trade routes, markets and means of

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Reno (1995); Opala (1998); Clapham (2001); Abdullah (1997); (2004); Keen (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 65; Fyle (1981), p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> As mentioned in the Introduction, Sierra Leone is a multi-ethnic society. The two dominant ethnic groups, the Temne and the Mende, each comprise approximately 30 per cent of the population and inhabit the North and the Southeast respectively. Regarding warfare and 'state'-formation a similar pattern can be observed for northern Sierra Leone as for the pre-colonial Mende states (Fyle (1981), p. 50). The Freetown peninsula has been dominated by the wealthy and politically influential Krios since their settlement as freed slaves from the Americas and other western African countries in the 19th century. Colonial and post-colonial politics have mainly been dominated by the interplay and competition between the elites of these three population groups.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 14; Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 537; Shaw (2002).

production (for example, using slaves as a workforce) was used to secure political influence and power.<sup>9</sup>

Power could be exercised most strongly over those in close proximity while physical distance meant weaker power and less access for any authority over their subjects. In this respect, Herbst observes that power in pre-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa was exercised not over territory but over people.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the political landscape was made up of power centres with overlapping and weak authority on their fringes rather than territorial areas with fixed boundaries.<sup>11</sup> Aside from economic reasons connected to trade and production, war was used for the establishment of such power centres, referred to here as ‘states’, and subsequently became the ‘*most common method of acquiring political power.*’<sup>12</sup> During the nineteenth century, southern Sierra Leone was made up of a loose confederation of approximately nine such states, which were ruled by kings.<sup>13</sup> Likewise the Northern region, increasingly under Limba and Temne rule was divided into such states.<sup>14</sup> Below the state level two tiers of local governance functioned. A war town and its satellites were the smallest basic unit of local administration. These were ruled by town chiefs, while senior chiefs ruled over

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<sup>9</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 56; 89.

<sup>10</sup> Herbst (1989); (1990); (2000).

<sup>11</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 77/78.

<sup>12</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 23/24; Barrows (1976), p. 67. The terminology surrounding political organisation in pre-modern Sierra Leone predominantly reflects European language. The term king does not so much refer to a monarch in the European sense but labels leading warrior or hunter chiefs whose performance placed them above a certain number of other chiefs. Strong kings could actually command a hierarchy, while a weak king was more a *primus inter pares*. States did not feature secure borders and bureaucracies, nor did the king necessarily have a monopoly of force. Rather, states were a collection of villages and towns held together by the hierarchy established through the authority of the leading warrior chief (Fyle (1981), p. 50-57). While Fyle (1981) and Abraham (1976) use the terminology of ‘kings’ and ‘states’ to describe supreme chiefs, Kilson (1966), Barrows (1976) and Cartwright (1970) use ‘chiefs’ and ‘chiefdoms’. For pre-colonial Sierra Leone, I, thus, use the terms ‘kings’ / ‘chiefs’ and ‘states’ / ‘chiefdoms’ interchangeably.

<sup>14</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 50.

multiple towns, so-called 'sections'.<sup>15</sup> Given the frequency of war, settlements were built close to fortified towns and the main legitimising feature of any authority was its ability to defend and maintain the integrity of a territory and provide security.<sup>16</sup> For this reason, the size and lifespan of states varied widely with the skill of the ruler. This reflected not only that *'[m]ost chiefdoms ... were constantly breaking apart and recombining as a result of family rivalries and success or defeat in wars'*<sup>17</sup> but that if a section of a chiefdom became disaffected with a chief, they could use the *'exit option'*,<sup>18</sup> that is, break away and form their own chiefdom. Overall, however, a consolidation of states took place in the territory of what is today Sierra Leone during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

As in many Sub-Saharan African societies, political power acquisition in pre-colonial Sierra Leone was fluid based on *'particular skills in leadership'*<sup>20</sup> rather than 'royalty' or hereditary claims.<sup>21</sup> Thus, *'by and large succession was based on the principle of expedience: A man's ability as a warrior was the prime consideration for appointment as chief.'*<sup>22</sup> Moreover, kings were elected after consultation with chiefs, territorial heads, big men, and elders. Meaning that, the election of a king as well as a king's rule was checked and balanced by a majority rule of elders.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 22/23.

<sup>16</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 68. Villages became more scattered when warfare was eventually suppressed by the British Protectorate and people moved according to availability of farmland and not security (Abraham (1976), p. 22).

<sup>17</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 13; see also Little (1951), p. 29-21.

<sup>18</sup> Herbst (2000), p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Little (1955); Newbury (2003). Kinship relations do play a central role especially in Mende culture. In chieftaincy succession *'hereditary principles [however] were at best secondary'* (Barrows (1976), p. 69). Birth and descent did play a part in acquiring lesser authority positions as village chiefs or headmen (Abraham (1976), p. 4; Barrows (1976), p. 68).

<sup>22</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 68; Abraham (1976), p. 5; Fyle (1981), p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 25; Fyle (1981), p. 58/59.

In this respect the secret societies, and especially the men's Poro, played an important role in counter-balancing chiefly power. Their powers permeated the social, political and economic realm and albeit being ever present, its actual activities were for the most part conducted in severe secrecy. Thus, it has generally been difficult for researchers to acquire precise information on the inner workings of the Poro.<sup>24</sup> However, all accounts stress its pervasive influence as a socio-cultural institution responsible for essential rites in the life cycle as well as with regards to the seasons and agriculture. More importantly, drawing its power and legitimacy from an *'esoteric basis'*, mixing fear and faith, violence and psychology,<sup>25</sup> it is an instrument of strict social control and hierarchy. While its political functions are described as *'covert and indirect'*,<sup>26</sup> its authority in the realm of local justice, control over agriculture, land and trade and its regulatory function over war and peace speak to a significant political and economic role.<sup>27</sup> Authors writing on secret societies are generally vague on the exact relationship of dominance and interdependence between chiefs and the Poro.<sup>28</sup> Importantly, however, the British colonial powers were largely oblivious of the encompassing role the secret societies held and hence significantly increased chiefly authority by neglecting this competing as well as complementary locus of power.<sup>29</sup>

While strengthening gerontocratic claims to power, the consultative and participatory process through which chiefs were selected excluded women and young men as well as slaves. Regarding the former it is important to point out the relevance

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<sup>24</sup> Little (1965); (1966); Whylie (1969).

<sup>25</sup> Little (1965), p. 349; 354.

<sup>26</sup> Whylie (1969), p. 298.

<sup>27</sup> Little (1965).

<sup>28</sup> Little (1965); (1966); Murphy (1980); Fulton (1972).

<sup>29</sup> Peters, pers. comm.

of age and gender within pre-colonial societies. Age hierarchies favoured male elders who had to be met with deference and respect, while women were kept strictly to the non-political sphere, that is to the household, farm work and child rearing.<sup>30</sup> Slaves were obtained through warfare, purchase or sold themselves to a master to pay off debts. While they were the property of the master, they were integrated in the compound. Slaves were of integral economic importance providing essential labour for farming.<sup>31</sup>

The duties of all chiefly rulers involved the day-to-day administration of the territory and population under their authority, including adjudication of disputes. The king and his chiefs received annual tributes, which furthered their wealth but were also *'used to reward faithful servants and feed people with bad harvests.'*<sup>32</sup> This established chiefs as patrons of communities. Chiefs and kings further consolidated their power by increasing the size of their compound and, therefore, the available workforce. This was done by accumulation of slaves as well as marriage to multiple wives.<sup>33</sup>

Nineteenth century warfare is particularly interesting for its political use and its self-perpetuating character. Since these wars were, for the most part, not between ethnic groupings but violent political contestations between individual chiefs or chief aspirants and their followers, groups of organised professional fighters evolved, who could be hired and were rewarded with a share of the booty if victorious.<sup>34</sup> This was

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<sup>30</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 64/65.

<sup>31</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 64; Shaw (2002).

<sup>32</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 63.

<sup>34</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 13; Barrows (1976), p. 65. In post-colonial and indeed post-war Sierra Leone factional conflict remains one of the biggest causes for violence. Competition between ruling families over the Paramount Chieftaincy is fierce and often leads to the recruitment of youth for violent contestation (Clapham (1976), p. 24/25; Barrows (1976), p. 202). This will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6.4.

known as *'buying war'*.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, wars did not stop with the establishment of Mende states or with the acquisition of power by any particular leader, rather,

*'Warfare was a permanent feature. There was no sleep at night. Warriors were attracted by the wealth of settlements. So they pounced on them, killed the defenders if possible, captured the women and children as slaves, and other booty. They then abandoned the area and searched for fresh adventure.'*<sup>36</sup>

Thus, having become a profitable occupation violent political contestation led to the emergence of a professional class of warriors. This in turn led to a self-perpetuation of conflict and violence through these 'war-men', who were difficult to control for political leaders.<sup>37</sup>

Pre-colonial politics throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, then set precedence for certain recurring themes in Sierra Leonean history: First, chiefly rulers drew their influence from political activities, including violence and leadership in trade. Accumulating wealth through trade, war, slavery, and marriage further fortified their position and established them as patrons of local populations. Second, while the acquisition of posts of political authority was tied to the principle of merit, women and young men were excluded from taking on such responsibilities or even being part of the consultative election process, thus, establishing the dominance of male elders in political, social and economic decision-making.<sup>38</sup> Lastly, violent competition over economic and political resources was entrenched, leading to the emergence of mercenary groups and a self-perpetuation of war. As the narrative below will show, 'buying war' has been used by chiefs (and later politicians) up to the present in order to secure leadership positions.

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<sup>35</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Informant, quoted in Abraham (1976), p. 11/12.

<sup>37</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> ICG (2004), p. 13.

### ***Colonialism – Solidifying Chiefly Rule***

In 1787 Freetown was established as a settlement for freed slaves on land bought from one of the Temne kings. After abolition in 1807 the Peninsula was made the Sierra Leone Colony to serve as a geostrategic naval base for raids on slave ships departing from the West African Coast and, thus, experienced an exceptionally long period of colonial administration.<sup>39</sup> The presence of the colonial power was, however, limited to the coastal region around Freetown. Sierra Leone only assumed its present territorial form a century later, in 1896, when colonial rule, in a rush of *'urgent imperialism'*<sup>40</sup> was extended to the hinterlands north and east forming a British Protectorate. The decision to lay claim to territory beyond the coast was influenced not only by the advance of the French from the North and West but importantly also by economic considerations. English traders in collaboration with colonial officials had slowly expanded their trading networks into the interior, even buying or renting parts of territory along the coast. From the early nineteenth century onwards the colonial government increasingly interfered on behalf of its traders, protecting them in trade disputes, if needed by force, and even intervening in candidacy and succession questions of chiefs and kings, setting precedence for future state leaders.<sup>41</sup>

As in other Sub-Saharan African colonies, the British established a system of indirect rule in the Protectorate, which deeply changed political, social and economic structures within a relatively short time span.<sup>42</sup> During the 1890s, the British entered

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<sup>39</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 34. With 'An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' from 25 March 1807 British Parliament abolished the slave trade in the British Empire. Domestic slavery itself remained legal in most of the British Empire until the 'Slavery Abolition Act' in 1833. In Sierra Leone domestic slavery was formally abolished in 1928.

<sup>40</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 100.

<sup>41</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 94/95.

<sup>42</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 38. For seminal works on indirect rule, see p. 51, fn. 180. It is important to note that the seemingly standardised concept of indirect rule was actually embodied in heterogeneous experiences regarding economic exploitation and political governance as well as the interference with

into a series of economic and political treaties with chiefs across Sierra Leone. On the one hand, the treaties were to establish secure and peaceful trade relations and the production of export crops as well as introduce the so-called hut tax to finance the system of local administration. These economic links drew the chiefly elite and most of the populace into the modern cash economy.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand they prohibited inter-chieftaincy war and divided the Protectorate into fixed administrative units. In all this chiefs were established as local interlocutors of the British administration. Thus, whereas the *'pre-colonial states were independent central governments in their own rights [they were] made units of local government under colonialism.'*<sup>44</sup> While losing much of their sovereignty as individual leaders, in the process of establishing a hierarchy of governance, traditional checks on chiefs, such as that from the Poro as well as other elders, were neglected and largely abolished. Moreover hereditary claims now superseded performance and, thus, chiefs gained considerable power vis-à-vis the populace.<sup>45</sup>

The British initially established five districts, headed each by a district commissioner and one Paramount Chief. Courts were established, which held jurisdiction over most criminal and severe civil cases, barring traditional chiefly courts from all but small-scale cases. Moreover, central laws were now predominantly made in Freetown where the governor of the colony had the power to depose and appoint Paramount Chiefs.<sup>46</sup> The treaties further aimed at abolishing the widespread practice of slavery

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social and cultural structures on the ground. Thus, within as well as between colonies considerable differences in indirect rule evolved as practices and structures emerged from the constant interplay of local circumstances and strategies with colonial agendas and actions (Newbury (2003)). See also the discussion on colonialism in Chapter. 7.1 and especially p. 225, fn. 20.

<sup>43</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 29.

<sup>46</sup> Fyle (1981), p. 105. The 1991 Constitution provides the President of Sierra Leone with the power to remove Paramount Chiefs if found guilty of *'gross misconduct'* by a Commission of Inquiry (Art 72 (4)).

and restricting forced labour. Thus, within less than a decade, the British had signed away most chiefly powers as well as the base for their wealth and influence.<sup>47</sup> Unsurprisingly, a wave of resistance of chiefs, at times violent, swept over the Protectorate culminating in the hut-tax war of 1898.<sup>48</sup> The British overthrew violent chiefly opposition to curtailed sovereignty and tax demands with brute force.<sup>49</sup> However, they '*shelved plans for abolition*'<sup>50</sup> and withdrew restrictions placed on forced labour after the uprising to accommodate the chiefs, whose governance they relied on.<sup>51</sup> Thus, under the Forced Labour Ordinance (applicable until 1956) chiefs were permitted to command unpaid labour from subjects. Interestingly, the 1991 constitution of Sierra Leone makes a special exemption to the section banning forced labour to allow for unpaid labour required by chiefs for community purposes.<sup>52</sup> Domestic slavery, in turn, was tolerated under British rule against much international pressure until 1928, although emancipation thereafter did not bring about a structural change to rural power hierarchies as will be discussed below.<sup>53</sup>

The British, thus, significantly curtailed the sovereignty of Mende chiefs and caused the fragmentation and weakening of Mende states.<sup>54</sup> After the experience of the hut tax war, chiefdoms were consciously broken down into smaller units so that individual chiefs would pose a lesser threat to British authority. By 1924, the Sierra

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Parliament holds the right to '*make laws for the qualifications, election, powers, functions, removal and other matters connected with the Chieftaincy*' (Art 72 (5)). The limits of this right are discussed in detail in Chapter 7.4 in connection with the mutual political dependence of parliamentarians, and politicians more generally, and chiefs.

<sup>47</sup> Shaw (1996), p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> Little (1951), p. 58.

<sup>50</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 537.

<sup>51</sup> Fenton (1948).

<sup>52</sup> The relevant paragraph 19 reads: '*(1) No person shall be held in slavery or servitude or be required to perform forced labour or traffic or deal in human beings. (2) For the purposes of this section the expression 'forced labour' does not include ... e. communal labour or labour which forms part of other civic obligations.*'

<sup>53</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 537.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 92; 95.

Leonean Protectorate was thus divided into 217 Paramount Chiefdoms, compared to five in 1896.<sup>55</sup> Displaying much ignorance and impatience in filling these new posts, the British entered into treaties with chiefs in disregard of hierarchy, effectively elevating the status of lesser chiefs. Moreover, the British interfered heavily in the system of selection of chiefs, at times distributing the posts as rewards for loyalty and collaboration.<sup>56</sup>

While chiefs had to submit to the colonial power in certain respects, the checks from above were relatively light, as the limited personnel and finances of the colonial state relied heavily on the chieftaincy structure for the administration and overall peace in the Protectorate. More importantly, the colonial government significantly enhanced the powers chiefs held over their subjects in various ways. First, the introduction of ‘customary law’ established in collaboration with chiefs who would gain from these moves, reconfirmed and widened the authority of chiefs and elders, as they set out to define regulating laws for local communities, including their own powers and the responsibilities of the populace.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, however, ‘customary law’ protected the land rights of land-owning lineages, including rights over women and marriage.<sup>58</sup> Thus, as Berman notes for wider Sub-Saharan Africa, *‘chiefs, headmen and elders [were allowed] to define customary law that asserted and legitimated their power and control over the allocation of resources against the interests of juniors, women and migrants.’*<sup>59</sup> In effect, customary law created a powerful legitimisation of chiefs’ power based on a past, which had as such never existed; a process which

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<sup>55</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 90; Fyle (1981), p. 107.

<sup>56</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 80; Abraham (1976), p. 92; 97; Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 537.

<sup>57</sup> Seminal works on the construction of customary law include Chanock (1985); Moore (1986).

<sup>58</sup> Fenton (1948); Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 537.

<sup>59</sup> Berman (1998), p. 321.

Hobsbawm and Ranger have aptly termed the *'invention of tradition'*.<sup>60</sup> In Barrows' assessment, the initiative for the change or invention of traditions regarding political structure and governance was predominantly a function of initiative, action and inaction by the colonial authorities rather than the active manipulation by chiefs themselves.<sup>61</sup> However, many changes proposed and supported by the British, such as the principle of heredity and the instalment of Tribal Authorities, were added by chiefs into their repertoire of traditions without much resistance.<sup>62</sup> A second further fundamental change lay in the mode of selection of chiefs as in 1898 the colonial government established the principle of heredity.<sup>63</sup> Barrows writes,

*'In seizing upon descent as the mode of political succession, the colonial officers in effect froze the recruitment system of Mende chiefdoms, limiting future leadership to the patrilineal descendants of those who had been arbitrarily installed in the early days of the Protectorate.'*<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, in a forerunner of developments to come under party politics in post-colonial Sierra Leone, the colonial government firmly established the dependency of chiefs on collaboration with and support of the government of the day. Ironically, this meant that chiefs' performance towards the populace no longer was the defining factor in gaining or retaining power, encouraging exploitative tendencies.<sup>65</sup>

Cartwright observes,

*'The fact that they [chiefs] were the officially designated tax collectors for the colonial administration not only acquainted them with the money economy, but helped to create the impression that any monetary demands they made would be backed by the colonial overlords. Starting modestly, with a*

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<sup>60</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983. Their findings and the subsequent evolution of the concept are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.1.

<sup>61</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 85; 91.

<sup>62</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 82; 91.

<sup>63</sup> Abraham (1976), p. 4; Keen (2005), p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 81. A certain level of competition still exists regarding chiefly positions, as multiple chiefly families per chiefdom are eligible for the Paramount Chieftaincy. Ruling families in the North usually rotate the Paramount Chieftaincy among them, while in Mende chieftaincies competition between ruling families continues to be a major source of local rivalry and conflict (Barrows (1976), p. 224).

<sup>65</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 100; Keen (2005), p. 10.

*corrugated iron roof here and a cement block house there, many chiefs gradually stepped up their exactions to finance motorcars and lorries, business enterprises, education for their children, and other items for their personal consumption.*<sup>66</sup>

Diverting parts of the official tax as well as levying illicit fines and demanding customary tribute in cash rather than kind, chiefs also excessively increased the extraction of unpaid labour.<sup>67</sup> Enforced by the local courts on which other elders or chiefs themselves sat as judges and with local sanctions such as detention, forced labour or (the threat of) banishment, the greed of chiefs became a system of exploitation. This sparked popular protests and uprisings on a regular basis.<sup>68</sup> The most violent and disruptive riots, known as the ‘tax riots’ continued for months in 1955-56 and led to the targeted destruction of chiefly property and especially luxury goods.<sup>69</sup> Dependent on chiefs, the colonial government interfered with some of the worst incidents of exploitation but generally did little to counter growing oppression.<sup>70</sup> Despite the obvious emasculation of chiefs and especially kings regarding their sovereignty, indirect rule, thus strongly empowered chiefs vis-à-vis the populace, providing them with the opportunity to amass even more wealth and power. A classic case of what Mamdani has termed ‘*decentralized despotism*’, thus, emerged.<sup>71</sup>

Importantly (and as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 on the chieftaincy), the people of Sierra Leone have on the whole demonstrated an ambivalent stance

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<sup>66</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 54; Allen (1968), p. 306.

<sup>68</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 111; Cartwright (1970), p. 73; Clapham (1976), p. 78; Tangri (1976).

<sup>69</sup> An encompassing report of these riots can be found in the so-called Cox Report, the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in the Provinces* (November 1955 to March 1956); see also Kilson (1966), p. 53-59.

<sup>70</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 30.

<sup>71</sup> Mamdani (1996).

towards their chiefs.<sup>72</sup> As Mair notes for the whole of West Africa, *'[i]n the eyes of the same persons the Chiefs may be symbols of reaction, symbols of group unity, and symbols of pride in national history. That is why there has been no move to eliminate them from the political system altogether.'*<sup>73</sup> Violent uprisings then were in the majority of cases directed against the exploitative tendencies of individual chiefs rather than the chieftaincy as an institution. While large-scale mobilisation of the population for protests, thus, took place in regular intervals this only generated a limited demand and drive for radical social change and transformation in the countryside. Drawing on Max Gluckman's terminology, Kilson, therefore clarifies that the *'rural radicalism'* of the time including the 'tax riots' is best described as peasant rebellions, not revolutions.<sup>74</sup> This also reflects the fact, that *'the chieftdom ... is the crucial emotional focus for the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans.'*<sup>75</sup> With an overwhelmingly rural population, the chiefs with their encompassing roles in the public communal realm as well as in individual private lives have, despite all of their vices, in the eyes of many represented a more tangible and effective institution of governance than the distant central state machinery.<sup>76</sup> One of the main arguments made in Chapter 7 is, thus, that it is precisely the relevance of chiefs in the lives of ordinary Sierra Leoneans that sustains their legitimacy and the institution of the chieftaincy as such.

It is important to understand that the prerogatives chiefs and ruling families obtained during colonialism transformed them into the national political as well as economic elite of the future Sierra Leonean state. Chiefs occupied a central position in the local

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<sup>72</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 183.

<sup>73</sup> Mair (1958), p. 200/201.

<sup>74</sup> Gluckmann (1955); Kilson (1966), p. 60/61; see also Barrows (1976), p. 104; Tangri (1973).

<sup>75</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 15. See also Tangri (1978).

<sup>76</sup> Sawyer (2008).

(financial) administration of the colonial state and the wealth generated through tax extortion as well as the commercialisation of customary economic rights, especially those tied to land. Thus, chiefs were able to establish themselves in the modern money economy through trade, cash cropping and mining very early on. Kilson describes some of the strategies with which chiefs converted their customary rights into modern economic gain:

*'First, they marketed the sizable stores of agricultural products secured as tribute from peasants; second, they expanded their own cash-crop output with the aid of free labor; third, they utilized traditional authority to establish and protect markets for themselves; and fourth, they manipulated their role in the traditional land-tenure system to expand their own cash-crop holdings and especially to claim rents or royalties from expatriate mining firms in return for mining concessions backed by the colonial government.'*<sup>77</sup>

As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, especially the favourable position in providing their children with a western education, opened up to many chiefly sons key posts in the modern structure of government.<sup>78</sup> This disproportionate promotion of the chiefly elite, for example by means of the famous 'Bo School' to which only sons and nominees of Paramount Chiefs were admitted,<sup>79</sup> coupled with the slow social mobilisation of the wider population explains the dominance of the 'traditio-modern' elite holding close (kinship)ties with ruling families in Sierra Leone politics up until the present.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, the fundamental changes to economic and political dynamics nevertheless only led to limited social mobilisation within the wider population. The majority of the Protectorate's populace stayed firmly embedded within traditional society. Cartwright observes that, for instance, economic activity fostered during the late

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<sup>77</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 58/59; 180; see also Allen (1968), p. 305.

<sup>78</sup> In the 1970s almost two-thirds of parliamentarians, for instance, were connected either directly or indirectly to chiefly families (Tangri (1978), p. 166).

<sup>79</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 78.

<sup>80</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 66; 233; Cartwright (1970); Clapham (1976), p. 11.

nineteenth and early twentieth century had only limited effects on social mobilisation as compared to other West African states such as Ghana and Nigeria.<sup>81</sup> Only very few Sierra Leoneans worked in the mining sector before (illicit) alluvial diamond mining drew larger parts of the population into wage employment in the 1950s.<sup>82</sup> Most individuals entered the money economy as small-scale cash crop farmers, which had much fewer uprooting effects. Similarly, the Protectorate lagged behind other coastal territories in West Africa with regards to education and urbanisation.<sup>83</sup> Thus, outside of Freetown little in the form of radical nationalism emerged on a popular front.<sup>84</sup> Rather, as will be described below, decolonisation took the form of a quite amicable arrangement between Protectorate elites and the British.<sup>85</sup>

Colonial economic activity did, however, lay the foundation for the ethno-regional divide between the North and the Southeast.<sup>86</sup> Following trade routes along the coast, the British established a tighter network of feeder roads as well as a railway in the more fertile southern part of the Protectorate. This further increased the opportunities for cash cropping in this region. Moreover, missionaries showed a greater interest in setting up schools in animist Mendeland rather than the Muslim dominated North.<sup>87</sup>

In sum, while British colonialism did end a situation of permanent warfare, the colonisers' influence overrode and replaced the principle of merit-based political power acquisition and the system of checks and balances among chiefs and between

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<sup>81</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 21/22.

<sup>82</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 11.

<sup>83</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 252; Barrows (1976), p. 115; Clapham (1976), p. 18.

<sup>85</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 115.

<sup>86</sup> Allen (1968), p. 307; Cartwright (1970), p. 21.

<sup>87</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 77; Allen (1968), p. 306.

chiefs and other local authorities, such as the Poro.<sup>88</sup> Sheltered from such scrutiny and endowed basically with legislative functions when it came to customary law, judicial functions in terms of local courts as well as executive functions in financial and political affairs, chieftaincy positions were often not only intensely and violently fought over but also created considerable opportunities for abuse.<sup>89</sup> Discontent at chiefs' abuses, like excessive cash levies, unpopular land allocation, forced labour and punishment of opponents grew during the colonial and post-colonial time and *'helped store up anger which erupted later.'*<sup>90</sup> Deeply embedded in this system were even more fundamental intergenerational tensions.

### ***The Foundations for 'Community Failure' – Ranked Lineages in Mendeland***

The previous sections have been mainly concerned with the history of political and economic processes and structures. However, to understand Sierra Leone's present situation it is also vital to look at the intertwining of political and economic aspects with socio-cultural institutions and systems of social hierarchy. Chauveau and Richards categorise the Mende in Sierra Leone as a *'trade-linked slave-based ranked lineage [society]'*.<sup>91</sup> Unravelling this rather long label reveals the following characteristics of Mende communities. A *lineage society* is a society organised by lines of descent for the transfer of rights of access to land and other productive resources. In Sierra Leone the male line, patrilineality, predominates.<sup>92</sup> When lineages are *ranked* there is a hierarchical social formation. Among the Mende a hierarchy exists

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<sup>88</sup> This official upgrading of chiefly power vis-à-vis the intransparent and indirect authority of the Poro, should not distract from the fact that the Poro remains an important locus of political power, though with significant independence from chiefly power, and can, thus, either support and augment or resist and obstruct it. Examples are discussed in the next section.

<sup>89</sup> Barrows (1976).

<sup>90</sup> Keen (2005), p. 10.

<sup>91</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 517.

<sup>92</sup> The overall dominance of the male line has one major exception. The mother's brother plays a significant role in Mende society.

between lineages with ruling families being ranked the highest and within lineages, where age and male gender confer higher status. The reproduction of this system is based on a certain *lineage mode of production*, that is, the organisation of the economy in the lineage society. As already mentioned above, the economy of Mende chieftaincies relied predominantly on trade and the acquisition and integration of slaves (and the widely extended household) for agricultural labour. Monopolising the commodity trade, successful elders accumulated resources to benefit their own lineages, thereby sustaining lineage ranking as well as preventing opportunities for young people to break away and form their own groups.<sup>93</sup> However, as Richards stresses in much of his work on Sierra Leone, the ultimate prestige good, with which these ‘mercantilist’ lineage heads sustained their control over juniors, was the maintenance of authority over marriage.<sup>94</sup> *A chief accumulated rights in reproductive capacities of young women by acquiring female slaves, or by polygynously marrying girls offered by client lineages.*<sup>95</sup> As ‘big men’ were monopolising marriage partners as well as routes of economic ascent, young men could only marry by finding a patron who would help his client to pay bride wealth or offer one of his own wives. In return, the client had to work on the patron’s farm or provide other services, reinforcing the wealth and status of the patron’s lineage. Thus, theoretically, big men’s patronage offered a place for even the poorest young men, provided they were willing to submit to working for the elders.

Breaches to this arrangement, for example a young man having an affair with a junior wife of an elder, were dealt with in traditional courts as cases of ‘woman damage’.

Rather than posing a dilemma of sexual morality, these offences were and are still

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<sup>93</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 518.

<sup>94</sup> Richards (1996); Chauveau & Richards (2008); Mokuwa et al. (2011).

<sup>95</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 519; see also Meillasoux (1981).

seen as a challenge to the right-holder's authority over a woman and, thus, as a breach of social hierarchies and obligations. During fieldwork in the 1940s, Little observed that the majority of court cases dealt with 'woman damage', even before land disputes.<sup>96</sup> The courts, invariably staffed with judges from the circle of elders, who held polygynous rights themselves, decided either on fines to be paid or an equivalent amount of labour to be performed by the plaintiff. Finding much the same pattern in the 2001 to 2006 records of chiefdom courts in rural southeastern Sierra Leone, Chauveau and Richards, thus, claim that control over marriage as well as 'woman damage' represents '*a means of reimposing a kind of agrarian servitude (that is, it forces young men into agricultural labour at very low rates)*'.<sup>97</sup> There existed few exit options from this system. Other rural communities featured the same ranked lineage system and newcomers would most likely be classified 'strangers' and, thus, placed at the very bottom of the lineage ranking.<sup>98</sup> The situation in the mining towns, a popular escape for young men, was somewhat more complicated, although by-and-large youth had to submit either to chiefly power or the authority of an increasingly predatory state and its business partners.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Little (1951), p. 150-3; 186.

<sup>97</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 542; see also Mokuwa et al. (2011).

<sup>98</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 114.

<sup>99</sup> Reno (2003) documents how chiefs in the diamondiferous Kono District exercised substantial power over youth in general as well as dependent 'stranger' youth in particular as they held the rights to land and, thus, regulated illicit diamond mining (IDM). With the onset of state control over large parts of Sierra Leone's diamond deposits, chiefs continued to dominate IDM gangs in the downstream Kono area while Stevens' focus on diamond mining further upstream put youth gangs in direct dependence of the state patronage system. Interestingly, Reno also shows how the tight social control chiefs were able to exercise downstream, enabled them to enlist youth as local vigilante and defence forces during the war. The RUF, however, was able to recruit many of the youth mining upstream, as the exploitative behaviour of chiefs and state authorities made them turn against all forms of previous authority. The complicated circumstances regarding the control of youth's labour in the provinces, leaves the attractive anonymity and 'freedom' of Freetown where the chiefly system does not exist. While the capital currently has the highest proportion of 24 to 35 year-olds (Peeters et al (2009)) as compared to the provinces, integrating in Freetown's social hierarchies has its own challenges and pitfalls (see for example, Enria (2011)).

As has been sketched above, the overwhelming authority of elders and the ranking of lineages are reinforced by the work of ‘secret societies’, most notably the Poro for men and the Sande for women.<sup>100</sup> Still in existence today, as cultural and religious institutions, the secret societies monopolise knowledge of initiation and adulthood, reproductive health and traditional medicine as well as mystical and religious rites.<sup>101</sup> One of their main functions is the ritual of initiation with which one enters adulthood and membership in the secret society simultaneously.<sup>102</sup> Initiation is still today the overwhelming rule, despite its controversies with regards to female genital mutilation (FGM).<sup>103</sup> Shrouded in mystery and demanding oaths of secrecy tied to severe sanctions from their members, these societies continue to have an important influence on social and cultural norms in Sierra Leonean society.<sup>104</sup>

In the realm of the local political economy, the men's Poro society has played a central role.<sup>105</sup> Ferme documents, for instance, how the Poro exercises stewardship over community land by putting secret medicine on parts of the bush to prevent overharvesting of palm fruits and other collective resources.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, by influencing the accessibility of communal resources as well as the performance of communal labour, the Poro has historically been able to exercise power over trade relations and the (violent) interactions between different chiefdoms.<sup>107</sup> Within the

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<sup>100</sup> Murphy (1980). These names denote mainly the Mende secret societies. However, secret societies are common across the majority of African ethnic groups in the region (even beyond Sierra Leone's borders) (d'Azevedo (1959); Little (1965); Murphy (1980)). On name differentiation across Sierra Leone, see Fanthorpe (2007), p. 8. I am indebted to Krijn Peters for sharing with me his *'Expert Report on the Poro Society in Sierra Leone'*, from which I have gathered most of the sources and publications used in this paragraph.

<sup>101</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 70; Ferme (2001).

<sup>102</sup> Fanthorpe (2007), p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> INT7, GTZ officer on FGM, Freetown; INT49, Rugiatu Turay, Freetown; see also Fanthorpe (2007).

<sup>104</sup> Murphy (1980), p. 199; Ferme (2001), p. 217.

<sup>105</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 8; Little (1965); (1966); Fulton (1972).

<sup>106</sup> Ferme (2001), p. 195.

<sup>107</sup> Ferme (2001), p. 36; Fanthorpe (2007), p. 5.

conflicting landscape of competing ruling families, the Poro generally serves as an umbrella of cultural unity and has the power to declare war as well as negotiate peace.<sup>108</sup> This is especially important as all major tribes in Sierra Leone (and the wider Upper Guinean coastal forests region of West Africa)<sup>109</sup> have had a long history of secret societies reaching back to at least the sixteenth century when the first European sources document them.<sup>110</sup> In this regard, the secret societies have functioned as training institutions for warriors since pre-colonial times.<sup>111</sup> Involved, for instance, in the coordination of the above-mentioned hut tax war in 1898,<sup>112</sup> they were drawn upon, again, during the civil war to train the Civil Defence Forces (CDF)<sup>113</sup> and are occasionally implicated in the staging of political violence in post-war Sierra Leone.<sup>114</sup> Thus, the Poro, in particular, is also deeply implicated in local political power dynamics. While chiefs are not necessarily heads of the Poro,<sup>115</sup> Little writes that the *'more powerful chiefs had control of the Poro.'*<sup>116</sup> However, as Fanthorpe observes,

*'... societies have sometimes served as instruments of hierarchical political control and sometimes as instruments of egalitarian resistance to such control. Since any number of activities can be placed under society rules and protocols, it is perfectly possible for different groups to harness the same societies to different, potentially competing political projects.'*<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Little (1965); Cartwright (1970), p. 13; Barrows (1976), p. 70.

<sup>109</sup> Murphy (1980), p. 194; D'Azevedo (1959), p. 68.

<sup>110</sup> Dorjahn (1961), p. 36; Little (1965).

<sup>111</sup> Fanthorpe (2007), p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> Little (1965), p. 350.

<sup>113</sup> Muana (1997); Fanthorpe (2007), p. 11.

<sup>114</sup> Waldock (2010).

<sup>115</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 112

<sup>116</sup> Little (1966), p. 68.

<sup>117</sup> Fanthorpe (2007), p. 9.

In this respect the Poro can also function as an autonomous locus of power providing a check on chiefly rulers and, more importantly, in (post-) colonial politics a locus of resistance to government and party politics.<sup>118</sup>

The ranked lineage system was sustained and even solidified during the twentieth century. This occurred first, because colonial authority in Sierra Leone recognised the right of elders to fine young men for marriage infringements, and respected the privileges of the Poro and Sande, thus, not interfering with the reproduction of the ranked lineage society, but in many ways cementing and rigidifying it in ‘customary law’, as described above.<sup>119</sup> Second, as (slave) emancipation was not linked to any kind of land reform, compensation scheme or skills training, it did not lead to a structural change in rural power hierarchies and the economic mode of production. Ex-slaves merely came to form a social underclass at the very bottom of client lineages. They were, thus, still dependent on their former owners for access to land and the means to marry.<sup>120</sup> Finally, even independence in 1961 did not bring about structural changes to this system of local control and coercion. To the contrary, as will be discussed below, chiefs were rewarded with the preservation of their ‘customary’ privileges by the ruling SLPP government for ‘*delivering the vote of [their] large client underclass.*’<sup>121</sup>

Various processes, however, made the system increasingly unstable. As has been described above, with entrance into the money economy and the abolition of checks

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<sup>118</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 256. Kilson ((1966), p. 112), for instance, points to evidence that the Poro helped organise and sustain the tax riots in 1955-56; see also Cox Report (1956), p. 11/12. For a contemporary example of the Poro’s involvement in partisan violence, see Waldo (2010).

<sup>119</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 88.

<sup>120</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 537.

<sup>121</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 539; Newbury (2003), p. 141.

from below, many chiefs grew self-centred and greedy investing heavily in their own fortunes as well as their own children outside of the rural sector, rather than finding places for members of the underclass within the local agrarian hierarchy.<sup>122</sup> This *community failure* coincided with an increasingly unresponsive state and failing national economy, leaving youth without prospects of social ascent in either the traditional or modern realm of Sierra Leonean society. What emerges then in the late 1980s is a process of growing intergenerational tensions cumulating in the marginalisation of large parts of the underclass. At the local level, a '*crisis of youth*' had emerged.<sup>123</sup> The failing patron-client system had led to an increasingly large proportion of young men (women, in general, had little chances of ascending), who were barred from vertical mobility, and, therefore, unable to acquire the position of an adult or elder within the community with its corresponding assets and entitlements.<sup>124</sup> Customary hierarchy no longer offered a place for all.<sup>125</sup>

## 2.2 Violence as State Failure

### *Elite Accommodation as the Focal Point of Sierra Leonean Politics*

Community failure at the local level was exacerbated by state failure as youth was unable to turn to the national level for their demands with regard to a relevant status in society more generally and education and employment in particular. The foundations of an increasingly unresponsive and exclusionary state were laid by the colonial government and were cemented by the Sierra Leonean elite-centred political system, which emerged during decolonisation. In this respect, the political analysis of

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<sup>122</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 39; see also Kilson (1966); Cartwright (1970); Barrows (1976).

<sup>123</sup> Peters (2006); (2011).

<sup>124</sup> Hardin (1993), p. 68/9.

<sup>125</sup> Douglas (2005).

Sierra Leone's late colonial as well as post-colonial trajectory has focused on the system of elite accommodation, namely the accommodation of traditional authorities, local and central political as well as business elites by the highest political leaders, which emerged as the main objective and logic of politics.<sup>126</sup> At the core of this arrangement was and continues to be the mutual interdependence of nationally elected politicians in the capital Freetown and the traditional chiefly rulers in the provinces. The dominant African 'traditio-modern' elite of western-educated politicians, most of whom were tied through kinship to chiefly ruling families, were on the one hand electorally dependent on local chiefly rulers to steer and deliver the votes of the population, but on the other hand enforced the loyalty of chiefs by tying them into lucrative politico-economic positions largely independent of the populace.<sup>127</sup>

As has been noticed above, after the hut tax war at the turn of the twentieth century, the colonial powers embarked on a fairly stable and cooperative working relationship with local chiefly rulers who took on the majority of responsibilities regarding local administration in return for political and economic dominance over the rural population. Relying heavily on this 'indirect rule', the colonial administration itself stayed slim and the bureaucracy in the capital (and some of the district headquarters) was dominated by the British as well as the highly educated Creole. Compared to other West African colonies no considerable popular drive towards nationalism took place and few political organisations were created by the African elite.<sup>128</sup> It was only when the British themselves moved towards decolonisation that mobilisation took

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<sup>126</sup> Barrows (1976); Cartwright (1970); Reno (1995).

<sup>127</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 5.

<sup>128</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 252; Cartwright (1970), p. 11; Barrows (1976), p. 115.

place among the Protectorate's elite.<sup>129</sup> This culminated in the foundation of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) in 1951, mainly to secure the Protectorate's influence over that of the Creoles.<sup>130</sup> Opposed to neighbouring Liberia, then, the African elite from the provinces, and especially the Mende, rather than the Creole settler community in Freetown established a firm hold of the state apparatus.<sup>131</sup> At the same time, drawn from the bourgeois sector of Sierra Leone society with close ties to chiefly ruling families, the new political elite showed no inclination to *'draw the masses into politics [or] ... effect a radical transformation of Sierra Leone society, but were content to work out a transfer of control of the existing political institutions from the British to themselves.'*<sup>132</sup> Independence on 27 April 1961 came about after a *'series of orderly and limited steps.'*<sup>133</sup>

During the 1950s and early 1960s Sierra Leone compares rather favourably with other West African states regarding its relatively open and competitive political system and culture, marked by what may be called free, fair and regular elections.<sup>134</sup>

In this respect Cartwright observes,

*'A final factor which may be noted as a protection for political competition under Sir Milton was the political culture of the elite. A belief in the desirability of free elections was the most conspicuous part of the Sierra Leonean pattern of political behaviour, but it also included such British heritages as respect for the independence of the judiciary and for the rule of laws, the legitimacy of opposition, and some regard for personal liberties.'*<sup>135</sup>

However, at the latest with the 1967 elections, which ushered in Sierra Leone's first change of power through the ballot box and a day later its first in a series of many

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<sup>129</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 253; Cartwright (1970), p. 39.

<sup>130</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 43; Barrows (1976), p. 10.

<sup>131</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 62/63; Clapham (1976), p. 58.

<sup>133</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 67.

<sup>134</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 4; 149.

<sup>135</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 179.

coup d'états, politics took a turn towards restriction and authoritarianism. This was largely due to the choices made by a few central individuals, and especially Albert Margai and Siaka Stevens, but was also supported by the system of elite accommodation in which politics were firmly embedded.<sup>136</sup>

The SLPP featured a loose party organisation within a party system marked by little programmatic difference.<sup>137</sup> This had three major consequences. First, in continuity with the colonial administration, the party (and thus government)<sup>138</sup> relied heavily on the chiefs, particularly to forge electoral support.<sup>139</sup> This made local party branches and the enrolment of mass membership not only superfluous for electoral success<sup>140</sup> but any independent party strongholds were also not desirable in the eyes of the chiefs who benefitted from their exclusive access to the party and the state.<sup>141</sup> While the SLPP was in power, this arrangement was both efficient and cost-effective. However, as the chiefs were tied to the government of the day a change in power would leave the SLPP in opposition without a mobilising structure of its own.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, as this close connection fostered a popular perception of synonymy between the party, the state and chiefly rulers popular grievances against either local or national government found no venting point, providing opportunities for more radical parties to emerge.<sup>143</sup> Second, even at its centre amongst the parliamentarians and the executive in Freetown little party discipline existed.<sup>144</sup> While politics in itself remained fairly stable, as politicians on the whole showed little programmatic or

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<sup>136</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 61.

<sup>137</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> In Sierra Leone central government can be largely equated with the party in power (Clapham (1976), p. 46; Barrows (1976), p. 126).

<sup>139</sup> Allen (1968), p. 306; Barrows (1976), p. 119

<sup>140</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 236; Allen (1968), p. 307; Cartwright (1970), p. 56.

<sup>141</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 178.

<sup>142</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 89.

<sup>143</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 176.

ideological differences, party members resisted close control by the party to be able to pursue individual strategies of power and wealth accumulation. Thus, considerable intra-party competition has always been a challenge for party and government leaders and remains one of the crucial points in understanding Sierra Leonean politics even up to the present.<sup>145</sup> Lastly, to contain the potential centrifugal tendencies of the party and thus maintain its hold on government, it required a skilled and flexible party and government leader. While firm in his objectives, the Mende Sir Milton Margai, the first prime minister of independent Sierra Leone and party leader of the SLPP, was largely able to contain intra-party rivalries and the nascent ethno-regional rift through '*a transactional style of leadership*',<sup>146</sup> namely co-optation of rivals and a careful distribution of appointments and patronage.<sup>147</sup> His brother and successor Sir Albert Margai in contrast lost control of this delicate balance and the subsequent electoral victory of the main opposition party the All Peoples Congress (APC) under its leader Siaka Stevens marked a drift into an even more polarised political system which was in the long run only sustainable through tight authoritarian control, increasing coercion and transgression into the illegal realm.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Cartwright (1970); Barrows (1976); Waldock (2010). A good example of this is the formation of several breakaway parties by (small groups of) individuals who did not see their personal interests and ambitions reflected in the ruling party. The first split occurred with the creation of the Peoples National Party (PNP) in 1958 by a younger set of SLPP politicians, among them most notably Albert Margai and Siaka Stevens. The PNP was co-opted again into the SLPP two years later after little political success. Under APC rule, in turn, the UDP split off in protest to Stevens' highly personalised politics. Stevens was quick to eliminate this source of opposition. The latest such split took place in 2006 when Charles Margai, the son of Albert Margai, disgruntled over losing the presidency candidacy to Solomon Berewa split from the SLPP and founded the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). Another example for low party discipline is the occurrence of floor crossing by parliamentarians. Tied to this, especially in the early days of multi-party democracy, many parliamentary candidates ran as independents and chose their allegiance once the ruling party was determined (Clapham (1976), p. 54).

<sup>146</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 58/59.

<sup>147</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 7.

<sup>148</sup> Reno (1995). It is important to note that the succession of these events was not automatic and, thus, inevitable. They mainly stem from the strategic actions taken by the two main political figures, Sir Albert Margai and Siaka Stevens. However, once Stevens had decided to personalise power in his

While challenging forces to this rather reactionary and complacent political system evolved early on, this criticism has remain largely unanswered up to the present day.<sup>149</sup> First, with the diamond rush in illicit mining of alluvial diamond deposits in the early 1950s, Kono District established itself as a hotbed of political resistance and upheaval. A distinct regionalism evolved based on the demand of more developmental and financial benefits for the local Kono population. At the same time, as more and more chiefs were drawn into the lucrative trade with the explicit support of the national government, anti-chief sentiments further rose.<sup>150</sup> Second, connected to this, as the majority of seasonal mining workers were from northern chiefdoms, the tax riots in the North during 1955/56, already mentioned above, reflected the existence of considerable and profound discontent with the prevailing political structures at the local level.<sup>151</sup> The core of the discontent surrounded *'taxes, levies and extortion in local government'*<sup>152</sup> coupled with the obvious growing wealth of chiefly families. Thus, the Cox Report stated that it had found a shocking *'degree of demoralisation among the people in their customary institutions'*<sup>153</sup> and went so far as to say that the targeted destruction of chiefly property and violence should be regarded *'as civil war [rather] than as a disturbance.'*<sup>154</sup>

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hands by relying on shifting patronage networks and the exploitation of Sierra Leone's natural resources he set in motion a string of processes which were increasingly difficult to manage and finally spun out of control.

<sup>149</sup> Some of them, indeed, were at the core of popular grievances, which sparked support for the rebelled insurgency. As this dissertation shows many of these underlying imbalances still have not been addressed in post-war Sierra Leone.

<sup>150</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 72.

<sup>151</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 67; 71.

<sup>152</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 78.

<sup>153</sup> Cox Report (1956), p. 9.

<sup>154</sup> Cox Report (1956), p. 82.

In their intimate connection with the chiefs, the SLPP proved unable to muster any understanding of these popular grievances let alone find any solutions.<sup>155</sup> Sanctions towards chiefs were thus very limited and popular discontent stayed unanswered.<sup>156</sup> A number of northern politicians who did not see their own aims realised within the governing party were able to exploit these violent upheavals to eventually form a national class-conscious political party, the All Peoples Congress (APC).<sup>157</sup> In contrast to the SLPP, the APC had to rely on direct popular support and the creation of a network of local party branches as the chiefs had pledged their allegiance to the SLPP.<sup>158</sup> This strengthened popular support of the APC and further entrenched resentment towards the SLPP. However, once in office in 1968, power struggles at the elite level, especially with regards to the growing ethno-regional divide, pushed to the fore and the APC largely followed in the footsteps of the SLPP by governing through elite accommodation rather than popular support.<sup>159</sup> The creation and ascendance of the APC, then, while relying on considerable social mobilisation did not bring about any social transformation in the countryside but for the most part led to the institutionalisation of an ethno-regional divide in Sierra Leonean politics. Significantly, from the very beginning, competition and dissent between the two parties was marked by violence.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, the governing SLPP actively used the

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<sup>155</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 80.

<sup>156</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 126.

<sup>157</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 130. The APC's more radical stance was supported by the fact that its leader's biography stood in stark contrast to the privileged background of SLPP politicians (Clapham (1976), p. 47). Siaka Stevens father had been a soldier and he himself had had a career as a trade union leader. Drawing in more politicians of similar background '*The APC leaders and members of Parliament constituted a "new class" entering the political elite for the first time. Relative to the SLPP oligarchy, the APC members came from lower-status occupations, had more limited formal education, were younger, and had fewer links with ruling families. [... However, while] they did have rather strong feelings about the existing social structure, and in particular about the abuses they felt the chiefs were able to perpetrate against their people ... [t]hey did not articulate any coherent set of beliefs that could be called a radical ideology*' (Cartwright (1970), p. 66). In fact, once in power, the APC disappointed its supporters in the population by backing chiefly privileges in return for loyalty and economic gain.

<sup>158</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 56.

<sup>159</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 128.

<sup>160</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 135; Clapham (1976), p. 64.

coercive means at their disposal to impede APC campaigning and organisation setting a precedent for future governments.

After the death of Sir Milton Margai in 1964, his younger brother Albert took over the SLPP leadership and prime ministry. More interested in securing power and wealth for himself rather than balancing competing elite demands he quickly created resentment and dissent within the SLPP and government. Moreover, he alienated the larger elite through practicing distinctly 'tribalistic' politics, increasingly promoting Mende and demoting other ethnic groups, especially Limba and Temne from the North, thereby creating popular resentment.<sup>161</sup> While Sir Milton Margai had included opposition politicians in access to patronage for themselves as well as their constituency,<sup>162</sup> Albert Margai had no feeling for such balancing diplomacy.<sup>163</sup> Adding to his negative image and, more importantly, to the demise of the rule of law and sound governance was open and large-scale corruption. Blatantly using the prime minister's office for his personal benefits,<sup>164</sup> he was also extremely tolerant of the open corruption of others.<sup>165</sup> Harboring more autocratic aims, for example a one-party state in a republican setting under his presidency,<sup>166</sup> he also turned to more drastic methods to secure his weakening grip on power. Breaking with the more moderate but firm strategies his brother had employed to suppress the APC, Albert Margai instituted restrictions on the opposition on a broad front. First, he granted the

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<sup>161</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 187; Clapham (1976), p. 15.

<sup>162</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 169.

<sup>163</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 15.

<sup>164</sup> He, for example, heavily invested in several companies for which he obtained exclusive licensing and, thus, monopoly status (Cartwright (1970), p. 208).

<sup>165</sup> Allen (1968), p. 311; 315; Cartwright (1970), p. 206.

<sup>166</sup> Interestingly, in the parliamentary debate on the one-party state, the APC did not object to the elimination of opposition parties. Citing again the rather conservative stance of Stevens and the APC elite more generally, Cartwright ((1970), p. 216/217) attributes this to the APC's own ideological inclination towards such a system. The APC then did not object to limiting competition as well as the concentration of power in the political system as such but opposed the leadership of Sir Albert Margai and the dominance of the SLPP.

Paramount Chiefs the right to openly take part in politics. This took from them the position (or at least the excuse) of ‘standing above politics’ and hence any chief not openly campaigning for the SLPP could be suspected of being against it and sanctioned accordingly. Moreover, in 1965, with the elections in view, Paramount Chiefs received absolute discretion to allow or forbid any meeting of twelve or more persons within their chiefdom.<sup>167</sup> The police was similarly given the right to disperse meetings and take into custody persons refusing dispersion. Second, he retired high-ranking northerners from the army, to eliminate potential sources of resistance against him.<sup>168</sup> Third, breaching the balance of powers he pressed the hitherto neutral civil service into party loyalty and appointed a SLPP sympathetic Chief Justice. Fourth, he directed that the government-controlled broadcasting service not to give any airtime to news on the opposition.<sup>169</sup> Finally, he used a broad range of coercive measures to directly suppress opposition activity, among them preventative detention and .extensive (though not quite extensive enough) vote rigging in the 1967 elections.<sup>170</sup>

When the Governor-General swore Siaka Stevens in as prime minister after the 1967 elections, the army under Brig. David Lansana staged a coup and proclaimed martial law.<sup>171</sup> Only a day later, his own staff toppled him instituting the National Reformation Council (NRC), which ruled without much success and popularity for a year before handing over power to the APC under Siaka Stevens. Determined not to lose power, Stevens set out to establish his personal control through increasingly autocratic, coercive and illegal means.

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<sup>167</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 197; 243.

<sup>168</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 244.

<sup>169</sup> Cartwright (1970), p. 200.

<sup>170</sup> Allen (1968), p. 313.

<sup>171</sup> On the 1967 elections and the two following coups, see Fisher (1969).

### ***The African State Conceptualised***

Looking back at these roughly two decades of politics influenced and steered by Sierra Leone's elites, it is possible to discern several conceptual themes placing the country's experience in a comparative perspective. There is an abundant literature dealing with the particularities of Sub-Saharan African states, how they differ amongst each other and in comparison to western states.<sup>172</sup> Given weak economic performance, several decades of authoritarianism followed by slow and uneven moves towards multi-party democracy as well as a high rate of political violence and civil war as compared with other continents,<sup>173</sup> researchers have tried to account in various ways for the '*permanent crisis*'<sup>174</sup> of Sub-Saharan African economies and states.<sup>175</sup> The main argument supported here and most closely linked to the Sierra Leonean case runs as follows: First, I assert, that there is a striking continuity from the colonial state to post-colonial state. Thus, as the colonial state was fragile and superficial in its institutional depth, so are many post-colonial Sub-Saharan African states. Second, I claim that without real restructuring of state institutions and state-society relations, effectively no state building, let alone nation-building, ever took place. Rather, carried by their external sovereignty, '*quasi-states*' arose.<sup>176</sup> This is important because the notion of 'state failure' presupposes that a viable state existed in the first place. However, in many cases and in Sierra Leone specifically, there never were efficient state institutions or encompassing state-society relations. Instead, I

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<sup>172</sup> cf. Bates (1981); (2008); Bayart (1993); (2000); Bratton & Van de Walle (1994); (1997); Reno (1995); Clapham (1996a); Chabal & Daloz (1999); Van de Walle (2001); Cooper (2002); Nugent (2004).

<sup>173</sup> Freund (1998); Nugent (2004).

<sup>174</sup> Van de Walle (2001).

<sup>175</sup> It is safe to say that there are very few African success stories, by which I mean states, which have featured a combination of stability and peace, economic growth and diversification as well as the consolidation of democracy over multiple decades. The only truly 'safe' candidate seems to be Botswana (Clapham (2001)) while some other countries such as Namibia, Ghana and Cape Verde have also had largely positive trajectories.

<sup>176</sup> Jackson (1990).

thirdly claim, these regimes nevertheless proved surprisingly stable as they functioned through a complex system of elite accommodation closely tied to various forms of patronage and clientelism, internal coercion as well as the skilful exploitation of links to external markets and the international community. In this scenario, a small governing elite (or often the president himself) ‘*broker*’ their regime along a fine line between survival and collapse.<sup>177</sup> In Sierra Leone, Siaka Stevens managed to steer Sierra Leone through two decades of steady economic and political decline, leaving it to his successor, a much less skilful ‘*broker*’, to command over the final regime breakdown. The successful insurgency, as far as the rebels were able to start a decade long war with few men and weapons, then, reflects the final (though temporary) collapse of the system of elite accommodation and, thus, the point at which popular grievances, which had been present since late colonialism, were brought to a violent fore. In essence then, the Sierra Leonean trajectory is one of stark continuities in elite dominated politics and remarkably little social change.<sup>178</sup>

Above the local chieftaincy level, colonialism created an overarching bureaucratic and coercive structure, the colonial state. Since the main interest of the colonial powers lay in economic exploitation, that is, the export of natural resources and marketable crops,<sup>179</sup> the system of ‘indirect rule’ was put in place to guarantee political and social stability without major investment into institutions of governance and administration.<sup>180</sup> Clapham, thus, writes that ‘*[c]olonial rule in Africa ... consisted in many areas of little more than the thinnest imperial overlay, which could be maintained*

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<sup>177</sup> Cartwright (1970); Clapham (2001).

<sup>178</sup> Allen (1968), p. 305; Fyle (1993b), p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 6.

<sup>180</sup> Lugard (1922); Crowder (1964); Emerson (1964); Mamdani (1996); Freund (1998).

*only by the co-optation of local elements which benefited from it.*<sup>181</sup> The presence of the colonial power was concentrated at the borders of the territory and especially at the ports and exit routes via which marketable merchandise was transported and exported. Cooper terms this state model the gatekeeper state.<sup>182</sup> Infrastructure was export-oriented and markets were geared towards producers of raw materials, while the state only had – and for that matter aspired to have – very weak instruments for entering into the social and cultural realm over which it presided.<sup>183</sup> Indigenous leaders, who took control of the state after decolonisation, then, inherited fragile and only very basic state structures, making up what Robert Jackson has termed ‘*quasi-states*’.<sup>184</sup> These are states whose claim to statehood hinges first and foremost on externally granted sovereignty and, thus, the acceptance of other states to treat them as fellow members of the state system irrespective of their actual capacities (or willingness) to govern and provide basic public goods and services internally. Bolstered by this external sovereignty, most prominently reflected in the principle of ‘*non-intervention*’,<sup>185</sup> and sustained by aid and credit flows, the new states were legitimate partners in international relations and trade.

However, despite the common perception of constant political instability on the African continent, political regimes have actually proven to be surprisingly stable and actual state collapse or even drastic regime changes have remained relatively few

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<sup>181</sup> Clapham (2001), p. 1.

<sup>182</sup> Cooper (2002).

<sup>183</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 4; 5.

<sup>184</sup> Jackson (1990).

<sup>185</sup> The norm of non-intervention was firmly established into international law as one of the basic principles of the United Nations Charter (Chapter I, Art 2 (7)) to guarantee post-World War II peace in light of the nuclear threat during the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, however, the new emergent norms of humanitarian intervention are slowly superseding the norm of non-intervention. This is based upon the growing insight that sovereign state rights must be matched by a responsibility to protect citizens. This argument has justified UN sanctioned peacekeeping interventions in many domestic conflicts during the past two decades, of which UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone (1999 to 2005) is one example.

when looking at the continent as a whole. Rather than holding the reality of Sub-Saharan African states against Weberian western standards, it is more enlightening to assess what drives and sustains Sub-Saharan African regimes and state-society relations in their own right.<sup>186</sup>

Roughly following the argument Jackson makes about ‘*quasi-states*’, many researchers point to the stabilising effect of the international state system with the governing rules of international relations as well as its sources of finance has on any single state.<sup>187</sup> According to Jackson and Rosberg, states exist simply because international actors recognise them, giving them juridical but not empirical reality.<sup>188</sup> As Cooper writes, ‘*[s]urvival depends on the fact that formal sovereignty was recognized from outside and that resources, such as foreign aid and military assistance, came to governments for that reason.*’<sup>189</sup> Given the small size of most Sub-Saharan African economies, ‘*even a modest amount of economic or military aid could be a major patronage source to a leader.*’<sup>190</sup> The crucial point here is not only the passive stabilising effect the primacy of the state as the main building block of the international system has,<sup>191</sup> but more importantly the agency African elites may exert when entering international relations and accessing external markets. In this respect, Bayart uses his concept of ‘*extraversion*’ to analyse not only external determinism of

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<sup>186</sup> In this respect, Lonsdale & Berman have put forth a definition of the state, which avoids a normative standard of statehood. In their words the state is ‘*the historically conditioned set of institutions in any class society which, more or less adequately, secures the social conditions for the reproduction of the dominant mode of production.*’ (Lonsdale & Berman (1979), p. 489)

<sup>187</sup> cf. for instance Jackson & Rosberg 1982; Jackson (1990); Clapham (1996a); Bayart, Ellis & Hibou (1999); Bayart (2000).

<sup>188</sup> Jackson & Rosberg (1988).

<sup>189</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 156. Importantly, political acceptance and economic or even military aid, however, have seldom come without conditions. The stability of any given country receiving such support, thus, also heavily depends on the aims and strategies of its major donors and allies. Proxy wars during the Cold War drastically show the destabilising effect of external acceptance.

<sup>190</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 159.

<sup>191</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 11.

the Sub-Saharan African state and constraints on Sub-Saharan African governments but also the way in which African elites have actively engaged and exploited international actors, markets and opportunities<sup>192</sup> displaying ‘agency in tight corners’.<sup>193</sup> Establishing extraversion as a ‘matrix of action, rather than a structure’<sup>194</sup> he contends that

*‘Sovereignty in Africa is exercised through the creation and management of dependence. Observance of the Holy Trinity of Reform (structural adjustment, democracy and good governance) has been filtered through objectives of power holders and implemented in the reproduction of systems of inequality and domination ...’*<sup>195</sup>

In Cooper’s gatekeeper state, the state elite polices ‘the intersection of internal and external economies ... collecting and distributing resources that derive from the gate itself’,<sup>196</sup> for example, customs and foreign aid, permits and visas and the movement of currency and goods. The primary struggle is fought over control of this gate to be able to reward followers and exclude rivals. This system makes the stakes of control at a single point extremely high. Politics becomes a zero-sum game and alternative mechanisms for influencing decisions and demanding accountability are undermined.<sup>197</sup> Any opposition movement, for example, basically cannot afford to lose, as the gate creates virtually all resources and power<sup>198</sup> while rulers do everything from generous patronage to brutal coercion to stay in control of the gate, thus, limiting channels of access even further. As will be discussed in more detail below, Siaka Stevens centralised power within his hands to an extreme extent

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<sup>192</sup> Bayart (2000).

<sup>193</sup> Lonsdale (2000).

<sup>194</sup> Bayart (2000), p. 234.

<sup>195</sup> Bayart (2000), p. 228, emphasis added. Pushing Bayart’s argument further, Bayart, Ellis & Hibou (1999) and Hibou (2004) advance the view that the state becomes a function of international criminal elements. Their hypothesis, while extreme and based on limited empirical evidence, is worth keeping in mind, in light of the recent growing Columbian presence in West Africa connected to increasing levels of cocaine trafficking through Sierra Leone and its neighbouring countries (INCB (2008), p. 40; BBC NEWS (2009a); (2009b); INCB (2011), p. 48).

<sup>196</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 97.

<sup>197</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 159; 192; 200.

<sup>198</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 5.

drawing on the country's diamond wealth as well as skilful negotiations with international donors to finance his grip on power.

Gatekeeping, or brokering as Cartwright and Clapham call it, is, thus, a complicated balancing act of tying allies into the regime and excluding rivals.<sup>199</sup> However, since the system is necessarily exclusionary, especially when resources for patronage become scarce, the gatekeeping regime faces constant resistance. During much of his rule, Stevens was occupied with co-opting ever-new allies while suppressing and eliminating rivals.<sup>200</sup> With the state occupied with patrolling the gate, discontent state actors and non-state actors do their best to circumvent it. Thus, *'one of the origins of instability in Africa is the inability of gatekeepers to keep the gate'*<sup>201</sup> and prevent activities like smuggling. In Sierra Leone, rivals to Stevens and discontent local power-holders developed cross-border networks that smuggled out valuable resources, such as diamonds, and smuggled in arms and luxury goods.<sup>202</sup> Importantly, this also points to a pattern of limited *'constructive interaction'* between Sub-Saharan African states, especially in situations of conflict. Clapham writes *'[t]he ability to exploit the frontier with a complicit (or at least acquiescent) state has been critical to most African insurgencies'*<sup>203</sup> such as Cote d'Ivoire for Liberia, Sudan for Uganda, Chad for Sudan, and Uganda for Rwanda. In the Sierra Leonean case, most prominently, Liberia's president Charles Taylor spurred this 'negative' intra-African cooperation by encouraging and participating in cross-border networks that bypassed the gate.<sup>204</sup> For Cooper, then, countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, the

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<sup>199</sup> Cartwright (1970); Clapham (2001).

<sup>200</sup> Reno (1995).

<sup>201</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 157.

<sup>202</sup> Reno (1995); Clapham (2001).

<sup>203</sup> Clapham (2001), p. 9.

<sup>204</sup> Reno (1995); Cooper (2002), p. 184; 192; Clapham (2001), p. 8/9.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Guinea represent the worst failures of the gatekeeper state. Here public services collapsed all together and whatever is left of the state loses control even of the gate, leaving place for a series of power brokers who acquire followers and weapons and transform themselves into warlords.<sup>205</sup>

While capturing an important aspect of the Sub-Saharan African state trajectory, namely its continuity from colonial state structures and its dependence on and simultaneous manipulation of international resources, a largely ‘internationalist’ take on states falls short of explaining and illuminating the inner workings of the political economy as well as state-society relations. In this respect, the concept of (neo)patrimonialism takes on a central role in the discussion of Sub-Saharan African politics, state functioning and legitimacy.

Several researchers put forth the thesis that Sub-Saharan African states are dominated by society, more specifically by their elites and a specific form of elite-society interaction.<sup>206</sup> The main argument is that the influence of patrimonial networks is larger than that of formal institutions. Chabal and Daloz are major, albeit also controversial, proponents of this perspective.<sup>207</sup> Using Weberian criteria of a state ‘emancipated’ from society and reliant on a rule-bound and meritocratic bureaucracy for its functioning, they claim that Sub-Saharan African states are ‘*retraditionalising*’ rather than institutionalising. This follows from the insight that the patrimonial logic implies an instrumentally profitable lack of distinction between the

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<sup>205</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 183; see also Reno (1995), Chapter 8; Reno (1998). For a similar argument, see Allen (1995), p. 307-9.

<sup>206</sup> cf. for instance Bayart (1993); Chabal & Daloz (1999); Mbembe (2001).

<sup>207</sup> Chabal & Daloz (1999). A major criticism of Chabal & Daloz’ work has been its over-generalisation of African states and, thus, homogenising the variety of cases across the continent (Cheeseman (2006), p. 26).

civic and personal spheres, as those with access to political office allocate political and economic resources in their fiefdom to their clients on the basis of patronage, rather than according to the criteria of professionalism and competence.<sup>208</sup> As this logic permeates not only the civil service but all relations, including the realms of civil society and political parties, no clear public-private divide exists. Thus, Chabal and Daloz conclude rather drastically, that *'[t]he state in Africa is ... not institutionalized.'*<sup>209</sup> However, they concede that *'Africa works'* and that it is exactly the *'instrumentation of disorder'* that, while preventing the emergence of a modern Weberian state, leads to a different but stable form of political order. Bayart explains this stability by analysing more closely the inner workings of Sub-Saharan African states, which he terms the *'politics of the belly'*.<sup>210</sup> Here, the state is the location of competing claims over *'our turn to chop [eat]'*,<sup>211</sup> that is, to consume and accumulate. The state, however, is not a modern, transparent state guided by bureaucratic principles but what Bayart calls a *'rhizome state'*, in which crucial transactions and relations are hidden from the public and international eye. The fusion of society and state as well as the public and private realm through patron-client networks produces stability and durability as it enjoys legitimacy, as long as it can deliver mutual benefits. The state is, thus, stronger and not weaker, according to Bayart. The key insights of this literature are, first, that institutions may work differently in distinctive cultural contexts, thus, comparisons to the European/western ideal have only limiting explanatory value. Second, regime stability hinges also on internal legitimacy and the ability to meet local expectations for the distribution of goods. Thus, little 'formal' capacity may not have to translate into a weak state and, thus, the

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<sup>208</sup> Chabal & Daloz (1999), p. 5/6.

<sup>209</sup> Chabal & Daloz (1999), p. 6.

<sup>210</sup> Bayart (1993).

<sup>211</sup> Lindberg (2004); (2006).

obsession with state failure may be misplaced, fundamentally misunderstanding local processes. In the case of Sierra Leone, however, patrimonial networks contracted to the point where they were unable to sustain any legitimacy, and the political elite had to resort to violence to maintain power.

The concept of 'neopatrimonialism' has attracted much scholarly attention in analysing and explaining the workings of Sub-Saharan African states and, thus, deserves closer examination.<sup>212</sup> Neopatrimonialism captures the thesis that *'the African state is best conceptualised as 'distinct from both the modern and the traditional states, but drawing on both.'*<sup>213</sup> Thus, an external façade of a modern Weberian rational-legal administration exists, with a clear distinction of the public and the private, written laws and a constitutional order.<sup>214</sup> This official order, however, is constantly subverted by a patrimonial logic, as *'... political authority in Africa is based on the giving and granting of favours, in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state.'*<sup>215</sup> In this system, officeholders systematically appropriate public resources drawn from their office for their own personal use, what is commonly termed prebendalism,<sup>216</sup> while political authority and loyalty to the elite is based on patronage, the distribution of favours, such as cash, goods and jobs, to supportive clients. Moreover, as many Sub-Saharan African states feature highly presidential systems power is centralised around a single individual with personal discretionary power over a big

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<sup>212</sup> cf. Roth (1968); Medard (1982); Clapham (1982a); Joseph (1987); Fatton (1992); Bayart (1993); Bratton & Van de Walle (1994); (1997); Reno (1995); Chabal & Daloz (1999); Van de Walle (2001); (2007); (2012); Erdmann & Engel (2007).

<sup>213</sup> Medard (1982), p. 162.

<sup>214</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 16/17.

<sup>215</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 51.

<sup>216</sup> Joseph (1987).

share of the state's resources and ultimate control over most clientelistic networks.<sup>217</sup> As will be discussed below, Reno has documented the efforts of Siaka Stevens to continuously reassert presidential control over key forms of rent seeking. In the Sierra Leonean case this centred on efforts to control the mining and trade of diamonds.<sup>218</sup>

Neopatrimonialism has not only been accused of blocking the emergence of a modern state<sup>219</sup> but is also seen as a major obstacle to economic reform<sup>220</sup> and democratic consolidation.<sup>221</sup> Van de Walle, thus, states that *'the removal of neopatrimonialism has been widely seen as a prerequisite for sustained economic growth and structural transformation in the region.'*<sup>222</sup> While much of this literature, again, reflects the failure of Sub-Saharan Africa vis-à-vis a western ideal standard, the features of neopatrimonialism in themselves can explain stability as well as instability in political regimes.<sup>223</sup>

In simple terms patron-client networks may function as a stabilising backbone of a state when the amount of available resources available to patrons meets the expectations of their clients. For Lemarchand, the importance of patronage politics is

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<sup>217</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 52; Mustapha & Whitfield (2010a); (2010b).

<sup>218</sup> Reno (1995); Clapham (2001).

<sup>219</sup> Chabal & Daloz (1999).

<sup>220</sup> Sandbrook (1985); Van de Walle (2001). In his book *'African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis'*, Van de Walle offers a *political* explanation for the persistence of Africa's *economic* crisis. His main argument is that patterns of structural adjustment programme implementation reflect the preferences and biases of decision-makers (Van de Walle (2001), p. 12/13) as regimes have sought to protect the interest of a narrow stratum of state elites during the reform process while inflicting austerity on the population (Van de Walle (2001), p. 16; 54). On the politics of structural adjustment, see also Callaghy (1990); Loxley (1990); Riddell (1992); Herbst (1993); Simutanya (1996); Clapham (1996b); Dollar & Svensson (2000); Whitfield (2009).

<sup>221</sup> Bratton & Van de Walle (1994); (1997); Lindberg (2004); (2006).

<sup>222</sup> Van de Walle (2012), p. 111.

<sup>223</sup> See Arriola (2009) on patronage strategies, which foster regime stability. In this respect it is also important to acknowledge that clientelistic dynamics exist in virtually all political systems worldwide while differing widely in their extent and legality, see for example, Piattoni (2001); Helmke & Levitsky (2006); Kitschelt & Wilkinson (2007); Bach & Gazibo (2012).

to be found in the particular history of decolonisation. In the newly independent but institutionally weak Sub-Saharan African states patronage provided an *'alternative means for integration where coercive power is not sufficiently coercive to command widespread compliance and where conceptions of legitimacy are as yet too weak or circumscribed to produce consensus.'*<sup>224</sup> Thus, the creation of patronage structures was a natural and as Clapham suggests quite rational response of the African elite to the challenge of nation-building in the context of the limited capacity of formal institutions and should not be mistaken as a *'cultural hangover.'*<sup>225</sup>

It is important to observe that clientelism can take on a variety of forms. It may link elites in mutual interdependence or hierarchical positions as well as joining the population as a whole or parts thereof with local or national patrons.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, as Cheeseman has shown patronage structures can differ along the dimensions of personalisation as well as competitiveness.<sup>227</sup> In this regard, Van de Walle's extensive work on neopatrimonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa has been criticised for oversimplifying the notion of clientelism and focusing too strongly on the intra-elite nature of clientelism, and especially prebendalism, in authoritarian settings.<sup>228</sup> However, as has been shown above the Sierra Leonean political system has been strongly dominated by its elite and the system of elite accommodation, while the populace has consistently lost out in its demands on (state) resources. Thus, for the pre-war period Van de Walle's analysis is favoured here as it is particularly relevant

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<sup>224</sup> Lemarchand (1972), p. 69.

<sup>225</sup> Clapham (1982c), p. 3.

<sup>226</sup> Post (1963); Allen (1995).

<sup>227</sup> The author explains, *'I identify two fundamental dimensions along which patronage structures can vary. First, patronage may be more or less personalised, depending on the proportion of patronage that is channelled by individuals as compared to organisations. Second, patronage structures may be more or less competitive, depending on the extent to which the recipients of patronage are able to change the source of their patronage.'* (Cheeseman (2006), p. 43).

<sup>228</sup> Mustapha & Whitfield (2010b), p. 220.

to the analysis at hand. More recently, Van de Walle has argued that the growing political competition on the African continent, that is, the slow move of Sub-Saharan African political regimes towards multi-party democracy, is likely to alter patterns of clientelism by progressively limiting prebendal dynamics and replacing them with patronage-based ones.<sup>229</sup> I will return to this prediction and the wider literature on clientelism in Chapter 6.4, when analysing contemporary state-society relations.

Van de Walle, then, asserts that clientelistic politics in Sub-Saharan Africa primarily constitute a mechanism for accommodating and integrating a fairly narrow political elite rather than following a logic of mass (party) patronage.<sup>230</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa's '*permanent crisis*' in turn results from the interaction between these clientelistic needs of neopatrimonial states, extremely low capacity of state structures and the dominant economic ideas, closely tied to self-survival, among policy elites.<sup>231</sup> This system favours consumption over investment producing unsustainable economic policies. Moreover, it systematically under-invests in institutional capacity, which could threaten power holders, thus leading to extremely low levels of state capacity.<sup>232</sup> These features are combined with a weak civil society and few traditions of open competition and participation. Sub-Saharan African states, therefore, combine high levels of autonomy with extremely low capacity in a context of poorly organised and weak non-state actors. Therefore, in African neopatrimonial networks, the position of the client is much weaker. Ultimately, it does not constrain relatively autonomous elites, giving Sub-Saharan African states the opportunity to withdraw more and more from basic development activities while shifting expenditures to elite

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<sup>229</sup> Van de Walle (2007); (2012).

<sup>230</sup> Van de Walle (2007), p. 66.

<sup>231</sup> Van de Walle (2001).

<sup>232</sup> Reno (1995), p. 4.

consumption.<sup>233</sup> With the progression of economic crises, leaders learned to instrumentalise the reform process of structural adjustment to derive political and economic benefits from it. Due to weak and inconsistent conditionality, elite interests could be protected while implementing *'just enough reform'* to maintain donor support.<sup>234</sup> Reno argues that adjustment-sponsored liberalisation policies actually strengthened Stevens' presidency as it allowed him to maintain his co-optation of allies in a situation of acute domestic resource scarcity.<sup>235</sup> Aid, then in general, helped to sustain neopatrimonial regimes by providing what the state was not generating on its own: resources and technical capacity for development.

An important question arising from the discussion on neopatrimonialism is the extent to which political regimes and states that rely on this logic are stable. Linking back to the works of Cooper, Clapham and Cartwright stability or instability seems to depend on effective *'gatekeeping'* or *'brokerage'*.<sup>236</sup> Van de Walle observes that where leaders manage political and economic crises in such a way that they constantly recentralise power and readjust patrimonial practices to lower level of resources, states exhibit remarkable political stability, displaying less frequent leader turnover than other regions.<sup>237</sup> However, where leaders lack the discipline and political skill to maintain the neopatrimonial order, rent-seeking tendencies spin out of control and state capacity so deteriorates that law and order break down. This can result in state decay as in Sierra Leone or what Reno terms warlordism as in the case of Liberia, Somalia or the DRC.<sup>238</sup> While the spectacular collapse of the regime in Sierra Leone and the

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<sup>233</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 55; 16.

<sup>234</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 13; 17.

<sup>235</sup> Reno (1995), Chapter 6.

<sup>236</sup> Cooper (2002), Clapham (2001); Cartwright (1970).

<sup>237</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 16.

<sup>238</sup> Reno (1995); (1998); Cooper (2002); Clapham (2001); Van de Walle (2007), p. 58.

subsequent brutal civil war tend to dominate contemporary assessments of the country inviting a focus on rupture and potential transformation, one of the aims of this chapter and the thesis as a whole is to show how remarkably little social change and disruptions to the system of elite accommodation have taken place.

### ***Towards Collapse: The Privatisation of the State***

Turning back to Sierra Leone then, the work of Clapham, on a more conceptual level, as well as Reno, more specifically geared towards the Sierra Leonean case, bring together the various strands of thinking on the Sub-Saharan African state sketched above.<sup>239</sup> What emerge as crucial points in understanding the particularity of Sub-Saharan African states more generally and the failure of the Sierra Leonean in particular is the intertwining of external and internal politico-economic strategies and dynamics.

In his detailed analysis of the political economy of colonial and post-colonial rule, Reno argues that Sierra Leonean rulers drew their authority from their abilities to control informal markets and their material rewards. These resources were used to finance a complex and ever shifting network of alliances and coercion. Moreover, it was the integration of key informal markets into the international economy, which defined the regime's relations with foreigners. As the survival of the regime hinged mainly on a monopoly position in informal markets, state institutions were either manipulated to strengthen control or left to wither. Public and private, formal and informal become enmeshed in this situation. The wider population played a minor supporting role in this scenario; while they were the main producers in informal

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<sup>239</sup> Clapham (1996a); Reno (1995).

activities, their voice was muffled by coercion. The crucial point that Reno makes in his detailed description of Siaka Stevens' presidency is that this system was not self-perpetuating but inherently unstable.<sup>240</sup> It required the constant search for new sources of finance to keep in check allies, whose loyalty depended on material rewards, and foes, whose coercion became ever more expensive as patrimonial networks contracted with economic decline and a crushing debt burden.<sup>241</sup> In this situation Stevens turned outward drawing on international private banks as well as donor money to sustain his rule. Picked precisely because he was weaker, Stevens' self-appointed successor, Joseph Momoh, did not have the necessary skill to hold the various strands of the regime together. More and more groups renegaded and when a small band of rebels crossed the border from Liberia there were simply no state institutions left to put up any meaningful resistance. Moreover, initially, the disaffected population turned against the state and supported the insurgents. Sierra Leone's decade of civil war had begun.

The trajectory towards war was not automatic. Stevens gradually built up centralised control after he finally took over the premiership in 1968. In 1971 he declared Sierra Leone a republic with himself as president and in 1978 the APC was declared the only legal political party in the country, confirming the one-party state that it had already become in practice.<sup>242</sup> From the start, however, his rule was decisively more authoritarian than that of the Margai brothers. Between 1968 and 1973, Stevens consolidated APC power over the legislative and executive in a series of manipulated

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<sup>240</sup> In this regard, Reno's analysis, which focuses on the predatory strategies of Sierra Leone's elite, resonates with the state failure framework Bates (2008) puts forth. The author posits that political order results from an equilibrium of choices. The choice of the population to produce wealth and, more importantly, the choice of the rulers to draw on the means of coercion to protect this creation of wealth rather than to prey upon it (Bates (2008), p. 5). Siaka Stevens then made the choice to prey rather than to protect leading Sierra Leone into instability and eventual state failure.

<sup>241</sup> Reno (1995), p. 80; 90.

<sup>242</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 15/16.

by-elections. He deliberately and liberally used the instruments of central power at his disposal – army and police, mass arrests and preventative detention as well as states of emergency – to suppress the SLPP and intimidate its voters.<sup>243</sup> Moreover, APC rule penetrated not only the northern part of Sierra Leone but the chiefdoms of the South and East as well. Laying off its radical stance on opposition to local chiefly rule, Stevens pragmatically affirmed the chiefs' role in rural governance.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, like the SLPP, he co-opted traditional rulers and the ruling families into his patronage system. Those who remained opposed were either threatened with deposition or swiftly replaced by candidates from opposing ruling families.<sup>245</sup> In this sense the competitive and conflictual nature of chieftaincy politics played into Stevens' hands. Candidates from ruling families who were out of power were all too happy to pledge loyalty to the new government party heightening their chances of gaining access to chieftaincy positions.<sup>246</sup>

While Stevens first sought to consolidate his power by drawing on a 'strong state', that is, relying on formal (coercive) state institutions, he was unable to control local strong men and in particular those who could afford autonomous power bases through their connection with the illicit mining sector.<sup>247</sup> He, thus, set out to gain control over the mining and trade of diamonds with the aim of breaking the power of rival actors and at the same time drawing on the diamond wealth to meet the fiscal demands of his system of elite accommodation.<sup>248</sup> What follows is a process during which Stevens gained control over the informal channels of the diamond sector. At

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<sup>243</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 12; 130.

<sup>244</sup> Tangri (1976); (1978).

<sup>245</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 131.

<sup>246</sup> Tangri (1978), p. 168.

<sup>247</sup> Reno (1995), p. 84; 86.

<sup>248</sup> Reno (1995), p. 80.

the same time his main strategy to co-opt elites was to place them strategically in positions within the government or formal economy (that is, parastatals, most notably the public-private venture, National Diamond Mining Corporation (NDMC)) for exploitation.<sup>249</sup> This clientelistic strategy had the overriding benefit of making those rewarded dependent on Stevens' appointments, thus forging loyalty.<sup>250</sup> Stevens made sure to rotate posts on a regular basis so that no one could build up autonomous power strong holds, while eliminating those who grew too powerful or loud in their criticism.<sup>251</sup> Keen writes *'Stevens' political system was based on extending patronage to a relatively small but shifting group of 'insiders', whilst intimidating any 'outsiders' who expressed their dissatisfaction.'*<sup>252</sup> Generous exploitation of these posts for self-enrichment (described as prebendalism above) soon led to the complete inefficiency of the companies involved. Moreover, expensive elite accommodation and coercion conflicted with redistributive promises to the population. From the early 1970s onwards the economy declined rapidly.<sup>253</sup> Development and social spending came to a grinding halt, reaching a mere three per cent of the overall budget in 1984.<sup>254</sup> At the same time official alluvial diamond production dropped drastically, reflecting a move into the illicit sector.<sup>255</sup> Sesay estimates that by the late 1980s, ninety-five per cent of Sierra Leone's diamond production was being smuggled abroad.<sup>256</sup> To further break the power of local big men, Stevens started a close alliance with Lebanese traders, which led to the consolidation of the private diamond industry in Lebanese hands.<sup>257</sup> This had the added benefit that Stevens acquired

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<sup>249</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 52; Reno (1995), p. 86; Bates (2008), p. 102.

<sup>250</sup> Reno (1995), p. 100.

<sup>251</sup> For a personal account of Stevens' uncompromising drive for power, see Forna (2002).

<sup>252</sup> Keen (2005), p. 16.

<sup>253</sup> Luke & Riley (1989).

<sup>254</sup> Kaindaneh (1993), p. 38; Reno (1995), p. 87; Keen (2005), p. 25.

<sup>255</sup> Reno (1996), p. 89; 106; Fyle (1993b), p. 12.

<sup>256</sup> Sesay (1993), p. 293/294; Keen (2005), p. 23.

<sup>257</sup> Reno (1995), p. 90; 109; 141; Clapham (1976), p. 11.

access to international credit markets via private banks in Lebanon who took illicit diamond exports as collateral.<sup>258</sup> In the 1980s Stevens additionally started to manipulate the conditions of the international financial institutions, the IMF and World Bank, to access more patronage resources.<sup>259</sup> *'Adjusting to adjustment'*<sup>260</sup> he, for instance, simply privatised state-run companies by selling them to loyal Lebanese traders and other elites.

Stevens' regime then breached the divide between formal and informal economy as well as the public and private sphere.<sup>261</sup> State resources, positions and materials, access to regulatory means such as licensing as well as international relations were used and manipulated within the informal and illicit realm to maximise the profit of a small elite. This is what Reno terms the 'privatisation of the state'.<sup>262</sup> Realising the impossibility of breaking this pattern, the IMF pulled its finances out of Sierra Leone in late 1984. In a rare move of capitulation by an African ruler, Stevens stepped down and handed over power to his chosen successor, Joseph Momoh, the head of the army.<sup>263</sup> 'Proving' popular support by running as the only candidate in a national referendum, Momoh was able to start up negotiations with the IMF again.<sup>264</sup> However, actually complying with austerity measures robbed Momoh of finances and control to keep in check allies and rivals, Stevens' system of elite accommodation spiralled out of control as local power holders reclaimed their autonomy laying bare the shambles of the state and the economy.<sup>265</sup> Clapham concludes,

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<sup>258</sup> Reno (1995), p. 132.

<sup>259</sup> Fyle (1993b), p. 14/15; Reno (1995), p. 131; Keen (2005), p. 21/22.

<sup>260</sup> Chabal & Daloz (1999), p. 122.

<sup>261</sup> Reno (1995), p. 111.

<sup>262</sup> In this regard, Kpundeh ((1995), p.24) writes that 'it was difficult to distinguish the Sierra Leonean government from a private enterprise' during the early to mid 1980s.

<sup>263</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 58.

<sup>264</sup> Reno (1995), p. 153.

<sup>265</sup> Reno (1995), p. 161; Van de Walle (2001), p. 185.

*'When the Sierra Leone 'state' came under armed challenge from the early 1990s, therefore, it would be more accurate to conclude that there was no state, in the sense of an institution concerned with the provision of public goods. Instead, there were a set of essentially private operators, using the mythology of statehood as one of a collection of resources, along with management of the diamond market and control over parts of a fragmented military, through which to achieve personal goals of survival, wealth and recognition. When these operators were challenged by rivals, to whom even the mythology of statehood was largely irrelevant, it was not so much that the state collapsed, as that its non-existence was revealed.'*<sup>266</sup>

Reno's conceptualisation of the *'Shadow State'*, based on his analysis of Sierra Leonean politics, resonates with Clapham's model of the *'monopoly state'*.<sup>267</sup> While Reno's term highlights the dealings of the state elite in the informal and illicit realm of politics and economics as the central survival strategy, Clapham focuses on the overriding centralising tendency of Sub-Saharan African states and their elites in the political economy. For both, however, it is the intertwining of politics and economics within the national and international realm, which characterise Sub-Saharan African states. Clapham stresses the following features of Sub-Saharan African states, which are reflected well in Sierra Leone's experience. First, political control is imposed from the top, rather than through mobilisation from below.<sup>268</sup> The precedent for this was laid not only by the colonial state in Sierra Leone but more importantly, the SLPP who set the tone for post-colonial politics. Second, leaders entrench themselves in power by drawing on the machinery of the state to suppress or co-opt rival organisations. The level of co-option versus coercion varies not only with the personality of the

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<sup>266</sup> Clapham (2001), p. 7. While a few authors propose that elites in Africa derive an advantage from the destruction of the central state, intentionally fostering instability to use *'disorder as a political instrument'* ((Chabal & Daloz (1999); Reno (1998); Bayart, Ellis & Hibou (1999)), Van de Walle suggests that state collapse is not a choice of state elites. Rather, descent to state collapse in Sierra Leone should be understood as the *'most unintentional result of increasingly desperate leaders who have progressively sawed off the state branch on which they based their neopatrimonial rule'* (Van de Walle (2001), p. 185). The subtle difference is that political disorder and state collapse might well be instrumentalised by elites, but this does not mean that state leaders would willingly allow the state to collapse, as larger profits can always be derived from rent-seeking in stable economies rather than in unstable ones or even during war (Van de Walle (2001), p. 186)

<sup>267</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 56.

<sup>268</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 56.

ruler, as can be seen by Sir Milton Margai's against his brother Sir Albert Margai's style of governance, but also by the structure of politics and the access to resources.<sup>269</sup> The later point became crucial for Siaka Stevens who was unable to finance the co-optation of an ever-growing network of allies, let alone, widespread popular patronage and, thus, had to strongly rely on force. Thirdly, Clapham emphasises the dependence of Sub-Saharan African regimes on personal leadership.<sup>270</sup> This has a number of consequences. Extreme centralisation makes rule extremely insecure with constant threats from within the regime as well as from rebellions. As Reno, importantly points out, the highly centralised system of power also means that state, regime and ruler's survival become one and the same.<sup>271</sup> Thus, major sources of power, especially the security apparatus, need to be under the direct command of the leader, to extinguish any independent loci of power. Similarly, foreign relations are conducted by the president, as *'[f]oreign policies ... became a means through which leaders attempted to gain access to the resources required to maintain the domestic political structure.'*<sup>272</sup> Stevens manipulation of international donor's conditionality as well as the collaboration with Guinean troops to coerce his political opponents speaks to this point while his constant shifting of alliances, reflects the permanent vulnerability of his regime.<sup>273</sup> Lastly, overall politics is turned into a *'patronage operation ... [a] consumption-oriented form of political management.'*<sup>274</sup> This system neither encourages production in the economic sector,

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<sup>269</sup> Clapham (1995), p. 57.

<sup>270</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 58/59.

<sup>271</sup> see also Barrows (1976), p. 126; Clapham (1996a), p. 4.

<sup>272</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 60.

<sup>273</sup> Clapham (1976), p. 19.

<sup>274</sup> Clapham (1996a), p. 59.

nor does it create a sense of moral community and, thus, lacks general legitimacy, especially in the eyes of those who are excluded from the system of benefits.<sup>275</sup>

Indeed, state-society relations – or in this scenario the dynamics between those at the centre of the patronage machinery and the rest of the population were not a priority within Stevens' regime. Internal sovereignty or acceptance mattered little for regime survival (given that external links function well) and, thus, the provision of public goods, which would normally justify the existence of a state, would have been '*entirely counter-productive*'.<sup>276</sup> Making substantial demands on state revenues, provisions such as health care and education bring few benefits to the state's rulers.<sup>277</sup> From a popular perspective, however, skyrocketing consumer prices, falling food production, currency devaluation and the system of monopolistic profits benefiting the elite, meant that being 'inside' or 'outside' the system was for many a matter of covering even basic needs. Even food aid delivered by foreign donors to mitigate the food crisis, was channelled through patronage networks.<sup>278</sup> As the TRC reports, the youth at the time referred to this system of highly unequal and exclusive access to resources as '*connectocracy*'.<sup>279</sup> Overall, during Stevens' rule the accommodation of popular demands through broad patronage networks proved too expensive; lacking popular legitimacy, the 'cheap' version of dealing with an increasingly disaffected populace was naked force.<sup>280</sup> In some cases, violence was extreme, not simply intimidating but representing public humiliation and a public

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<sup>275</sup> Clapham (1982b).

<sup>276</sup> Clapham (2001), p. 6.

<sup>277</sup> The same argument holds for the maintenance of institutional structures of rule. Rather than strengthening the power of the individual at the top of the state hierarchy, a Weberian bureaucracy sustaining internal norms of correct behaviour, restrict the freedom of action of the individuals wishing to exploit them (Clapham (2001), p. 6).

<sup>278</sup> Ferme (1998), p. 563; Sesay (1993), p. 206.

<sup>279</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 347.

<sup>280</sup> Reno (1995), p. 26; 111.

demonstration of superiority of the attackers over the victim.<sup>281</sup> This created a culture of violence associated with party politics and elections still today. Moreover, it set a dangerous example for youths, who would utilise violence in a similar way during the war.

Regarding this, the increasing informalisation and privatisation of security was another important factor in the run-up to the civil conflict. After a series of coups Stevens had largely privatised security to form private policing forces, most notably the Internal Security Unit (ISU), later called Special Security Division (SSD), strictly loyal to him. They were reinforced by the below described informally recruited bands of youthful thugs (Clapham (1976), p. 56). The army in contrast lacked finance for training, weapons and later even salaries (Fyle (1993b), p. 5). When the insurgency started, the army was, therefore, in no position to defend the country's borders and territory.<sup>282</sup>

As development and social services receded from the majority of the population, education became a *'privilege, not a right'*.<sup>283</sup> Declining educational standards led to protests and corruption among teachers and mass dropouts of students, which would soon come to haunt the country as young males with incomplete education formed *'the single largest group of irregular combatants'*.<sup>284</sup> College student protests turned

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<sup>281</sup> Keen (2005), p. 18.

<sup>282</sup> Moreover, being part of a private security group came with the benefit of access to illicit diamond mining. The overall focus of economic aims and activities on this one commodity as well as the implication of power-holders and security forces in the trade quickly focused all fighting forces – be it the army or the insurgents, ECOWAS troops or South African mercenaries – on diamond extraction and smuggling (Zack-Williams & Riley (1993); for an overview of the regions and times the various fighting forces engaged in diamond mining, see Peters & Richards (2011), p. 381).

<sup>283</sup> President Joseph Momoh, quoted in Richards (1996), p. 36; Beckley (1993). For a detailed assessment of a wide range of public services during 1961-91, see Fyle (1993a).

<sup>284</sup> Richards et al. (1996), quoted in Keen (2005), p. 28.

into more general urban protests when students formed alliances with poorer alienated youths.

In this regard, the role of youth during the years of the APC regime deserves a more detailed discussion. The TRC Report observes that *'[i]n the 1970s and 1980s, as the one-party system became increasingly tyrannical, youths formed the only viable opposition to the ruling All People's Congress ...'*<sup>285</sup> An important factor in understanding youth role within post-independence Sierra Leone are its heterogeneous and often contradictory roles. This means not only that various sub-groups exist within this groups, which makes up around a third of the Sierra Leonean population, but that individual youths have often taken on complex and ambivalent roles, especially with regards to violence and the contestation of the provincial and national political elite.<sup>286</sup>

The APC started to draw on marginalised youth for their own political purposes during the 1969-70 by-elections, when soldiers, the police and *'rarray man dem'* were used to intimidate SLPP members and voters.<sup>287</sup> The later have been described by Abdullah as a particular category of marginalised Freetown youth who emerged in the 1940s.<sup>288</sup> Predominantly male, illiterate and economically insecure as they moved in and out of casual jobs, they lived at the margins of the urban mainstream society. Prone to non-political violence and other anti-social behaviour such as drug consumption and dealing as well as petty crime these youths formed a distinct

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<sup>285</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 343.

<sup>286</sup> For a completely different perspective on critical youth culture, namely artistic forms – plays and masquerades, murals and painting as well as music – that youth critique on Sierra Leonean politics and societies have taken during the past decades, see Banton (1957); Nunley (1987); Opala (1994); Christiansen & Utas (2008); Abdullah (2009); Shepler (2010).

<sup>287</sup> Fyle (1993b), p. 6.

<sup>288</sup> Abdullah (2002).

subaltern culture lived out within their *'potes'* – meeting places or neighbourhoods – and during masquerades and processions, known as *'odelay'*. The APC drew on these young men in an ad hoc manner, paying for their violence against political opponents with drugs, alcohol or token cash handouts. While a few leaders of the *'rarray man dem'* were rewarded with political positions, most of these 'thugs' were *'unceremoniously dumped after the completion of their violent assignments.'*<sup>289</sup> In the diamond mines up country, marginalised youth were called *'san san boys'*. Eking out a living sifting through sand for diamonds, they were easily manipulated for violent purposes. Importantly however, they were drawn on both for state as well as counter-state violence.<sup>290</sup> The term 'youth' then became a synonym for an un(der)employed young person, vulnerable to manipulation.

At the same time, youth were not only tempted to partake in violence for comparatively small rewards but also formed a conscious and vocal opposition to the exploitative political system. Several authors have noted that the fact that the country's deteriorating economic and political situation for the most part eliminated the differences in the socio-economic standing of educated and uneducated youth was critical for the eventual outbreak and support of the war. Thus, in Freetown, a convergence in life-style and worldviews between *'rarray man dem'* and groups of radical students took place with the city's *'potes'* becoming a rallying point for alienated, unemployed youth as well as meeting points for critical political discussion.<sup>291</sup> Especially the campus of Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone's most prestigious university, became a hotbed of student protest from the late 1970s

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<sup>289</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 346; see also Abdullah (1997), p. 49. For the same pattern of ad hoc youth recruitment, while some especially violent individuals are rewarded with state positions in post-conflict Sierra Leone, see Christiansen & Utas (2008); Awareness Times Newspaper (2008a); (2008b).

<sup>290</sup> Reno (2003); TRC (2004d), p. 346.

<sup>291</sup> Rashid (1997), p. 24; Abdullah (1997), p. 29-32.

onwards.<sup>292</sup> While, youth in Freetown on the one hand started to exchange ideas and collaborate, the APC repeatedly drew on *'rarray man dem'* to intimidate and brutalise student protesters.<sup>293</sup> Youth were, thus, pitched against youth.<sup>294</sup> Similarly within the camp of those opposing the state different factions evolved especially between those who eventually came to support and actively pursue the violent opposition of the state and those who did not favour a military option.<sup>295</sup>

The disaffection of urban youth coincided with the *'crisis of rural youth'*<sup>296</sup> arising from community failure as described above.<sup>297</sup> In this context, Muana describes *'njiahungbia ngornga'*, Mende for unruly youth, who contested traditional structures and values.<sup>298</sup> Some of these youth set up *'potes'* in the provincial towns and sympathised with the culture and ideology of marginalised Freetown youth. Thus, severe popular disaffection over state and community failure spearheaded by urban and rural youth proved essential for the outbreak of the war as it directly led to the emergence of a group willing to attack the state while also providing popular support or the RUF insurgency at the beginning.<sup>299</sup> In this respect, the TRC report writes,

*'... different categories of youths were involved at distinct stages of the conflict history of Sierra Leone. Educated youths were involved in the formulation of ideas for revolution and regime change, instigating the training in Libya. Marginalised urban youths were involved in the bulk of the*

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<sup>292</sup> Rashid (1997); Fyle (1993b), p. 6.

<sup>293</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 349.

<sup>294</sup> It is important to note that youth, while limited in their freedom by economic hardship, were able to display considerable agency. Thus, rioting for state agents does not only represent the exploitation of youth with an uncertain socio-economic status but also an active choice on the part of youth to access the resources offered by patrons. The flexibility with which youth, for example, perpetrate violence for different and at times opposing patrons to maximise profits as well as the utilisation of times of acute instability for looting sprees reflect this element of choice (see TRC (2004d), p. 349; Christiansen & Utas (2008)).

<sup>295</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 351.

<sup>296</sup> Peters (2006); (2011).

<sup>297</sup> Indeed, Peters ((2011), p. 12) finds that across rank, fighting force, ethnicity and age ex-combatants agree on these factors as causes of the war.

<sup>298</sup> Muana (1997), p. 80.

<sup>299</sup> Reno (1995), p. 173.

*military training and the launch of the insurgency. Thereafter the bulk of the growing manpower of the RUF consisted of marginalised rural youths.*<sup>300</sup>

Exclusion from education, employment and positions of influence created widespread anger among youth unable to advance or fulfil a meaningful role in society. The RUF epitomised youth's grievances when it denounced, *'a society has already collapsed when the majority of its youth can wake up in the morning with nothing to look up for.'*<sup>301</sup> Violence then emerged as a revolt against the system of accommodation between national and local elites, as can be seen in widespread attacks on figures of authority in general and chiefs in particular as well as government buildings. Kandeh notes in this respect that the violence perpetrated during the war represented the subaltern appropriation of elite modes of violence and violent modes of accumulation. Youth felt legitimised to not only appropriate public as well as private property but also to do so by force.<sup>302</sup> At the same time, the RUF, at least in its initial years of existence and fighting, attempted to replace ranked lineage society and the patron-client logic with new forms of egalitarian association.<sup>303</sup> While the overall organisation of the RUF 'bush camps' is still debated and under-researched, the picture which emerges from research done so far is that of a *'violent meritocracy'*,<sup>304</sup> in which merit-based promotion was tied to successful fighting, including the commitment of cruelties. In the most comprehensive analysis of the RUF to date Peters writes,

*'While the movement ... never fully got rid of patrimonial tendencies, it definitely tried to incorporate egalitarian and meritocratic principles ...*

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<sup>300</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 351.

<sup>301</sup> RUF (1995), p. 19.

<sup>302</sup> Kandeh (1999).

<sup>303</sup> INT8x, Ex-RUF commander FM, Freetown; INT31x, Ex-RUF commander GM, Freetown. INT54x, Ex-RUF commander BM, Magburaka; INT16, Jimba Ngobeh, ex-RUF minister for education, Kailahun.

<sup>304</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008), p. 543; see also Richards (1996); (2005); Peters (2006); Coulter (2006); Marks (2008).

*performance at the war front determined seniority in the movement. This may have appealed to underclass elements because it was ... a ... system, based on effort and merit, but it also resulted in a movement preoccupied with military success, at the expense of regard for civic values.*<sup>305</sup>

Failings on the community and state level, thus, not only shed light on the outbreak of violence but also help explain patterns of violence and militia formation.

### **2.3 Sierra Leone 1991-2002: A War Beyond Reason?**

The timing of the war in Sierra Leone falls into a historical high of armed conflicts globally unleashed in the decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>306</sup> For a conflict in a small West African country, Sierra Leone's civil war has played a disproportionate role in the academic discussion on the causes of war. While Kaplan depicts the conflict as the prototype of new savage wars that will rage in the developing world, Collier and Hoeffler class the civil war as being driven by greed for the country's most precious natural resource, diamonds.<sup>307</sup> More subtle explanations range from a revolt of marginalised urban 'lumpen' youth to an agrarian crisis among rural based youth.<sup>308</sup> Wars typically defy monocausal explanations. As the previous sections as well as the following analysis will show, this dissertation follows the work of Richards, Abdullah, Keen and Peters in locating the underlying causes of the war in

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<sup>305</sup> Peters (2011), p. 96/95.

<sup>306</sup> Civil wars in Africa have attracted much scholarly attention. The following works provide a comparative overview of the topic: Clapham (1998); Gourevitch (1998); Nnoli (1998); Newbury (1998); Cramer (2006); Berdal & Malone (2000); Keen (2005); Collier & Sambanis (2005); Johnson (2006); De Waal & Flint (2005 / 2009); Ellis (2007); Prunier (2009).

<sup>307</sup> Kaplan (1994); Collier & Hoeffler (2000).

<sup>308</sup> Abdullah (1997); (2004); Richards (1996); (2005); Richards & Peters (1998); Peters (2006); (2011).

an intricate set of politico-economic and social factors leading to a break-down of state-society relations on the one hand and communal relations on the other.<sup>309</sup>

When on 23 March 1991 a small group of Sierra Leonean and Liberian fighters, led by former army corporal Fodah Sankoh, entered from Liberia into Kailahun and Pujehun District, their talk of a rebellion against the corrupt political system resonated with a large part of the population and especially marginalised rural youth. The rebels easily recruited marginalised youth, as *'deceived by diamonds, bored by agriculture, and powerless against corrupt politicians and lack of opportunities'*<sup>310</sup> joining the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) not only provided the satisfaction of bonding with a set of comrades,<sup>311</sup> but also proved exciting and, more importantly, lucrative and empowering. While the rebels could rely on voluntary recruiting at the beginning of their incursion, increasing levels of brutality against civilians alienated the population, making the RUF dependent on forced abductions of children and youths during the war. What started as a small rebellion, evolved into a civil war that lasted eleven years and was characterised by horrific levels of violence, mainly directed against the civilian population, causing tens of thousands of deaths, the displacements of half the population and leaving tens of thousands maimed, raped and severely traumatised.<sup>312</sup> Rather than analysing in detail the complex timeline of the war,<sup>313</sup> the

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<sup>309</sup> Richards (1996); (2005), Abdullah (2004), Keen (2005); Peters (2006); (2011). The most detailed documentation on the war and its causes can be found in the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone (TRC (2004a)).

<sup>310</sup> Skelt (1997), p. 21.

<sup>311</sup> Bangura (2004).

<sup>312</sup> Statistics on Sierra Leone's war victims vary widely. The following numbers should be read as an impression of the horrific levels of violence that took place rather than precise facts. It is estimated that more than 50,000 people died in the conflict; 2.5 million were displaced from their homes, of which ca. 500,000 became refugees in neighbouring countries ([www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)). Several NGOs, including Medicines sans Frontier and Handicap International, estimate that at least 4,000 intentional amputations took place, of which most likely at least two thirds resulted in death (TRC (2004g)). Sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery, was widespread affecting thousands of women and children (HRW (2003)). For a very detailed discussion of the matter of victimisation, see TRC (2004d), p. 465-564; TRC (2004f), p. 8-33.

following section discusses who fought the war and how the extreme levels of violence can be conceptualised. This focus is justified by one of the puzzles the work at hand aims to address, namely, why Sierra Leone has seemingly been able to recover so fast from its violent past when it is plausible to assume that extreme levels of violence would make post-conflict peacebuilding especially difficult.

Two academic debates surround the analysis of the Sierra Leonean war. First the background of the fighters and their motivations to fight are disputed, and, secondly, the rationality and explicability of violence in the light of the horrific brutality of the conflict is debated. Research suggests, that the RUF drew its key supporters from three groups of marginalised youth: urban marginals, socially disconnected village youths and illicit miners.<sup>314</sup> The origins and ‘vanguard’ of the RUF are located in the group of urban ‘*lumpen*’ youths. As described above, these largely illiterate school dropouts, many of whom had worked as hired thugs for politicians, teamed up with radical students and other dissidents like the later rebel leader Fodah Sankoh.<sup>315</sup>

A common perception is that the RUF’s main motivation for fighting lay in ‘*greed*’ for material resources, like diamonds.<sup>316</sup> Richards and Peters, claim that the core of the early RUF was ideologically driven, forming a political movement with disciplined cadres demanding foremost education.<sup>317</sup> Keen dismisses the claim that the RUF was a political movement, pointing to the few and sketchy ideological documents actually produced by the rebels and the fact that inconsistent reports of ‘*revolutionary*’ and

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<sup>313</sup> See for example, TRC (2004a); Keen (2005).

<sup>314</sup> Abdullah (1997); (2004).

<sup>315</sup> On student radicalism in Sierra Leone, see Bolten (2009).

<sup>316</sup> for example, Collier & Hoeffler (2000). Peters & Richards (2011) counter this notion by showing that the RUF was engaged in only one instance of mining during the first few years of the war, while other fighting forces had already established themselves in the diamond mines.

<sup>317</sup> Richards (1996); Peters (2006); (2011).

'egalitarian' practices were dramatically contradicted by the rebels' violent actions, which were strikingly counterproductive in building civilian support for any greater political movement.<sup>318</sup> Primary data on the RUF collected during the war is very limited and, hence, its organisation and ideology as well as the strategies and motivation of its fighters remain underresearched.<sup>319</sup> Several interviews conducted with former RUF combatants, including some of its high-ranking military and civilian leaders, for this and a previous study seem to suggest that both of the above accounts need to be qualified. At the beginning of the war, the RUF's call for education and an end to corruption resonated with many youth who voluntarily joined the insurgents. Thus, the rebels did put forth political aims and communicated them to the wider population. Several accounts also point to evidence that developmental goals, such as free, universal education and health care as well as a cooperative approach to agriculture and more egalitarian governance structures were implemented in strongholds of the RUF as time, resources and fighting permitted.<sup>320</sup> However, these initiatives seem to have been the exception rather than the rule. Moreover as the movement grew in response to pressure from other fighting forces and had to rely on abductions to fill its ranks, discipline among its ranks declined sharply and the political motivation to fight was limited to very few of its members.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Keen (2005), p. 39-47.

<sup>319</sup> Notable exceptions are the work of Richards (1996); Richards & Peters (1998); Peters (2011). Moreover, two research projects at Oxford University led by Zoe Marks and Julia Amos respectively are currently collecting data on the inner workings of the RUF.

<sup>320</sup> INT8x, Ex-RUF commander, Freetown; INT31x, Ex-RUF commander, Freetown; INT54x, Ex-RUF commander, Magburaka; INT16, Ex-RUF minister for education, Kailahun.

<sup>321</sup> Interestingly, the RUF Party, RUFPP, holds on to the account of having formed a political movement. Its presidential candidate for the 2012 elections recently stated '*that the objective of RUFPP during the eleven years civil war in Sierra Leone was to establish democracy and equal distribution of wealth to the people of this country. He [the candidate] further acknowledged that the positive change in the country which Sierra Leoneans are enjoying was the initiative of the RUF.*' (Awareness Times Newspaper (2012)).

Based on *'What the Fighters Say'*, Humphreys and Weinstein find support for all of the competing theories, suggesting that the rivalry between them is artificial.<sup>322</sup> Their data, taken from a large-scale survey among fighters demobilising, suggests that across factions greed and grievances, political and material motivations mattered for recruitment. While RUF-fighters claimed to have predominantly fought to bring down the existing corrupt regime, combatants of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), local vigilante groups, argued that they had defended their communities. Material incentives operated as well. RUF-combatants were promised jobs, money, and women; they received women, drugs, and sometimes more valuable goods. The CDF helped to meet the basic needs of its members and provided increased security for their families. According to the researchers, as most rank-and-file were not directly engaged in the lucrative natural resource trades, these profits do not help to explain the motivations of the vast majority of combatants. Rather, throughout the conflict, the interests of most fighters, particularly the rebels, remained focused on basic needs – access to security, food and education. Importantly, both Humphreys and Weinstein and Peters and Richards find that recruitment strategies, the composition of the fighting forces, and the motivations to fight worked differently for different groups and changed over time as the conflict progressed.<sup>323</sup> Thus, while the RUF was a group of mutual strangers, largely recruited by force, the CDF originated from tight networks of families, friends and communities and was able to rely on much higher levels of voluntary recruitment. However, the researchers found a striking consistency in the demographic profiles of the different warring factions. No large differences along ethnic, regional or religious lines emerge across factions. Further, the vast majority of fighters were young (under the age of twenty-five), uneducated

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<sup>322</sup> Humphreys & Weinstein (2004); (2005); (2006); (2007).

<sup>323</sup> Humphreys & Weinstein (2004); (2006); Peters & Richards (1998).

and poor, with the average level of education of fighters continuously declining throughout the course of the conflict. In this respect, the TRC Report observes, *'[b]y 1992,<sup>324</sup> therefore, almost the entire combatant population consisted of youths, on both sides of the battle.'*<sup>325</sup>

While for some observers the violent excesses amounted to a war *'randomly'* fought by *'mindless'* combatants,<sup>326</sup> Richards stresses that the RUF's violence was actually a quite *'rational'* attempt to articulate and dramatise the grievances of those floating at the margins of an exploitative patrimonial state unable to extend even minimal services to its population.<sup>327</sup> Violence here is conceptualised as a plea for attention from those who felt they had been forgotten. Richards' rationalisation of the RUF – a rebuttal to Kaplan's provocative and grossly under-researched article – was seen by many as dangerously close to a justification of the horrors committed.<sup>328</sup> Keen provides a nuanced and plausible view of how grievances were not only the root-cause of the conflict, but also how they shaped the extreme violence pursued by the rebels and other fighting forces. In economic terms, he claims, the war provided its fighters with the ability to loot, thus escaping extreme poverty and starvation. More importantly, economic factors were crucial for the duration of the conflict as the leaders of all fighting forces developed strong economic agendas geared towards the exploitation of Sierra Leone's natural resources. Significantly, the diamond-mining regions were the sites of some of the fiercest battles in a war otherwise characterised by low-tech weaponry, hit-and-run-attacks and jungle ambushes.<sup>329</sup> Keen rejects,

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<sup>324</sup> The year the NPRC engaged in mass recruitment of marginalised urban youth into the army.

<sup>325</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 352, emphasis added.

<sup>326</sup> Kaplan (1994).

<sup>327</sup> Richards (1996).

<sup>328</sup> Bangura (1997).

<sup>329</sup> Keen (2005), p. 48-55.

however, that the civil war was *'all about diamonds'*, rather, he locates the source of *'greed'* in grievances.<sup>330</sup> As described above, Sierra Leone's society was marked by incredible inequality in access to power, education, employment, and wealth, with youth being the losers within the patrimonial system. In a *'generational inversion of authority'* the war involved the direct and immediate transfer of power from the *'haves'* to the *'have-nots'* and from the old to the young, turning previous roles on their head.<sup>331</sup> In many cases, violence was directed against chiefs and elders. More generally, violence was often conducted in such a way that it would force *'respect'* and *'recognition'* for the perpetrator. This constituted a cruel game, where those turned rebel, reacted to previous humiliation and oppression by inflicting even greater humiliation on their current victims.<sup>332</sup> Keen portrays extreme violence as taking place in a world of shamelessness, which had removed all *'normal moral constraints'* among the rebels.<sup>333</sup> Shamelessness in committing heinous crimes was based on a belief of killing and harming those *'causing the war'*, that is, the corrupt elite and whoever was perceived as supporting them. Violence was, thus, seen as justified. At the same time, the constant *'threat of shame'* inflicted upon the rebels through alienated civilians, risked to shatter the twisted logic of this enclosed world, leading to a high propensity to attack anyone arousing a sense of shame, be it within the rebel group or from the outside. This led to a vicious circle of violence met by resentment feeding even extremer violence. Moreover, drug use, an externalisation of violence to

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<sup>330</sup> Keen (2003), p. 68.

<sup>331</sup> Wood (2008), p. 550. This observation holds predominantly in the case of RUF hierarchy and violence perpetrated by the rebels. The army was structured much more closely along conventional hierarchies of seniority, while the CDF arose from traditional hunter societies embedded in local, gerontocratic structures. Importantly, however, very young fighters who came to commit atrocities, and thus hold power, over civilians, dominated all fighting forces. Moreover, young CDF fighters did contest traditional gerontocratic authority during and after the war, as is discussed in more detail in Ch. 7.3.

<sup>332</sup> Keen (2005), p. 59-75.

<sup>333</sup> Keen (2005), p. 75-81.

other forces (that is, the belief of being possessed during battle) and the more general climate of impunity provided a context conducive to extreme violence.<sup>334</sup>

The RUF started as a very small fighting force and very soon lost its popular support. This begs the question why the war lasted so long. The initial failing of the army reflects the above described *'impoverished state[, which] was to prove as ineffective in suppressing rebellion as it had been in suppressing smuggling.'*<sup>335</sup> An unprepared, untrained and unequipped army was simply *'caught with [their] pants down.'*<sup>336</sup> However, even successor regimes – first the NPRC military junta, which ruled from 1992 until the elections of 1996, then the democratic government under President Kabbah, which was ousted from power by a coup of renegade soldiers calling themselves the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) from 1997-98 – were unable to gain lasting control over the war situation and terminate it. Two major reasons for this failure are the economic and political agendas of all the fighting forces involved, which repeatedly obstructed any sincere peace negotiations.

The war in Sierra Leone was fought by a multitude of actors in various coalitions, defying clear dichotomies of 'the good' versus 'the bad' or a formulation of who was whose enemy. Crudely put, at the beginning of the war, the RUF, together with Liberian fighters, fought against the weak Sierra Leonean army. Liberia continued to support the rebels with arms and supplies, until international pressure at the end of the 1990s made this impossible. The Sierra Leonean government soon hired

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<sup>334</sup> On the socialisation into fighting forces, including the RUF, through violence suffered, observed and perpetrated, see Wood (2008), p. 546; Maclure & Denov (2006); Denov & Gervais (2007).

<sup>335</sup> Keen (2005), p. 9.

<sup>336</sup> Major General Mohammed Tarawallie, quoted in Keen (2005), p. 83.

mercenaries from South Africa<sup>337</sup> and received regional support from the Guinean Army and, mainly Nigerian, ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) troops. The army's fighting was characterised by an incapacity and increasingly unwillingness to actually defeat the rebels. Rather, covert collusion of the two groups, which recruited youths in the thousands from the same marginalised background, led to the phenomenon of 'sobels': soldiers by day, rebels by night. Collusion reached its height in 1997 when renegade soldiers staged a coup, forming the AFRC and inviting the RUF to govern alongside them. The army's lack of reliability led to the rise of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) built around groups of traditional hunter societies, most famously the Mende 'kamajors'.<sup>338</sup> Finally, the end stages of the war also saw international military interventions of the British army and UN peacekeepers.<sup>339</sup> Important to note regarding the different fighting forces is that, while the RUF is responsible for the largest share of atrocities committed, all *local* fighting forces involved engaged in the recruitment of minors and committed large-scale atrocities against civilians. Similarly, all local forces followed economic agendas during the war considerably, and possibly knowingly, prolonging the conflict. Moreover, ECOMOG's troops were repeatedly accused of engaging in violence against civilians as well as collaborating with the RUF to gain access to mining sites.<sup>340</sup> Thus, the RUF was '*not so much a movement as an environment*'<sup>341</sup> – an environment capitalised on by a variety of groups to pursue their own goals.

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<sup>337</sup> On the most prominent of these outfits, Executive Outcome (EO), see Howe (1998).

<sup>338</sup> The Civil Defence Forces (CDF) were a collection of local militia groups who played an important role defending communities against rebel attacks, especially in light of the considerable weakness of the army and its eventual collaboration with the RUF. For a detailed account see Muana (1997); Hoffmann (2007).

<sup>339</sup> For a critical account, see Bangura (2000).

<sup>340</sup> Keen (2005), p. 244.

<sup>341</sup> Analyst, quoted in Keen (2005), p. 267.

Three rounds of peace negotiations and Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) efforts preceded the final end of the war in 2002. The agreement of Abidjan (November 1996) collapsed soon after its signing, as the army, rebels and kamajors did not see their interests reflected in the agreement.<sup>342</sup> Renewed fighting led to cycles of particularly extreme violence cumulating in the AFRC-coup in May 1997 and the viciously conducted destruction of much of Freetown by parts of the army and the RUF in January 1999. This stark visibility of the war to the governing elite and international community led to the signing of the controversial Lomé Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999.<sup>343</sup> It incorporated the RUF into the government, making Fodah Sankoh head of a new mineral resources commission and giving him the status of Vice-President. It granted a blanket amnesty to all fighters and laid down the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).<sup>344</sup> Hard for the government and civil society to swallow, these conditions were accepted to finally achieve peace. However, repeating earlier patterns, weak international support for the DDR-process and UN-peacekeeping mission, continuing, destabilising influence from Liberia, exclusion of the AFRC/SLA from Lomé as well as obstructionism by the RUF unravelled the agreement cumulating in the hostage-taking of some 500 UN-peacekeepers by parts of the RUF in May 2000.<sup>345</sup> After the signing of Abuja I/II (November 2000/May 2001), which determined the creation of a war-crimes tribunal, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the TRC and the largest UN-peacekeeping mission to that date (UNAMSIL),<sup>346</sup> peace and stability finally progressed fast. President Kabbah declared the end of the war on 18 January 2002. By that date,

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<sup>342</sup> On the peace process and especially the controversial involvement of the NGO International Alert, see Amos (2011).

<sup>343</sup> Bangura (2000).

<sup>344</sup> Lomé Peace Accord (1999).

<sup>345</sup> TRC (2004c), p. 10; Bangura (2000), p. 571/574.

<sup>346</sup> For a careful assessment of the eventually successful peacekeeping operation by UNAMSIL, see Olonisakin (2008).

almost 72,500 fighters, including 24,000 RUF rebels and 37,000 CDF fighters, had demobilised.<sup>347</sup> These were eighty-nine per cent of the estimated total pool of ex-combatants.<sup>348</sup> The reasons for this sudden, relatively smooth transition can be found in several external and internal factors, which decreased the incentives to go on fighting and increased a favourable view of peace. First, the rebels took a heavy beating under rigorous measures from regional (Guinean) and international (British, UN) troops, while international sanctions cut off Liberian support. Second, now a high-profile conflict, international attention shifted to the fight against Sierra Leonean 'blood diamonds', curtailing benefits from the war economy. Third, enhanced DDR-programs for the rank-and-file as well as specific development projects entrusted to former commanders increased the attractiveness of peace.<sup>349</sup> Internally, the RUF tone of command shifted as more moderate leaders, like Issa Sesay, took control, while the hard-liners (notably Sankoh) were in prison. Finally, the rank-and-file had grown war-weary and were keen to demobilise.<sup>350</sup> Similarly, the confident and tough stance of the international actors, which provided relative stability and security, and

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<sup>347</sup> ICG (2002), p. 13.

<sup>348</sup> Humphreys & Weinstein (2005), p. 4. The final phase of DDR, which offered cash payment, various trainings and toolkits to ex-combatants, achieved '*a moderate level of success*' (Fitz-Gerald (2005), p. 66/67). Two failures of DDR, relevant to the consolidation of peace, stand out: First, a group approach to DDR gave disproportionate power to commanders who defined eligibility. Many weak males and especially women were, thus, excluded from DDR benefits, while former commanders were able to establish themselves as patrons over their previous rank-and-file. Second, due to the attractiveness of artisan training packages, artisan apprenticeships, such as carpeting and tailoring, were over-subscribed compared with vocational trainings, which would have supported other areas of employment, particularly in the agricultural sector. This imbalance, coupled with the weak economic climate and an absence of market demand for such a surge in artisan capacities, led to considerable un(der)employment at the end of the training-programs, while a number of other desperately-needed skills stayed untapped (for a detailed discussion, see Richards et al. (2003); Humphreys & Weinstein (2004); Fitz-Gerald (2005); Peters (2006), p. 117-130). A qualitative assessment of the integration status of ex-combatants and their coexistence with the communities they decided to settle in after the war can be found in Boersch-Supan (2008).

<sup>349</sup> Peters (2006), p. 84.

<sup>350</sup> Keen (2005), p. 274.

enhanced and inclusive DDR-programs led to the demobilisation of the CDF and the various parts of the army.<sup>351</sup>

## **2.4 Post-Conflict-Reconstruction, Reintegration and Reconciliation**

The President and his government were credited with the (eventual) successful end of the war. Benefitting from this peace dividend, Kabbah and his Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) were re-elected in the peaceful May 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections in a landslide victory.<sup>352</sup> The AFRC's Peace and Liberation Party (PLP) as well as the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF) only received 3.6 and 2.1 per cent of the popular vote, respectively.<sup>353</sup>

Sierra Leone has commonly been hailed as a peacebuilding success with low levels of post-conflict violence between 2002 and 2007 and a relatively low crime rate.<sup>354</sup> The country made a considerable effort to address its violent past by initiating a two-pronged approach of restorative justice with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone (TRC) and retributive justice with the Special Court for

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<sup>351</sup> Not demobilised were those fighters who joined the current Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL) via the Military Reintegration Programme. After several screenings and a one year long training, a total of 2349 former RUF, CDF and AFRC fighters (out of 2982 applicants) became members of the army in 2002 (Albrecht & Jackson (2009), p. 63-67).

<sup>352</sup> Kabbah received 70 per cent of the votes; the SLPP obtained 83 (68 per cent) of parliamentary seats (Kandeh (2003), p. 204/207).

<sup>353</sup> Kandeh (2003), p. 190. The RUF was dissolved in 2007, after – quite ironically – pledging its support to the APC in the upcoming elections (Awareness Times Newspaper (2007); The Patriotic Vanguard (2007)). However, the party has made a fresh appearance in 2012 with several party offices in Freetown and the provinces and putting up its own presidential candidate (Awareness Times (2012)). Rumour has it that the APC is financially supporting this opposition party in a bid to further split the SLPP vote (pers. comm. Julia Amos).

<sup>354</sup> On the large issue of peacebuilding, see Paris (2004); Call & Wyeth (2008); on the interlinked but separate concept and process of state building, see Ottaway (2002); Miliken & Krause (2002); Chesterman (2004); Dobbins (2004); on democratisation and peacebuilding, see Bermeo (2003); Call & Cook (2003); Special issue of *Journal of Democracy* on 'Building Democracy after Conflict' (2005); Jarstad & Sisk (2008).

Sierra Leone (SCSL).<sup>355</sup> I have documented the academic debate surrounding these two institutions as well as the practical challenges of post-conflict integration, coexistence and justice in my previous work.<sup>356</sup>

Politically, Sierra Leone has shown development towards a competitive democratic system, reflected in multiple elections on the national and local level, which even saw a change of government from the SLPP to the APC in 2007.<sup>357</sup> The country boasts considerable press freedom, with an abundance of paper- and internet-based newspapers – some more objective than others. Severely limited ministerial capacity as well as a weak civil service, however, significantly constrain the effectiveness of governance.<sup>358</sup> This is compounded by thriving corruption at all levels of government. Moreover, increased political violence since the last general elections suggests that the shock of the civil war may be wearing off. They also reveal depressing continuities with the pre-war and war phase, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> The TRC operated from 2000 to 2004. Its mandate was to ‘*create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses ... to address impunity, to respond to the needs of the victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered*’ (TRC (2000); see also TRC (2004b), p. 21). Its impressive documentation based on extensive research as well as the hearings are can be found in the Final Report (TRC (2004a)). The SCSL’s mandate was to try ‘*those who bear the greatest responsibility*’ for serious violations of international humanitarian law. Thirteen persons were originally indicted, however the cases against RUF-leaders Fodah Sankoh and Sam Bockarie as well as Deputy Defense Minister and CDF-leader Hinga Norman were withdrawn due to their deaths in 2003 and 2007, respectively. All accused were found guilty and sentenced to prison charges between 6 and 52 years. The case against Charles Taylor, held in The Hague, found the former Liberian president guilty on all accounts and sentenced him to 50 years of imprisonment. (All relevant documents pertaining to the cases can be found at <http://www.sc-sl.org>; see also Gberie (2003); for grassroots perceptions of the TRC and the SCSL see Sawyer & Kelsall (2007); PRIDE (2002); for a critical assessment of the work of the two institutions see Kelsall (2005); (2009); Shaw (2005); (2007)).

<sup>356</sup> Boersch-Supan (2008); see also Stovel (2006); (2008).

<sup>357</sup> The SLPP marginally lost to the APC in the parliamentary elections (39.5 versus 40.7 per cent, respectively) and a more substantial margin in the presidential run-off (45.4 versus 54.6 per cent, respectively). For discussion of the elections, see contributions in Zack-Williams (2008a). Kandeh ((2008), p. 603) harshly comments this event: ‘*The elections were referenda on the SLPP, which lost both the presidency and the legislature because its rogue leadership squandered the goodwill of the public, misappropriated donor funds with impunity, and failed to deliver basic social goods and services.*’

<sup>358</sup> EIU (2012).

<sup>359</sup> See also Christensen & Utas (2008); Kandeh (2008), p. 616/617; Waldock (2010).

Additionally, as laid out in the Introduction, Sierra Leone is still a country ridden with poverty and underdevelopment.<sup>360</sup> Mortality rates are among the highest in the region, while educational levels are low. A host of interventions by the government and the international community are promoting various strands of post-conflict reconstruction,<sup>361</sup> with one author stating in 2005 that *‘international intervention is the single most significant contribution to Sierra Leone’s emergence as a sustainable state.’*<sup>362</sup> Core efforts led by the international community are an encompassing Security Sector Reform (SSR) led by the British<sup>363</sup> as well as projects and policy initiatives in what the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) terms the three *‘main risks to peace consolidation’*, namely youth and youth unemployment; corruption and bad governance; and illicit drug trafficking and organised crime – the later definitely being Sierra Leone’s least structural problem.<sup>364</sup> Considering these initiatives, an important question is, which kind of reconstruction Sierra Leone needs.<sup>365</sup> As has been shown above, the roots of the war can be found in the pre-war political, social and economic system. *Reconstructing*, therefore, would be highly undesirable.

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<sup>360</sup> See also Chapter 6.2, Table 4.

<sup>361</sup> cf. ICG (2004); Reno (2004); Humphreys & Richards (2005); Gienanth & Hansen (2006); Thomson (2007); UN, World Bank, GDC, IFAD & EU (2010); UN PBC SL (2010); UN Security Council (2011a); (2011b).

<sup>362</sup> Albrecht (2005), p. 2. While post-war Sierra Leone has seen a remarkably high donor and NGO presence, this seven-year-old quote must be qualified in two ways. First, as donors’ own assessments a decade after the civil war document, post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts have fallen far behind their intended goals, especially in the realm of economic recovery and (youth) unemployment as well as public service provision (UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010)). Thus, the sustainability of the Sierra Leonean state remains questionable. Second, the influence of donor money and, hence, voice is expected to significantly decrease as the country’s income from iron ore exploitation surges and, connected to that, China becomes the main trading partner for Sierra Leone (pers. comm. David Harris).

<sup>363</sup> Critical reviews of the process of SSR can be found in Albrecht (2005); Jackson & Albrecht (2011); Krogstad (2012). For the tension between official police work and informal vigilante groups, see Baker (2005); (2010); for the two-pronged approach of development and military assistance, the ‘security-development nexus’, see Porter (2003); Denney (2011).

<sup>364</sup> UN, World Bank, GDC, IFAD & EU (2010); UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010); UN PBC SL (2010); UN Security Council (2011a); (2011b).

<sup>365</sup> Hanlon (2005); Albrecht (2005).

A number of grievances have outlasted the war, of which four are of particular interest for this study: un(der)employment remains extremely high among youths in general and ex-combatants in particular;<sup>366</sup> patronage politics are *'very much alive'*, still and again, shaping highly asymmetrical access to resources and opportunities;<sup>367</sup> corruption at all levels is still the order of the day, although popular awareness is growing;<sup>368</sup> and the chieftaincy system looks much the same as before the war even after the 2000-2002 reform.<sup>369</sup> All these point to important structural continuities from the pre-war society which caused extreme grievances and dissatisfaction among Sierra Leone's population. Moreover, as Kandeh observes the political parties in Sierra Leone have scarcely changed in their structures and functions. Reflecting on the SLPP, the author harshly states *'[the] party ... still remains an unreconstructed patronage outfit that is unresponsive to popular currents and mass aspirations'*;<sup>370</sup> the *'APC leadership[, in turn,] is no more committed to democracy or less corrupt than its SLPP counterpart.'*<sup>371</sup> It is, thus, questionable whether the country's elite have the capability, or willingness for that matter, to finally jump-start significant change to Sierra Leone's political and economic system. International actors, in contrast, while pinpointing many valid structural problems have gone about several projects and

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<sup>366</sup> World Bank (2007); Peeters et al. (2009); UN Security Council (2011a); (2011b).

<sup>367</sup> Keen (2003); (2005); Labonte (2011).

<sup>368</sup> BBC NEWS (2007); Kandeh (2008), p. 604/605; UN Security Council (2011a); (2011b). The Economist Intelligence Unit writes: *'[f]ighting Sierra Leone's endemic problem with corruption has become an increasingly marginalised objective of the current [APC] regime; it remains a serious concern and affects people's trust in the state bureaucracy as well as the functioning of the government.'* (EIU (2012)). In this respect the Anti-Corruption Commission has long been plagued by a lack of genuine independence while making headlines for highly questionable practises and its inability to secure harsh punishment in any of its high profile cases (Albrecht (2005), p. 22; Kandeh (2008); EIU (2012); Sierra Express Media (2012d)).

<sup>369</sup> Fanthorpe (2004a); (2004b); (2005).

<sup>370</sup> Kandeh (2003), p. 189; see also Albrecht (2005), p. 13.

<sup>371</sup> Kandeh (2008), p. 631; Labonte (2011). Indeed, the vice-president, Samuel Sam-Sumana, has prominently been implicated in a series of corruption allegations (EIU (2011)).

policies in a way that actually reinforces old cleavages, especially in the realm of communal power relations.<sup>372</sup>

To be sure, the war has also brought about significant changes. Most important to mention in the context of this study, is a change in attitude among the country's youth (Chapter 6). Displacement and the experience of surviving a war and/or fighting in it brought exposure to new ideas of communal coexistence and systems of social hierarchy, and, hence, a new unwillingness to submit to abuses by chiefs and other authorities.<sup>373</sup>

The aim of this dissertation then is to explore continuity and changes between the pre-war era and present Sierra Leone to assess the stability and sustainability of societal peace in the country.<sup>374</sup> It is important to specify that within this rather large field of exploration, the thesis aims to focus on a limited set of factors. First, as laid out in the following chapter on methodology, fieldwork took place in predominantly rural and peri-urban fieldsites. Thus, Freetown, with its very specific youth culture, as well as other major towns in Sierra Leone were not surveyed. Second, within these fieldsites, my research interest lay in the micro-level and local power relations. This means my point of departure is individual's attitudes, perspectives and opinions on

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<sup>372</sup> Hanlon (2005).

<sup>373</sup> see also Keen (2003); Archibald & Richards (2002); Peters (2006); (2011); Manning (2009).

<sup>374</sup> The analysis is focused on the balance of power between generations in present-day Sierra Leone. It implicitly compares the current situation to pre-war conditions highlighting continuities and changes. However, it is beyond the scope of this work to explore causal mechanisms of change comprehensively. While especially Chapter 7.3 points to processes during and after the war, which are likely to have catalysed positive transformations at the micro-level, the question whether war itself or socialisation during the war brought about social change is not systematically analysed (for a comparative discussion including Sierra Leone on this topic, see Wood (2008)). Given the focus of this dissertation on the micro-level, the work at hand also does not address the much more broader thesis put up by Cramer ((2006); in the style of Tilly (1992)) of the transformative effects war may have on political and economic institutions (for a critical assessment to this thesis in the African context see Clapham (2000)).

the social relations in their communal spaces of living and work. As a consequence the national and macro-level economic and political system, which have been a large focus of the preceding historical analysis, are only discussed in so far as they influence the local power dynamics and the status of youth and elders within their communal surroundings.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> This focus is sensible as it makes for a concise and manageable research project. More importantly, however, Sierra Leone is a predominantly rural society and the focus of the majority of the population is on the politics and economics within their chiefdom (Allen (1968); Barrows (1976); Tangri (1978); Sawyer (2008)). Moreover, the war took place foremost in rural settings and the fighting forces drew predominantly on rural youth and children as their fighters. Lastly, and as will be discussed in the following chapter, those questions pertaining more explicitly to macro-politics (for example, corruption, bad governance) and the patrimonial linkages between local and national politics did not yield conclusive results and were, thus, excluded from the analysis.

## **PART II**

### **3. Methodological Interlude: Data Collection and Analysis**

The work at hand is empirically driven. Data collected for my MPhil thesis in Sierra Leone in 2007 inspired this doctoral project. As with my previous work on post-conflict Sierra Leone,<sup>1</sup> this dissertation aims to analyse and understand processes and developments in Sierra Leone by drawing primarily on the perceptions, expectations and opinions of the local population. Thus, I use a micro-approach to shed light on the societal phenomena of social hierarchies, social mobility and relations between socio-generational groups. By letting the respondents and data guide my research, I have also not strictly subscribed to any single academic discipline. Rather, I embed the analysis of my field data in an interdisciplinary conceptual framework, drawing on theories and research in the fields of political science, sociology and anthropology. In a similar way, my mixed methodological approach has been primarily guided by my research questions, taking into consideration logistical, financial and time constraints.

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<sup>1</sup> Boersch-Supan (2008); Boersch-Supan (2012).

**Figure 2: Map with Fieldsites**



**Table 1: Overview of Fieldwork**

Fieldsite	# of Interviews	# of Surveys	Timing of Data Collection
Eastern Freetown	7	---	July-Sept 2007
Kailahun	12	45	March-April 2009
Eastern Freetown	6	---	March-April 2009
Koidu	11	40	Sept 2009
Pujehun	10	37	Oct 2009
Makeni	9	35	November-December 2009; August/October 2010
Magburaka	10	44	August/October 2010
'Context interviews'	28	---	March 2009-October 2009
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>201</b>	

The data for this dissertation is based on a total of ten months of fieldwork in six rural and urban locations. Initial interviews were held in eastern Freetown in 2007,

providing preliminary data on the integrating function of youth groups.<sup>2</sup> Five rounds of fieldwork in 2009 and 2010 explored the actual research topic of intergenerational relations with interviews in two suburbs of the capital Freetown as well as interviews and surveys in the district capitals Makeni, Magburaka, Koidu (Sefadu), Kailahun, Pujehun, and their immediately surrounding villages (see Figure 2, above).

It is important to point out that the term ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ each denote a wide spectrum of localities within Sierra Leone. The largest city in Sierra Leone is the capital Freetown with an (conservatively) estimated population of one million. Koidu Town in the eastern Kono District and Makeni in the northern Bombali District are the fourth and fifth largest cities in Sierra Leone respectively with an estimated population of over 100.000. Magburaka in the north, Kailahun in the very east as well as Pujehun in the southeast are rural towns with much smaller populations ranging from an estimated 16.000 (Magburaka) to 10.000 (Pujehun). The size of these urban centres for the most part also reflects their accessibility. Makeni and Koidu Town are linked to Freetown by newly constructed highways and broad roads, while Kailahun and especially Pujehun are still time-consuming to reach particularly during the rainy season. Rural Sierra Leonean villages, in turn, range from those accessible by roads passable with a car or at least a motorcycle to hamlets deep inside the forest, only reachable by foot. As with the rural towns accessibility greatly depends on whether traveling during the rainy or dry season. The rural fieldsites referred to in this dissertation were villages in the near vicinity of the above-mentioned district headquarters. They were all reached by car or motorcycle taxi. As such, the data

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<sup>2</sup> Boersch-Supan (2008).

presented in this dissertation for the most part represents voices from respondents living in peri-urban and semi-rural locations.<sup>3</sup>

The fieldwork locations were chosen mainly to make broader countrywide observations possible, albeit neither the qualitative nor the quantitative data can claim to be representative on fieldsite or national level in statistical terms. I also wanted to explore whether variations with respect to the region, ethnicity or war-time experience would emerge. While none of these three factors proved to be convincing in explaining broad differences, the five fieldsites as such displayed considerable heterogeneity with regards to respondents' attitudes, perceptions and experiences. This certainly is a function of the small sample size in each of these fieldsites but more strongly reflects the way in which a combination of local specificities – including accessibility of the fieldsite, predominant fighting force presence during the civil war as well as the personality of individual chiefs and youth leaders – influence the communal realm of intergenerational relations and dynamics. These local differences are discussed in more detail in the following empirical chapters.

Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods, the core of the data consists of fifty-eight semi-structured interviews with the two main target groups: traditional authorities and youth leaders. To juxtapose the opinions of the more 'elite' interviewees with the answers of 'ordinary' Sierra Leoneans a survey of 201 randomly chosen individuals aged fifteen and over recorded attitudes and

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<sup>3</sup> This is very important to understand the differences in findings regarding Sierra Leonean youth between my own work and that of authors such as Abdullah (1997); (2004); Christiansen & Utas (2008); Enria (2011); (2012) who collected their data mainly amongst marginalised youth in central Freetown.

perceptions of intergenerational relations at the community level (see Table 1, above). Additionally, contextual and macro-level information was gathered during twenty-eight interviews and semi-formal conversations held with staff from donor agencies and NGOs; local and national politicians; local authorities such as the police and educational staff and, lastly, local and international academics and consultants.

In Kailahun and Freetown, I conducted all qualitative fieldwork over the course of two months in 2009 myself. Both of these fieldsites are heavily overrepresented regarding the interview sample size. Musa Mewa, a Sierra Leonean law student, who I trained with regards to interviewing, assisted me in this task. All other data collection was conducted and led by Musa in late 2009 and in the course of 2010, coinciding with Musa's vacation and weekend time. Interviews and surveys were conducted in the local language best spoken by the respondents; thus, in addition to a research assistant local interpreters were hired in Koidu, Makeni and Magburaka. All interviews and surveys were translated into English simultaneously during the interview and immediately written down. No digital recordings were made.

### ***Interview Data***

The purpose of the interviews was to juxtapose the answers of the leading figures of two societal groups, youth and adults, at community level, namely chiefs, elders and communal authorities as well as, and youth leaders and executives of youth organisations. On the whole, this sets up the thesis as a work focussing on *intergroup* differences and pitting the older generations against the younger to emphasise conflicts as well as agreements between these two large societal groups. I, thus, assume a certain homogeneity of these groups while, for the most part, glossing over

internal differences. Nevertheless, crosscutting cleavages, such as status, and significant intragroup conflicts are discussed when they are of particular importance to the overall topic.

The main technique used was semi-structured interview frameworks.<sup>4</sup> The questions were fielded and tested by myself, with the support of a local research assistant, Musa Mewa, in Kailahun and two neighbourhoods of Freetown and subsequently adjusted in their wording for the remaining four fieldsites. Using semi-structured interview frameworks with open-ended questions gave me, on the one hand, the freedom to flexibly adapt to the interview situation by varying the sequencing of question topics and add on specific questions. On the other hand, every respondent was asked a fixed core set of questions making their answers comparable across the sample.<sup>5</sup>

The aim was to conduct as least five interviews with each societal grouping in every fieldsite. I used a non-probability sample, meaning that I deliberately selected my interview respondents to reflect particular features. This sampling method, using the specific characteristics of a population as the basis for selection is well suited for small-scale, in-depth studies.<sup>6</sup> The overall aim then in my research design was to link the results from five such small-scale, in-depth studies to create regional detail while also maintaining a comparative perspective across the country. In practical terms, chiefs, especially the Paramount Chief and Speaker, as well as youth leaders are easy to locate in a community even for strangers. After the first few interviews, we relied on suggestions from previous respondents, that is 'snowballed', to identify further

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<sup>4</sup> The semi-structured interview frameworks are attached in the appendices section for reference.

<sup>5</sup> See Brannen (1992); Bernard (1995), p. 209; Arthur & Nazroo (2003), p. 111; Wood (2006).

<sup>6</sup> Ritchie, Lewis & Elam (2003), p. 78.

interviewees. While snowballing holds the danger of compromising sample diversity,<sup>7</sup> we specifically asked our elite respondents to recommend further communal authorities dissimilar in status, age or function to themselves to achieve a greater range in professional and demographic profiles.

On the side of elders, we deliberately searched for and selected chiefs and elders with differences in power, that is, high-ranking Paramount Chiefs as well as lesser Section/Town Chiefs. In addition we interviewed such traditional authorities as court chairmen and members of the elder councils. Another particular focus was to interview elders in a wide age-range. The final sample featured the following demographic particularities. With one exception, all elder interviewees were male. All elder respondents were married and had multiple children. Two lesser chiefs reported to have had no formal education while the rest had secondary or even tertiary educational qualifications; a sixth had studied in the UK. Overall and unsurprisingly, chiefly households made a wealthier impression compared to the surrounding households. Most chiefs and elders stated as their occupation a title of traditional authority, however, the majority had multiple income sources ranging from plantations and farms to property, trade and other local businesses. A sixth of the chiefs reported that their occupation was a job, like farmer, tailor, trader, rather than listing their chiefly position. While elder respondent's age ranged from twenty-five to eighty, on average the chiefs interviewed were 55.5 years old (median age also 55.5). A third were under fifty. This age data has to be treated somewhat carefully, as a good third of the respondents could not give an exact age but, for instance, stated that they were in their 'sixties' or 'over fifty'. Nevertheless, it shows that young or

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<sup>7</sup> Ritchie, Lewis & Elam (2003), p. 94; Bernhard (1995), p. 97.

youthful chiefs are in the minority as are those above sixty-five. The implications of age on chiefly attitudes was not straight forward; however, on the whole younger chiefs tended to talk more inclusively and favourably about youth as will be discussed in Chapter 7.3. The elder sample contains one important bias: a disproportionate number of high-ranking chiefs were interviewed. Of the twenty-four chiefly respondents interviewed, five were Paramount Chiefs and six Speakers (the second highest chiefly rank in Sierra Leone), while thirteen were lower ranking chiefs (four Town Chiefs; eight Section Chiefs; one Headman). Sierra Leone has 149 Chiefdoms and, thus, the same number of Paramount Chiefs and Speakers. Every chiefdom has multiple Section and Town Chiefs; there may also be headmen below these chiefs. The number of these lesser groups of chiefs is likely to be in the low thousands. This bias is mainly the result of the small sample size within each fieldsite. It matters for the data analysis and results in so far as lesser chiefs do more of the hands-on work within communities, especially in regards to day-to-day dispute resolution. They are also likely to be much less wealthy than their superior chiefs and, therefore, rely more heavily on fines as a source of income. Differences in opinions between these two groups are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.3.

In the category of ‘youth leader’ two sets of people were interviewed. First, formally elected chiefdom and/or district chairmen and, second, the officers of local youth organisations. The interviews were, again, heavily male dominated, only a handful female youth leaders were located (see Table 2, below).<sup>8</sup> The age of the youth leaders

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<sup>8</sup> This not only reflects that few women take on official leadership roles in youth representation structures but also that both ‘youth’ and ‘women’ are target groups for international funding. By focusing on youth organisations and not systematically including women’s organisations, I certainly lost out on female respondents. More importantly however, the term youth, especially in connection with ‘problem issues’ such as violence and crime is usually directed at young men rather than young women.

interviewed ranged from 19 to 45; the average age was 31.2 years (median age 30). Thus, the youngest youth leader was born at the start of the war, while the oldest was already 27 years old at the time. Most of the respondents were in their teens during the war. Similar to the elder respondents, youth leaders were disproportionately highly educated: half had completed high school while the rest had either a local university degree or some other form of tertiary education (for example, a teaching certificate, Diploma in Human Resource Management, Diploma in Business Administration, etc.). More than a third of youth leaders were married and of these most had children. About two thirds of the youth interviewed were employed in such varied capacities as motorcycle taxi-drivers (called ‘bike riders hereafter), teachers or NGO officers. These socio-economic demographics are important as the term youth is often used to denote persons who have not been able to acquire an education, set up an independent household, marry, and have children. The majority of youth leaders, however, defined themselves as youths, thus countering the ‘standard’ social age definition. Definitions of youth and their implications are discussed in Chapter 6.1.

**Table 2: Overview of Interviews (2009/2010)**

Fieldsite	Youth		Elders		Donor/ NGO	Politician	Authority	Academic/ consultant	Other
	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>					
Kailahun	1	4		7	4	1	5		4
Freetown		3	1	2	5	1		3	3
Koidu	2	4		5					
Pujehun		4		6	1	1			
Makeni		4		5					
Magburaka	1	4		5					
	4	23	1	30					
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>

The majority of respondents took ample time to answer the questions from the semi-structured interview questionnaire; thus, the average length of interviews was an hour. While all data is of high quality, during analysis it has become clear that I do not have the same deep understanding of the interview data conducted without my presence as I have for that from Kailahun and Freetown. Having never been to Koidu or Pujehun, I lack a mental image of the fieldsites as well as the respondents questioned there. I was also unable to ask spontaneous follow up questions or deepen certain topics of interest. While I am familiar with Makeni and Magburaka, having spent time there in 2007 conducting interviews, I, again, have no mental image of the respondents from there and, thus, had to rely on the notes taken by Musa on such issues as friendliness, openness, truthfulness, etc. which shape the tone of any interview. I tried to make up for this by phoning with Musa almost daily while he was in the field and taking notes on his observations. At the same time Musa noted down short summaries of the interview atmosphere, any special occurrences during the interview and his thoughts on the respondents.<sup>9</sup>

Another important question is how the characteristics of the interviewer influence the answers of the respondents and, thus, how, in this study my influence as a foreign, white, youthful female differed from that of Musa, a well-educated, similarly young Mende. While extremely difficult to exactly gauge, my impression from the data collected has been that both our profiles generally met with an openness to divulge information. As a young female, chiefs and elders clearly did not feel threatened by my presence, usually using a more paternalistic and benevolent tone. Musa, on the

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<sup>9</sup> While outsourcing data collection was, thus, not ideal and has created questions and the occasional blank spot, which I have been unable to answer or fill in during analysis, it was the only feasible way to progress and finalise my dissertation in a timely manner given the birth of our son midway through my doctorate.

other hand as a very well mannered young man who was in the habit of displaying great respect for the elders as well as being an openly devout Muslim, was similarly taken seriously as a youngster eager to learn. Both our rapport with youth leaders was quite casual and friendly, certainly also a result of the mutual enthusiasm for soccer. The main differences, then, which I have been able to detect within the data seem to have less to do with the impression our characters made on the respondents but with our specific research, personal, political and societal interests. As a law student and journalist, Musa is very interested in issues of accountability and transparency in the political process but he also has a soft spot for exploring the cultural differences of Sierra Leone's ethnic groups. My own interest lies foremost in questions of societal conflict and tensions as well as their resolution. While we both were guided mainly by the overall research questions, the answer of individual respondents triggered different thoughts in our minds, leading to different spontaneous follow-up questions. Thus, again it was very important to analyse the data with several feedback loops to understand Musa's motivation for certain added or rephrased question.

### ***Survey data***

The survey was a short set of questions and lasted on average ten to fifteen minutes.<sup>10</sup> Respondents were grouped into three categories: students, youth and adults. While most questions overlapped, every group was also asked age-specific questions; for example students were asked who supported their studies financially, while adults and elders were asked in more detail about pre-war circumstances. All surveys were

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<sup>10</sup> The surveys can also be found in the appendix section. While conducting interviews in Kailahun, I realised that it would be interesting and important to contrast the answers of the 'elite' interview respondents with those from a broader spectrum of the local population. The survey was, thus, developed and tested during my field stay in Kailahun.

conducted by local research assistants.<sup>11</sup> The aim was to administer forty-five surveys per fieldsite, fifteen for each group. Thus, Pujehun, Koidu and Makeni are underrepresented (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Overview of Surveys**

Fieldsite	Student		Youth		Adult		TOTAL
	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	
Kailahun	6	8	7	10	8	6	<b>45</b>
Koidu	8	7	5	5	13	2	<b>40</b>
Pujehun	8	7	3	8	8	3	<b>37</b>
Makeni	1	2	16	2	9	5	<b>35</b>
Magburaka	7	8	13	0	16	0	<b>44</b>
	<i>30</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>16</i>	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>62</b>		<b>69</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>201</b>

Student respondents, in the Sierra Leonean case a privileged group of children and youth, were directly contacted at 2-3 different secondary schools per fieldsite. The age of student respondents ranged from fifteen to twenty-six (see Figure 3, below). My interest in students was to collect assessments of those who are ‘future youth’, that is, record the attitude and ideas of community members who for the most part were not yet asked to perform community responsibilities. Students were also the only respondent group in which only a few had experience with the pre-war era. I, thus, assume that their attitudes and opinions have been predominantly shaped during the (late) war and post-war years.

Youth and adult respondents were contacted in households and public spaces using a simple randomisation process of walking away from the village/town/city centre into every other street and choosing every other house/public square. While the data is

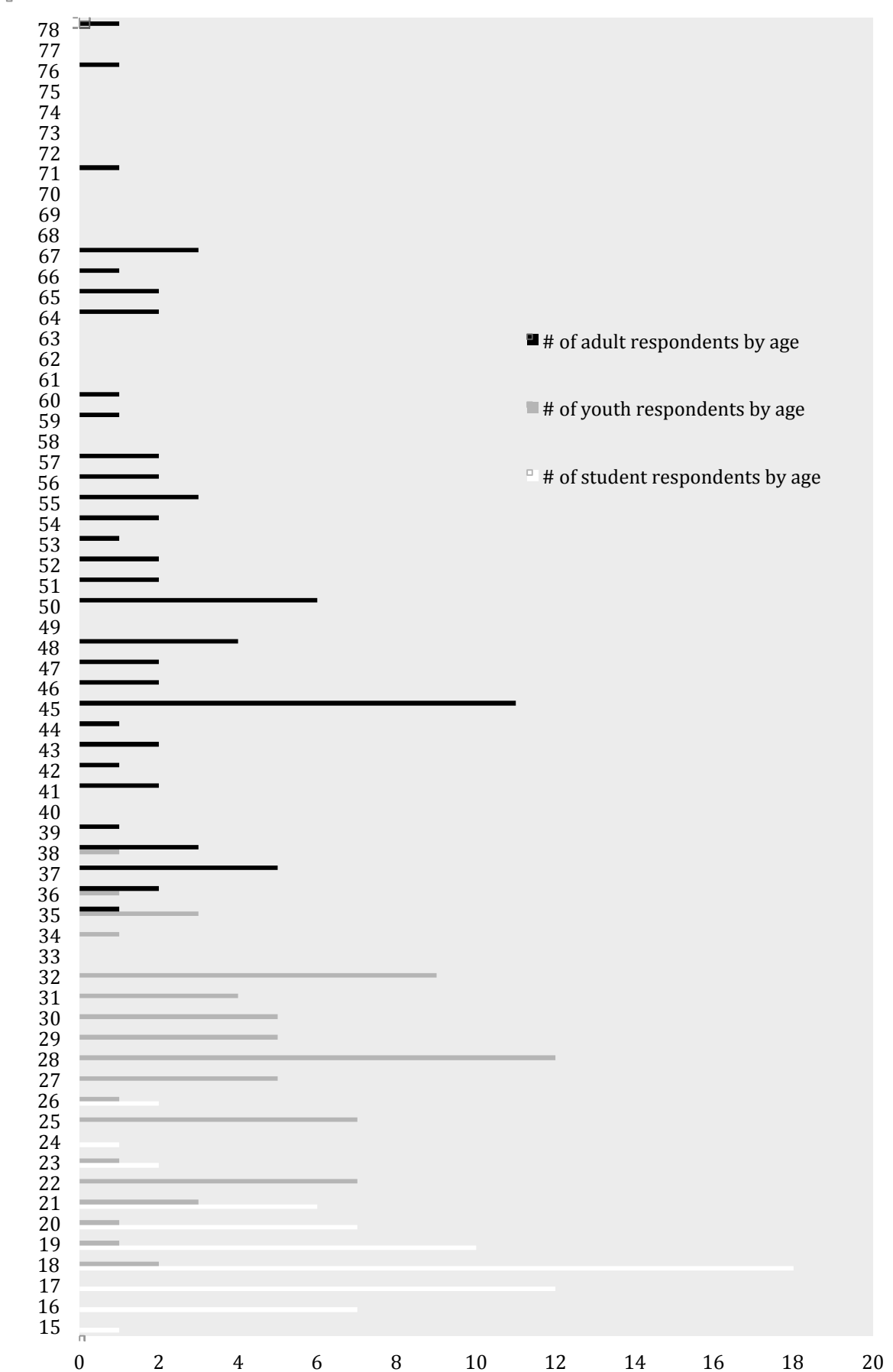
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<sup>11</sup> Musa conducted most surveys in Kailahun and all in Pujehun, Koidu, Makeni and Magburaka. In Kailahun I also hired two local teachers to conduct surveys as Musa came down with Malaria for two weeks.

not representative, GPS coordinates recorded at each survey location show a fairly even distribution around the village/town centre. Respondents were asked for their age; when between eighteen to thirty-five, the official definition for a youth in Sierra Leone, they were further asked whether they would describe themselves as youth or as an adult and grouped accordingly. This resulted in some age overlap between adult and youth respondents (see Figure 3, below) and shows that Sierra Leoneans draw on multiple criteria to position themselves in a socio-generational group. The work at hand does not use one fixed definition of youth. Rather, a main aim of the thesis has been to explore the multiple meanings the term 'youth' holds in the Sierra Leonean context. The implications of this approach are discussed in Chapter 6. With respondent's ages ranging from eighteen to thirty-five, the youngest youth respondent was born the year the war broke out while the oldest was twenty when the war started; thus, many have childhood or early teenage memories from the pre-war years.

Lastly, adult respondents were between the ages of thirty-five to seventy-eight (see Figure 3, below). As with the interview data, I had a special interest in comparing the answers this group gave to those of the youth respondents to explore the importance of intergenerational relations and conflict in Sierra Leone. Adult respondents (and elder interviewees) were also the only ones who were specifically asked to comment on social, political and economic circumstances before the war as well as their personal assessments of change and/or continuity regarding such topics as the role and status of youth and chiefs or the effectiveness of the state over the past few decades.

**Figure 3: Survey Respondents by Age\***



\*Total number of survey respondents: 70 adults; 69 youth; 69 students.

Such retrospective reporting must always be treated with some caution. On the one hand, the accuracy of memories significantly varies depending on the attributes of the event recalled as well as the personal characteristics of the respondent. This is generally referred to as ‘recall bias’.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, personal factual information is generally more easily and accurately recalled than, for instance, attitudinal data.<sup>13</sup> This has to do with the fact that changes to a person’s personal characteristics, for example, his/her social status or his/her value system may change over time and affect the assessment of earlier events. Similarly, an overall changed environment of values, norms and behaviour may have similar effects.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, recall bias may be compounded by a response bias; a respondent may intentionally give an inaccurate account of past events. This, again, is more likely in socially or politically charged questions. As qualitative interviewing involves probing and clarification, fairly detailed retrospective accounts may be collected.<sup>15</sup> Besides a careful interview strategy, then, which includes asking a range of questions on the same event or attitude to detect biases, more general triangulation of interview data with factual data and secondary sources can limit these biases or at least make them visible to the researcher.

### ***Data Analysis and Presentation***

For its analysis, the dissertation at hand relies for the most part on the opinions and attitudes of the above introduced respondents. It is thus crucial to understand that I put an emphasis on the reality of processes and circumstances as perceived by the respondents. Following the constructivist school, I assume that knowledge is situated

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<sup>12</sup> Smith & Thomas (2003); for an overview see also Moss & Goldstein (1979); Dex (1995).

<sup>13</sup> Field (1981); Berney & Blane (1997).

<sup>14</sup> Smith & Thomas (2003).

<sup>15</sup> Ritchie & Lewis (2005), p. 53/54.

and contextual rather than existing as context and value-free truth.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, the perceptions of the respondents were often biased by their personal underlying aims and prejudices held and, therefore, revealed interesting conflicts and tensions. I have made sure to bolster the validity of my data by drawing on multiple and different informants as well as sources.<sup>17</sup> Thus, I triangulated as many statements as possible with ‘context’ interviews with NGOs/donors, local state authorities (like the police) or other local leaders (such as teachers and principals) as well as articles from the local media.<sup>18</sup> I have also discussed my data and findings in detail with other researchers who were in the field around the same time working on similar questions. However, what the dissertation does not offer is substantial observational data, i.e. the comparison of the perceptions of reality of the respondents with actual behaviour as witnessed by the researcher. Thus, the focus of this thesis is on the subjective dimension of communal discourses on power relations and conflict.

In practical terms the survey and interview data was analysed using the computer program HyperResearch to index and code all text documents and Microsoft Excel to produce descriptive statistics and figures. Data analysis has been an on-going process during which I have again and again worked through my data material to identify core themes.<sup>19</sup> This systematic approach, during which I often resorted to counting answers in different categories, was very helpful in steering the data analysis; my brain tended to memorise especially the extreme views and opinions, while counting moderate or counter-intuitive answers balanced out my analysis.

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<sup>16</sup> cf. Berger Luckmann 1967); Watzlawick 1984); Hacking (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Berhard (1995), p. 227; Ritchie (2003), p. 43/44; Laws (2003), p. 280/281.

<sup>18</sup> The interviews and informal conversations held with donors/NGOs, other local authorities and experts were all tailored to the profile of the respondent and the specific interview topic. However, I again had a handful of core questions regarding the role of youth and intergenerational dynamics that every respondent was asked to answer.

<sup>19</sup> Ritchie, Spencer & O’Connor (2003), p. 228/229.

While I appreciate the consolidated overview numbers and figures convey, it is of great importance to me to present the voices of respondents as much as possible. I believe they can often create a more authentic picture of realities on the ground for the reader than my paraphrased summaries. This is even truer where I present the ideas, attitudes and personal thoughts of respondents. It is needless to say, however, that I have strongly structured, selected and edited the answers recorded. While I hope that the reader will find the many direct quotes as thought provoking as I myself do, glimpsing a view into the lives and thoughts of common Sierra Leoneans, the data has been arranged and aggregated to present broader trends and ultimately a certain line of argument.

To present the data I have chosen the following two formats. Throughout the text, I try to give the reader as many ‘soundbites’ as possible. The referencing for these direct quotes is given in the footnotes so as not to visually interrupt the text too much but also giving the reader a chance to quickly get an overview of which interview/survey respondents I have drawn upon for my argumentation. For this reason, the referencing always states the main title/role of the respondents as well as the fieldsite.<sup>20</sup> A detailed list of all respondents can be found at the end of the thesis. In accordance with informed consent and confidentiality agreements, respondents’ names and personal details have been kept anonymous with the exception of those who were indifferent to being named or specifically asked to be identified with their name.<sup>21</sup> Informed consent was less of an issue during interviews as these more elite

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<sup>20</sup> In case of interviews this follows the format: INT#, Title/Role, Fieldsite.

Survey respondents are denoted the following way: SV#\_A(dult)/Y(outh)/S(tudent), Fieldsite.

<sup>21</sup> Laws (2003), p. 239. All respondents were briefly informed of the topic and aim of the research and asked explicitly whether they were willing to take part.

respondents were accustomed to talking not only to strangers but also displayed self-confidence in talking about themselves and their work. I have kept the particulars of all survey respondents strictly confidential as many voiced highly critical opinions and contentious issues regarding their community and local leaders.

To showcase broader trends aggregated data is presented in tables and figures (all of them bar charts). Tables and Figures are listed at the start of the dissertation.

## PART III

Drawing on the framework laid out in Chapters 1 and 2, the following chapters in Part III of this dissertation present several arenas of contestation and negotiation between younger and older generations in present-day Sierra Leone. Exploring these arenas, community and state failure are revisited analysing continuities and changes from the pre-war period. As these processes are very much in flux, constantly influencing power-dynamics and the structure of social hierarchies, the data presented here offers an open-ended look at the dynamics in a post-conflict society.

Chapter 4 provides a general discussion of intergenerational relations and conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, introducing the concept of the generational contract, which will be used as a framework to assess the dynamics between the two major socio-generational groups, youth and adult/elders in Sierra Leone. Based on the idea of a social contract between generations, Chapter 5 explores the basics of the generational contract in Sierra Leone. I find a striking agreement on a basic division of labour and responsibilities within communities. My data especially reveals a broad acceptance of communal labour by the youth population. However, the self-confidence that youth display when presenting themselves as drivers of local development is based on a fundamental transformation of communal labour, which in itself reflects a change in intergenerational relations and norms. No longer a duty to the chiefs by loyal and dependent 'subjects', community labour must be increasingly understood as the vital

provision of public goods and services in the context of a weak post-conflict state. As such, the service providers – youth – have gained significant influence in the organisation and management of communal labour tasks. However, these changes are far from universal and control over the labour of youth remains hotly contested.

Chapter 6 then forms the centrepiece of this dissertation, presenting organisational strategies youth employ to improve their social status in general and regarding local governance institutions in particular. A critical analysis of youth organisations as well as youth representational structures reveals on the one hand a significant empowerment of the group of youth in social, political and economic respect in certain Sierra Leonean communities. Youth leaders are increasingly represented in the established governance institutions on town, village, section, chiefdom, and district level and are at times even able to influence local decision-making. At the same time, this ‘youth elite’ emerges as an ambiguous group, forming a stratum of *‘elders among youth.’*<sup>1</sup> The ascent of many youth leaders into the status of a patron or their involvement in party and state politics questions the transformative aim of these leaders. Moreover, the larger group of youth displays a broad acceptance of electoral principles as well as the patrimonial logic pointing to the fact that youth is most interested in accessing existing governance structures rather than deeply transforming them. Nevertheless, I will argue that youth leaders who show a genuine concern for the youth constituency are an important new phenomenon in Sierra Leonean society and even a limited push for participation an important step towards reform. On the other hand, the data also reveals a number of continuities with past marginalisation as well as obstacles to further youth empowerment. Of major concern

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<sup>1</sup> Manning (2009), p. 3.

is the continued and as of 2007 heightened recruitment of youth for political violence. Exploitation of youth for intra-elite struggles is foremost a sign of economic marginalisation and vulnerability of youth as well as problematic state-society relations. High un(der)employment remains youth's problem number one in Sierra Leone and is less a sign of economic discrimination against this particular societal group but a reflection of the general lack of integrative capacity of the Sierra Leonean labour market. International interventions have strongly focused on the age group of youth. It is claimed here that their involvement has contributed to the salience of a generational cleavage in Sierra Leone.

Chapter 7 finally, analyses the effect youth's changed attitudes and behaviour have had on two central local governance institutions traditionally dominated by elders, namely chiefly courts and the organisation of communal labour. Significant changes have occurred showing the effectiveness of youth empowerment. Beyond organisational strategies, a rights discourse, which has locally emerged and is supported by international actors, serves as a powerful rhetorical and normative tool to push for an even broader set of changes to intergenerational norms and values. Importantly, this discourse poses an even more fundamental challenge to gerontocracy and patrimonialism than youth's organisational strategies. However, continuous counter-strategies by elders limit a further-reaching transformation of power structures in local communities. Moreover, partly due to weak state performance, chiefs and elders are still respected and sought after as local leaders. I, therefore, propose that while a restructuring of local governance structures to provide more inclusiveness and participation is necessary to stabilise and ease intergenerational relationships an abandonment of the chieftaincy structure is

unfeasible in light of the weak capacity and unresponsiveness of the central government.

Overall, the analysis shows that age in numerical as well as social terms remains one significant fault line in Sierra Leonean society, influencing the strategies individuals and groups choose to position themselves vis-à-vis the other. Drawing on the perspective of intergenerational relations and the analytical concept of the generational contract, therefore, provides significant insights into the transformative as well as regressive processes in a post-conflict society.

## 4. Setting the Scene:

### Intergenerational Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa and Sierra Leone

The literature on Sub-Saharan Africa has seen a surge of studies on youth analysing their ambiguous roles in societal processes, development and conflict.<sup>2</sup> Diouf writes, *'[t]oday, young people are emerging as one of the central concerns of African Studies. Located at the heart of both analytical apparatuses and political action, they also have become a preoccupation of politicians, social workers, and communities in Africa.'*<sup>3</sup> Youth as a socially situated and culturally constructed category emerges in relation to other socio-generational groups, such as children, adults and, most important for the context of this thesis, elders. In this respect, Shepler observes that *'[i]n West Africa generally, "youth" is constructed in opposition to "elder", and is a political category as much as, or more than, a biological one.'*<sup>4</sup> Thus, calling somebody a youth positions him or her in terms of a *'... variety of social attributes, including not only age but also independence-dependence, authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, responsibilities and so on ...'*<sup>5</sup> vis-à-vis these other groups. As such, generational categories are part of a constant struggle for influence and authority in almost every society.

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<sup>2</sup> cf. O'Brien (1996); Diouf (2003); Abbink & Van Kessel (2005); Rosen (2005); Honwana & De Boeck (2005); Kagwanja, (2005); Bay & Donham (2006); Christiansen, Utas & Vigh (2006a).

<sup>3</sup> Diouf (2003), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Shepler (2010), p. 630; see also Murphy (1980); O'Brien (1996); Durham (2000).

<sup>5</sup> Durham (2004), p. 593.

Over the last decades, youth has become a position of social and political immaturity, marginality and liminality in the Global South.<sup>6</sup> Unable to meet ritual and social obligations needed to set up an independent household or create a space of patronage to enter adulthood, youth find themselves in a *'social moratorium'*.<sup>7</sup> As patrons, powerful elders, on the other hand, control access to land, wealth, social status, and even women.<sup>8</sup> Rather than a Weberian state and bureaucracy, built on principles of meritocracy and professionalism, providing and redistributing resources on the basis of equity, *'... authority in Africa is based on the giving and granting of favors, in an endless series of dyadic exchanges that go from the village level to the highest reaches of the central state.'*<sup>9</sup> Patrimonialism permeates all relations, including the realms of civil and political society as well as community and extended family life. Thus, traditional authorities (for example, chiefs, headmen) and economic and political elites (for example, political and bureaucratic leaders, party bosses) regulate economic, political and social inclusion and ascendance. As such, they can allow or deny access into adulthood, for example, through initiation or regulation of marriage or by granting access to resources such as education, jobs, land, or money. In situations of a scarcity of resources, as created by the economic decline most African countries witnessed from the 1970s onwards, compounded by rapid demographic expansion patrimonial networks tighten and non-insiders are excluded with few alternative routes to advancement.<sup>10</sup> Thus, those in control become a smaller, ever older group, while those waiting to gain status grow in number as well as with respect to age. Observing

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<sup>6</sup> Bellagamba (2008). Youth has historically had a lesser say in political, social and economic matters. However, their marginalisation takes on a new significance in the context of a global discourse on as well as development towards democratisation and human rights. While this changes societal structures and state systems, it also, importantly, shapes the expectations and aspirations youth has regarding their own status in society and vis-à-vis the state and other societal and socio-generational groups.

<sup>7</sup> Vigh (2006a), p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Fortes (1984); Meillassoux (1981); Van de Walle (2001).

<sup>9</sup> Van de Walle (2001), p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> cf. Eisenstadt (1973); Bayart (1993); Richards (1996); Bangura (1997); Abbink (2005).

post-apartheid South Africa, Comaroff and Comaroff go so far as to say that ‘... *rather than the more familiar axes of social division – class, race, gender, ethnicity – the dominant line of cleavage ... has become one of generation.*’<sup>11</sup>

Relations between younger and older generations, foremost within families but also at the community and societal level, lie at the core of most of the world’s societies’ social fabric.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is important to note that generational tensions and the specific challenges surrounding the status of youth are not a phenomenon limited to Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>13</sup> Hampered economic development and poverty, limited political and social inclusion and the heightened incidence of armed violence, however, disproportionately stress generational relations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite the universality – and to some extent naturalness – of generational tensions and conflict, it is even more important to understand that generations live in mutual dependence, support and cooperation in every society. In this regard, a generational contract ties several generations vertically and horizontally to each other through

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<sup>11</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff (1999), p. 284. Similarly, Kagwanja (2005) has proposed in his work on Kenya that generational conflict and the politicisation of marginalised youth provide a better understanding of political divisions and unrest than the dominant ‘ethnic’ framework. Further, Nugent (2001) has argued with regards to the 2000 elections in Ghana that political developments in the country reflect the central role of youth rather than ethnicity or regionalism.

<sup>12</sup> Walker (2002).

<sup>13</sup> Many examples of intergenerational conflict and tension can be found globally. The marginalisation of the young and poor by the established elite was (and continues to be), for instance, an important driver of the 2010 upheavals in northern Africa and the Middle East (ACSS (2011)). In France, the group ‘*génération précaire*’ protests against the precarious status of graduates, who are sealed off from the job market by those who are older and well established in the system (<http://generation-precaire.org>). Debates on the viability of public debt as well as social security and pension systems are held in many industrialised countries with shrinking birth rates and increasingly elderly populations (Willets (2008); Boersch-Supan et al. (2011); Eurostat (2012)). In this regard, US Media outlets have even gone so far to state that class war will be superseded by ‘*generational warfare*’ (Bloomberg Press; MacManus (1996)). With the elderly population growing faster than any other age group globally, many developing countries are grappling with the transformation of traditional forms of care in old-age (Wisensale (2003); Aboderin (2004); (2006); Bhat & Dhruvarajan (2001)). Furthermore, the global discourse on climate change is also a debate on justice and sustainability for younger and future generations (Page (2006); Stern (2007)).

material and non-material exchanges taking place over the course of life.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on the notion of intergenerational solidarity anchored in intra-family support, these contracts are based on intertemporal reciprocity, that is, the sharing and transmission of resources as well as mutual expressions of care and regard over time.<sup>15</sup> Central to the argument of this thesis is furthermore the insight that social relations between generations are contested and negotiated over time, altering and adapting the generational contract.

At the family level, generation indicates a person's position in a family lineage stipulating social roles and obligations.<sup>16</sup> Most often this refers to the raising of dependent children and support for their education in return for nursing care in old age.<sup>17</sup> The presence of the welfare state raises the generational contract to societal level by introducing tax- and contribution-based systems of social security. Thus, at societal level generation usually refers to an age cohort. In most western welfare states, the term is used to denote the beneficiaries of and contributors to pension, health care and social security schemes.<sup>18</sup> Generational contracts, therefore, function at a private and interpersonal as well as public and societal and, therefore, micro and macro level.<sup>19</sup> Importantly, intergenerational bonds and obligations are deeply culturally and historically embedded, even permeating the realm of philosophy and

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<sup>14</sup> While the concept of the generational contract is well established in the economic and sociological literature on the family, youth and ageing, it is important to point out that the 'contractual language' is used in a more flexible way than, for instance, legal terminology would allow for. This pertains to the time dimension – intergenerational exchanges take place at various instances during the life course – as well as the actual benefits and responsibilities exchanged. The reality of this contract, however, is tangible in so far as it is bound to high mutual expectations and often tied to social sanctions if these are not fulfilled.

<sup>15</sup> Reynolds Whyte, Alber & Van der Geest (2008), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion of the term generation, see Reynolds Whyte, Alber & Van der Geest (2008).

<sup>17</sup> Bengston, Marti & Roberts (1991).

<sup>18</sup> Walker (1996).

<sup>19</sup> Walker & Fong (2010).

spirituality.<sup>20</sup> Across Sub-Saharan Africa, many cultures and societies emphasise notions of communal solidarity rather than individualism,<sup>21</sup> as reflected in the well-known Xhosa concept of *'Ubuntu'*, for instance.<sup>22</sup> While acknowledging that the *'fabric of the extended African family/society has ... endured multiple stresses in the past decades'* Hoffman writes that *'[t]he intergenerational contract is, essentially, embedded as a way of living in Africa.'*<sup>23</sup> Culturally dependent, the generational contract is embodied in distinct customary norms and rules, moral obligations as well as legal regulations.<sup>24</sup> Thus, while intergenerational solidarity is a global phenomenon, societies differ in the form and extent of their generational contract.<sup>25</sup>

Few Sub-Saharan African countries provide welfare systems like the model European welfare state.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, many Sub-Saharan African states struggle to provide even a range of basic public goods. Thus, welfare provisioning not only disproportionately falls on the extended family but vital services like infrastructure construction and maintenance and physical and food security are negotiated at the community level.<sup>27</sup>

In many communities the division of labour regarding these responsibilities is

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<sup>20</sup> For instance, they take on a central role in the core moral instructions contained within all of the major world religions (Walker (2002); Hoffman (2003)).

<sup>21</sup> Hoffman (2003); Adjaye & Aborampah (2004), p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> *'Ubuntu'* refers to a collective human solidarity and morality *'... of co-operation, compassion, communalism ... respect ... with emphasis of dignity in social relationships and practises ...'* (Mokgoro (1998), quoted in Hoffman (2003)).

<sup>23</sup> Hoffman (2003), p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> In France, for instance, adult children have a legal obligation to support their parents (Walker & Fong (2010)).

<sup>25</sup> See for instance MacLean (2004) on Cote d'Ivoire; Aboderin (2004); (2006); Adjaye & Aborampah (2004) on Ghana; Alber, Van der Geest & Reynolds Whyte (2008) for an overview of African cases; Izuhara (2002); (2010) for global comparisons; Izuhara (2002); Traphagan (2008) on Japan; Bhat & Dhruvarajan (2001) on India; Walker (1996); (2002); Saraceno (2008); Boersch-Supan et al. (2011); Eurostat (2012) on Europe and the US; Willets (2010) on the UK; and MacManus (1996) on the US.

<sup>26</sup> South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Mauritius are exceptions. Welfare states in themselves, however, are not a guarantee for stability in intergenerational relations. Møller (2010) and Van Dongen (2008) describe the straining and even perverse effects state transfers and especially pensions in South Africa have on intergenerational relations.

<sup>27</sup> Aboderin (2004); Adjaye & Aborampah (2004).

organised along generational (and gender) lines.<sup>28</sup> While western societies feature fuzzier boundaries between age groups, in many Sub-Saharan African societies a system of fixed, mutually exclusive age categories exists. Generational order relies on a hierarchical system of age groups, delineated by clear ritual boundaries and specific social roles and responsibilities.<sup>29</sup> Generally, these systems are marked by a disproportionate male, gerontocratic element.<sup>30</sup> It is the generational contract at the communal level, which this dissertation concerns itself with.<sup>31</sup>

Generational tensions are more likely to occur in situations where an extreme imbalance of power and resources exists between generations, straining solidarity and minimising reciprocity. The debt crisis and economic decline was triggered in many African states by the combination of highly expansive state spending following independence and the explosion of import prices due to the oil crisis of the 1970s. Highly dependent on stable world market prices for their primary commodity exports, state income further plummeted as a global recession set in. This development was sharpened through the subsequent structural adjustment programmes implemented by the international financial institutions. This cumulation of economic shocks severely reduced the nascent states' budgets and especially their social spending. As state funds declined, patrimonial networks also tightened. However, this was not only a structural process, but as Sierra Leone's history shows

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<sup>28</sup> The dissertation at hand has no specific focus on a gendered cleavage in Sierra Leone and the term youth, although it officially denotes males and females of a certain age group, is usually used to refer to young men. A selection of studies focused on gender and women's issues in Sierra Leone includes Leach (1994); Ferme (2001); for the special topic of women and girls connected to the fighting forces, see Mazurana & Carlson (2004); Ter Horst (2004); Coulter (2005); (2009); Van Gog (2008).

<sup>29</sup> Steward (1977).

<sup>30</sup> Abbink (2005), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> As the following analysis shows, relations between generations and attitudes towards the older/younger are formed in the first instance within the nuclear and extended family. While I point to examples of intergenerational exchange and contestation within the family realm, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully analyse vertical family relations in Sierra Leone and discuss their effect on the communal generational contract.

(see Chapter 2), also tightly linked to the greedy and predatory strategies the elite chose to pursue to secure their own power and wealth to the detriment of national development and redistribution to the population. In this situation of scarcity and state neglect paths of generational turnover collapsed. *'With older people hold[ing] on tightly to their jobs and not groom[ing] and prepare[ing] younger ones for turn-over [a socially blocked generation] see[s] older people as obstacles [while] old people see younger ones as a threat'*, a Sierra Leonean parliamentarian observed.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, many Africans in their thirties and even forties sociologically resemble biologically younger people as their entry into adulthood is perpetually delayed. In Burkina Faso, Roth observes an *'inversion'* of the generational contract as adult children fail to establish independent households continuing to depend on their family when they should be developing the resources with which to support their parents in their old age.<sup>33</sup> Indeed one of the respondents for this study observed, *'[t]hey [adults] take care of their children, even at 40 years.'*<sup>34</sup> It is this inability of large numbers of African youth to achieve the social status of an adult, let alone elder, and thereby taking a well-defined place in society, which is causing frustration and conflict.<sup>35</sup> In several countries, generational conflict, tied to social stagnation and a lack of future prospects, has led to the massive voluntary recruitment of youths into armed movements. While only a minority of youth turn to armed militancy, violence then reflects an element of revenge, as fighters claim to take back what they consider as having been monopolised by the older generation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> CV40, Parliamentarian, Freetown.

<sup>33</sup> Roth (2008).

<sup>34</sup> INT53, Court Chairman, Koidu.

<sup>35</sup> Hardin (1993); Richards (1996); Peters & Richards (1998); Abbink (2005).

<sup>36</sup> Abbink (2005), p. 16; Keen (2005), p. 68; Comaroff & Comaroff (1999), p. 289. Intergenerational tensions and conflict take on many forms (Alber, Van der Geest & Reynolds Whyte (2008)); this dissertation focuses on intergenerational conflict as it negatively affects younger generations. Other research focuses more on the perspective of older generations, analysing the challenges of ageing especially in relation to declined filial support of the elderly (Aboderin (2004); (2006); Bhat &

As Chapter 2 has shown, Sierra Leone provides an extreme but insightful example as intergenerational conflict played an important role in its decade-long, extremely brutal civil war. The collapse of the neopatrimonial system pitted an elderly minority against the bulk of marginalised youth in two ways. First, at the community level an autocratic gerontocracy, led by chiefs and elders and tied to an exploitative labour system and rigid marriage laws, barred an increasingly large proportion of young men from vertical mobility, rendering them unable to acquire the position of an adult or elder within the community.<sup>37</sup> Second, breaking its patrimonial promises, the state abandoned its population more generally and youth in particular by failing to provide even the most basic public goods, including education and security.<sup>38</sup>

Two questions have dominated the academic debate surrounding intergenerational conflict in Sierra Leone over the last decades and will also serve as a red thread throughout the thesis. These enquiries also show the multifaceted meanings the concept of generation can convey, making it a complex and insightful tool for analysis. First, does an age cleavage as such actually exist or is it rather a mixture of age and status defining conflict lines? Writing on political developments and social relations in Sierra Leone around the time of decolonisation, Barrows portrays so-called young-men,

*“Youngmen” is an oft-used category in Mendeland. It refers to males who hold no position and little power in chieftom affairs. A youngman need not necessarily be young in age, although there is a clear tendency in Mende societies for age and power to coincide. “Elders” are those who hold power,*

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Dhruvarajan (2001); Traphagan (2008); Wisensale (2003)) or novel constellations of intergenerational dependence in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Kakooza (2006); Eke (2003)).

<sup>37</sup> Richards (1996); (2005); Keen (2005); Peters (2011); Chauveau & Richards (2008).

<sup>38</sup> Peters (2011), p. 9; Reno (1995); Opala (1998); Clapham (2001); Keen (2005).

*position, and respect. It is quite possible for an “elder” to be fairly young in years, as is the case for a number of Paramount Chiefs.’<sup>39</sup>*

The author continues,

*[The] latent rivalry between youngmen and elders ... is really another way of stating that there is always potential friction between those who have and those who do not have power and influence. This is less a conflict between generations than an interaction between those who lead and those who follow.<sup>40</sup>*

Social promotion, therefore, is not solely and automatically tied to progressing age. As Murphy observed for Liberia, ‘*while young men do become old men, not all old men become elders. Even more importantly, while some young men do actually become lineage elders few become powerful elders in the community.*’<sup>41</sup> The work at hand proposes, that access to political, economic and social resources does indeed crucially hinge on a combination of identity markers, in which age, status and descent are major components. I use status to denote socio-economic standing, that is, mutually reinforcing dimensions of wealth and social/communal prestige/rank. Descent refers not only to the ethnic background of a person but more importantly to the community-specific label of being a ‘stranger’ versus ‘son of the soil’ as well as belonging to a ruling versus commoner’s family. Status and descent are often intimately linked and impact on the opportunities an individual of a given age group or socio-generational category has at his/her disposal. Failure to gain status leaves forty-year-olds labelled as youths, while many adults never acquire the position of an elder. Conversely, those connected to families with high status tend to progress faster socially, becoming an adult/elder at relatively young age. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that considerable heterogeneity exists within generations and age groups

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<sup>39</sup> Barrows (1971), p. 102.

<sup>40</sup> Barrows (1971), p. 208, emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy (1980), p. 202.

regarding status, power and wealth.<sup>42</sup> This also leads to tensions and conflicts within socio-generational groups, as the high criticism of elders by adult respondents for this study reflects.

I find, however, that it is still valid to focus on the analytical lens of an intergenerational conflict for several reasons.<sup>43</sup> First, (social) age strongly structures Sierra Leonean society, defining the roles and responsibilities members of the community have. Contestation surrounding these roles has been at the heart of societal unrest and tensions in the country for many decades. Second, the focus of international interventions on easy-to-operationalise markers such as numerical age has had important ramifications on socio-generational groups in Sierra Leone. Targeting youth with specific policies has created a self-awareness within this group and is shaping strategies youth themselves as well as other age groups devise to tap into available resources. In some instances 'being a youth' has become an important income generation strategy. Finally, *'[g]enerations constitute an analytical entity not only because their members share a chronological coexistence but also because they are subject to common intellectual, social and political circumstances and influences.'*<sup>44</sup> The classical sociological literature defines this as a *'historical generation'*, a cohort of people of approximately the same age whose personal and social identities are shaped by a commonality of experiences.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, when this group becomes aware of its uniqueness and enters the political realm, it emerges as a *'political*

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<sup>42</sup> On 'youth' as a signifier for age as well as status, see Archibald & Richards (2002), p. 345, fn. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Peters (2011) suggests that communal tensions have a strong class component. The work at hand supports this view but aims to add a layer of understanding by analysing the crosscutting dimension of (social) age, which has gained in importance during the post-conflict phase.

<sup>44</sup> Cutler (1952), p. 282.

<sup>45</sup> Mannheim (1952); Kertzer (1983).

*generation*'.<sup>46</sup> It is the two overlapping and intertwined generations of war and post-war youth whose particular experiences with violence and international intervention have shaped a distinct identity, rooted, among other things, in a resistance to the exclusivity of patrimonialism and gerontocracy and, thus, predominantly the members of older generations. Post-conflict youth organisations and representation, discussed in detail in Chapter 6, reflect this aspiration to emancipation.

A second field of enquiry regarding intergenerational conflict has been the question of whether violence conducted by youth reflects a form of '*rural radicalism*'<sup>47</sup> aimed at rebelling against or overturning the established gerontocracy. In this line of thought, Richards has depicted the Sierra Leonean civil war as a revolt against the system of social reproduction aiming to overturn the prevailing social system.<sup>48</sup> Analysing earlier incidents of violence, Barrows proposes that youth-led violence is for the most part an instrument of elders in intra-elite struggles, *'[It] is the youngmen who do the shouting and the demonstrating and the rioting. But it is their fathers who if they do not direct them, at least support them. Behind every 'youngmen' trouble is a group of elders.*'<sup>49</sup> A Paramount Chief, the author interviewed in the 1960s, affirms this,

*'The tactic of using the youngmen is very common in this country. It has been used for a long time. If ever you see the youngmen aroused and politically active, you know that some bigman is behind them. The common people in this country would never do anything without the backing of a bigman. A bigman is always behind the activities of the youngman.'*<sup>50</sup>

The question of revolution versus instrumentalisation further hinges upon the insight that the concept of generation conveys a sense of cyclical or sequential continuity.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Braumgart & Braumgart (1986), p. 217; O'Brien (2003), p. 160.

<sup>47</sup> Kilson (1966), p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> Richards (2005); (2008).

<sup>49</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 103/104, emphasis added.

<sup>50</sup> Barrows (1976), p. 104.

<sup>51</sup> Le Meur (2008), p. 209.

Thus, two questions come to mind: *What kind of elders does today's youth strive to be?* and *What kind of youth were today's elders?* In her article '*Today's Elders, Yesterday's Youth*' Bellagamba traces how youth driving the anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s and 60s in the Gambia have found themselves confronted by yet another generation of youth hungry for structural change in the 1990s.<sup>52</sup> In the youths' eyes the political system had, again, become ossified, conservative and marginalising towards the young. In connection with the question whether youth strive to make lasting changes to the social structure in Sierra Leone, it is, therefore, essential to understand whether youth despise their powerlessness as a matter of principal and seek structural change for themselves as well as future generations, taking into account that their responsibilities and privileges as elders will differ from those held by contemporary elders; or whether they are merely fed-up with their own personal situation and would like to reach the position of a patron as fast as possible. From this perspective, the concept of generation reveals an important *relational* aspect. It '*... helps address how the past is debated and the future envisioned by differently situated categories of subjects in distinct historical contexts.*'<sup>53</sup> Thus, while the dissertation analyses the role of youth and elders as distinct groups (Chapters 6 and 7, respectively), it also focuses '*... on the process that, at specific moments in time, produces both as connected through conflicting social categories.*'<sup>54</sup> These intergenerational dynamics feed back into the self-conception of socio-generational groups.

The study at hand finds evidence for all three of the above-mentioned scenarios. Violence surrounding politics as well as social relations has been a fact in Sierra Leone over the last decades and continues to shape the country in important ways in

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<sup>52</sup> Bellagamba (2008).

<sup>53</sup> Bellagamba (2008), p. 239.

<sup>54</sup> Bellagamba (2008), p. 239.

its post-war era. While forming a red thread in Sierra Leonean history, violence has varied in its intensity as well as with regards to its motives and perpetrators. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore in detail the differences and similarities forms of violence have taken in Sierra Leone, the study at hand proposes that violent revolt of marginalised youth and the instrumentalisation of youth by elders are intimately linked and in essence result from the prevailing socio-economic circumstances and peculiar state-society relations. Thus, on the one hand there are laudable initiatives to fundamentally change the generational contract and social structures in Sierra Leone. These include the drive for lasting representational institutions for youth as well as a fundamental discourse on human rights challenging the core of the generational contract. Some of these initiatives have their roots in the pre-war as well as wartime, as will be discussed in detail below. At the same time, reaping the fruits of patronage is a powerful lure and co-option of youth leaders by established elites can be found in many places. More important in this respect is the fact that creating a space of patronage is actually a social marker of adulthood and social ascent.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is not only society's conceptualisation of youth in need of change but also the attributes of being accepted as a successful adult to accomplish a transformation of social relations. Lastly, contemporary Sierra Leone displays a strong continuity of elite-led instrumentalisation of youth violence for political aims, surrounding especially electoral moments.<sup>56</sup> The data at hand confirms the continued exploitation of youths by local and national elites. Importantly, the dominant perception on the part of all actors – elites, youth themselves as well as international and local NGOs and donors – is that violence perpetrated by youth is intimately

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<sup>55</sup> Le Meur (2008), p. 212. Peters ((2011), p. 160) shows that this was even relevant during war time, reflected in the fact that RUF commanders surrounded themselves with personal bodyguards. These 'clients' in practice only had to answer to their 'patron'/commander but were also dependent on his protection and support.

<sup>56</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008); Waldock (2010); Enria (2011).

linked, if not causally connected, to youth's socio-economic standing and in particular its unemployment. The nexus of violence and precarious economic standing reflects in a very drastic way the challenges to youth's emancipation as well as the problematic nature of Sierra Leonean state-society relations.

This reveals a further aspect of the concept of generation, which has already been touched upon further above. The perpetual debate on structure versus agency can be continued using the lens of generation. The term 'generation' has an active and a passive meaning.<sup>57</sup> *'Being generated'* indicates that people (at least in the first instance) do not choose their culture but are born into it inheriting its language, habits, norms and beliefs. This passive notion of generation is a reminder that social forms and historical forces and with these social relationships are prior to persons. As the classical British structural-functionalist school would have it, structure determines social behaviour.<sup>58</sup> Observing Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, MacLean writes, *'the fluidity of social relations occurs within the parameters of local economic and political power'*,<sup>59</sup> which in turn are shaped by structural political and economic factors at the macro level. Aboderin shows how Ghana's political economy, serves as a structural framework within which decisions on reciprocity and resource allocation between generations are made.<sup>60</sup> At the same time, relations are the inter-actions of people, people *'generating'* agency. Thus, *'[m]embers of a generation are not surrendered to their cultural and societal position, but are able to use that position to bring about new ideas and practices and pursue their own interests within the historical*

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<sup>57</sup> Reynolds Whyte, Alber & Van der Geest (2008).

<sup>58</sup> Radcliffe-Brown (1952); (1957); Parsons (1951).

<sup>59</sup> MacLean (2004), p. 471.

<sup>60</sup> Aboderin (2004).

*circumstances in which they live.*<sup>61</sup> This thesis acknowledges the importance of socio-economic constraints and opportunities in shaping the agency of individuals and groups. I argue that within these constraints – foremost weak state capacity, high unemployment and poverty – confrontation may take place along generational lines, requiring a closer understanding of the dynamics of socio-generational groups. These interactions and the strategies chosen by socio-generational groups, rather than the influencing structural factors, are the focus of this thesis.

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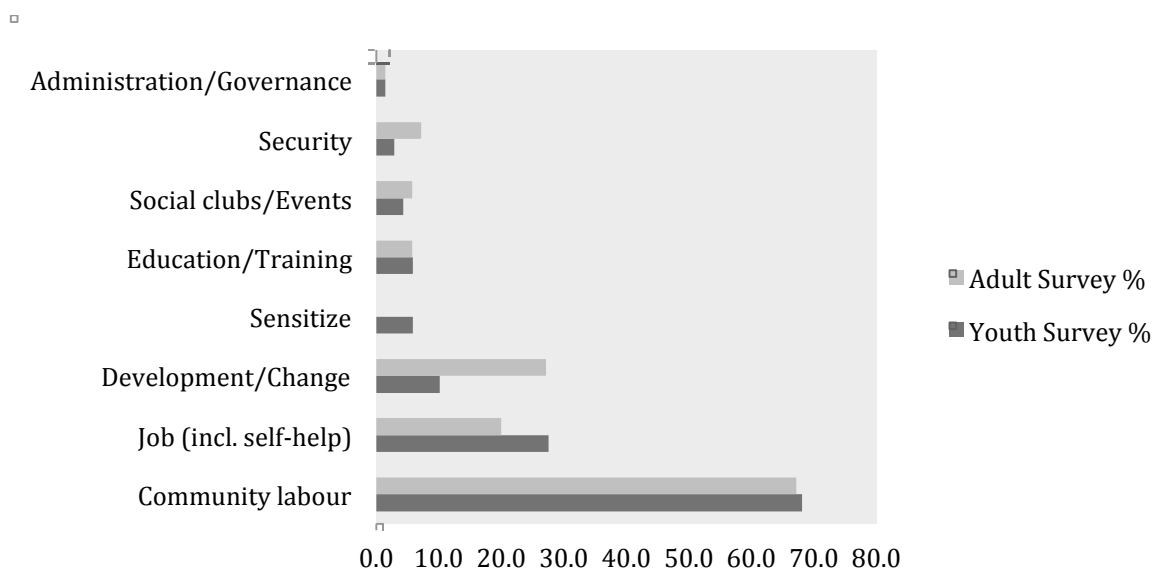
<sup>61</sup> Reynolds Whyte, Van der Geest & Alber (2008), p. 3.

## 5. Imagining the Generational Contract

This chapter focuses on the perceptions and opinions youth and adults/elders have of their own role in their communities as well as on the mutual expectations these socio-generational groups have of each other. The shared imagination of mutual interdependence and support lies at the heart of the generational contract. As such these ideas reflect an ideal type of family and community cooperation. Presenting them and the commentary given by respondents immediately reveals frictions and tensions in intergenerational relations which impact on the behavioural dynamics of the two societal groups. Chapter 6 and 8 will go on to analyse the strategies youth and elders devise to attain the societal role and status they strive towards.

**Figure 4: Role of Youth in the Community**

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: What is the role of youth in the community?\**



\* Answers in % of all 69 youth / 70 adult survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

A central finding of this study is that the overwhelming majority of adult and youth respondents are in agreement on the basic division of labour and roles within local communities (see Figure 4, above). *'The young people are the work force. They have the potential to develop their community. Nothing can be done without the young people. The old people cannot farm. It's the young people who undertake economic activities.'*<sup>1</sup> With their physical strength, energy and education youth drive development as the *'dynamo of community'*<sup>2</sup> and the *'human resource man power.'*<sup>3</sup> They render important services not only to their families but the community as a whole as it is youth who *'... do the physical work when it comes to communal labour.'*<sup>4</sup>

Communal labour is an essential part of community life in Sierra Leone. It encompasses regular and seasonal activities like the monthly cleaning of the town/village,<sup>5</sup> 'brushing' (clearing overgrown paths) and clearing the bush for community farming as well as infrastructure undertakings such as the maintenance and construction of roads, bridges and community buildings like schools, mosques, churches, and the digging of wells.<sup>6</sup> As such they are part of the generational contract in which youth provide their physical strength to the benefit of the community as a

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<sup>1</sup> INT24, P.R.O. Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>2</sup> INT87, Assistance Secretary Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka.

<sup>3</sup> INT68, Youth Organisation, Pujehun.

<sup>4</sup> INT56, Paramount Chief, Koidu.

<sup>5</sup> The regular cleaning exercises are a remnant from the time of the war. They were introduced by the youthful military leaders of the NPRC (Opala (1994), p. 195/6). Interestingly, similar initiatives have been taken by young military governments in other West African countries, such as Ghana and the Gambia (Bellagamba (2008), p. 256) in a bid to declare a fresh start by visibly cleaning towns and cities as well as putting the energy and enthusiasm of (unemployed) youths to use. For the spontaneous and productive, although short-lived activism of youth in Freetown following the NPRC coup, see Opala (1994).

<sup>6</sup> These activities need to be differentiated from youths labouring on elders and chiefs' farms and plantations to work off a debt, such as a woman damage or a bride price. The later is tightly linked to the closed-off marriage system and was an additional grievance factor running up to the war (Richards (2005)). For a current review of this phenomenon, see Mokuwa et al. (2011).

whole.<sup>7</sup> Asked about the role young people have in the community sixty-three per cent of adult respondents pointed to community labour and, more importantly, sixty-eight per cent of youth respondents agreed, thus, accepting this part of customary obligation (see Figure 4, above). With their involvement in communal labour youth essentially take on services, which the state is too weak to provide. This becomes especially clear in the realm of security where youth act as nighttime ‘*watchdogs*’.<sup>8</sup> In this role as active citizens, many also acknowledged youth’s ‘*engagement in civil society activism*’.<sup>9</sup> ‘*[They] assist young people in the education field [and ...] organise social activities like football for youths ...*’<sup>10</sup> Youth respondents positioned themselves self-confidently as strategic and positive actors within society whose physical strength makes them key drivers of development.

*‘The youths are the work force. We do the mining, engage in agriculture, etc.’<sup>11</sup>*

*‘We undertake communal labour in groups and also we work in our farms in groups.’<sup>12</sup>*

*‘The youth have a role of cleaning the area and the township as a whole. The youth also provide security for the town and areas especially at the time when armed robbers are out at night.’<sup>13</sup>*

*‘The youth do the road work; they embark on sensitisation; youth offer voluntary services during which educating the people on how to vote.’<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Communal labour with its implications for intergenerational relations is not a phenomenon particular to Sierra Leone but common in many West African societies. See for example Le Meur ((2008), p. 217) on Benin; Bellagamba ((2008), p. 247) on the Gambia.

<sup>8</sup> SV185\_A, Makeni; SV124\_Y, Makeni; SV182\_Y, Makeni. Such youth vigilante groups were only mentioned by respondents from urban fieldsites, namely survey and interview respondents from Makeni as well as interviewees from eastern Freetown. For the problems surrounding non-state policing, see Baker (2005); (2010).

<sup>9</sup> INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>10</sup> INT85, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka.

<sup>11</sup> SV75\_Y, Koidu.

<sup>12</sup> SV121\_Y, Pujehun.

<sup>13</sup> SV124\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>14</sup> SV152\_Y, Makeni.

*'The youth are there to create awareness to the elderly people to realise their mistakes of the past. We are the torch bearers to correct the mistakes of the elders.'*<sup>15</sup>

*'We have a big role, we implement projects in the community. We are united so we do the roads and clean the community hospital in our area.'*<sup>16</sup>

The above quotes also reveal that youth perceives itself as a united societal group, apart from but interacting with and interdependent on other socio-generational groups. As a *'historical generation'*<sup>17</sup> it has an agenda vis-à-vis these other groups, especially elders.

Adult and elder respondents largely affirm this picture. However, elders, in particular, emphasised a different perspective thereby revealing a first tension between their own and youth's expectations. Youths were keen to present themselves as indispensable assets in the community, their strength and energy empowering the group. After community labour they saw their most important role as being to generate an income, an important marker of economic and, thus, social independence. Many elders, in contrast, perceived youth's capacities as a resource to be harnessed by the community authorities to drive development and provide security (see Figure 4, above).

*'They are the pillars on which elders stand in terms of undertaking physical work.'*<sup>18</sup>

*'The youth should brush the road to the town and do farming. We have young people just to take care of the town and brush the roads, this is their role.'*<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> SV47\_Y, Koidu.

<sup>16</sup> SV175\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>17</sup> Mannheim (1952); Kertzer (1983).

<sup>18</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun, emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> INT69, Speaker, Pujehun, emphasis added.

*‘They have the role of facilitating development. We the elders give them specific assignments to carry out ... They are always ready to clean the town, do the roads ...’<sup>20</sup>*

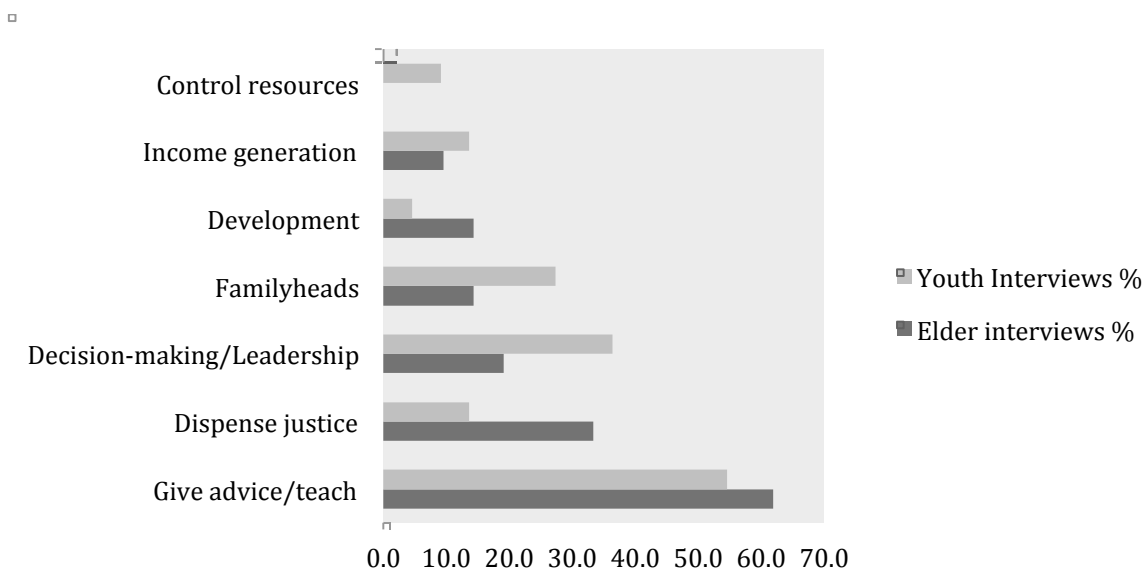
Adults and elders on the other hand,

*‘... make decisions at their homes for the family like their economic wellbeing, etc. They also find themselves in various committees, decision-making bodies in the chiefdom. They are also found in the local courts for the dispensation of justice amongst local people.’<sup>21</sup>*

Thus, adults take on leading positions in the family and community as *‘directors, commanders, protectors and producers’* (see Figure 5, below).<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 5: Role of Adults in the Community**

***Consolidated answers to the interview question: What is the role of adults in the community?\****



\* Answers in % of 22 adult / 21 youth interview respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

Most importantly, as part of the generational contract, they *‘... direct and advise the young people.’<sup>23</sup>* Passing on their knowledge *‘[t]he adults guide the young people by telling them their experiences [and] teach[ing] them the customs and traditions of the*

<sup>20</sup> INT89, Court Chairman, Magburaka.

<sup>21</sup> INT56, Paramount Chief, Koidu.

<sup>22</sup> INT80, District Youth Organising Secretary, Makeni.

<sup>23</sup> INT62, BRA, Koidu.

*land.*<sup>24</sup> In the interviews, respondents agreed that giving advice was the main role adults take on in the community (see Figure 5, above). Again, however, youth and adults' answers were nuanced differently. While youth matter-of-factly accepted adults and elders' leading responsibilities, adults added an element of supervision and control to these tasks. *'The adults are there to supervise the youths like in brushing the roads and farming. We are always with them to supervise and teach them how to go about it. Much of the role of the adults is to supervise the youths.'*<sup>25</sup> The conception of controlling and directing youth is mirrored by an expectation of youth's duty to listen and learn. This will be discussed in detail below in connection with intergenerational exchange and learning.

Summarising communal intergenerational relations, a youth leader stated *'The youths are energetic and the adults are experienced.'*<sup>26</sup> This agreement on the side of youth and adults/elders is remarkable in itself. However, as has already been remarked above, it presents an 'ideal type' of social relations. Frictions and tensions arise when social relations are contested and negotiated on a daily basis.

Flowing from these roles, intergenerational exchanges take place within (extended) families as well as the community and society as a whole. In their most general form intergenerational transfers are given consecutively over the life course with adults supporting dependent children's education and livelihood until they have established a household of their own. A youth leader termed adults the *'socio-economic security of*

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<sup>24</sup> INT94, Youth leader, Magburaka.

<sup>25</sup> INT69, Speaker, Pujehun.

<sup>26</sup> INT83, Youth organisation, Makeni.

*younger people.*<sup>27</sup> Acknowledging the problem of blocked social mobility, an elder added *'They [adults] take care of their children, even at forty years.'*<sup>28</sup> In return, grown-up children support their parents in old age. Respondents consciously referred to these mutual exchanges over the life course. Asked, for instance, why they sent their children to school, fifty-five per cent of respondents with children in school-going ages listed provision in old age as a reason. Sixteen per cent of this group declared this to be their sole motivation, referring to the exchange as *'payback time.'*<sup>29</sup>

Norms of parental and filial obligation are highly common globally.<sup>30</sup> Yet, Hoffmann contends that communal ideas, such as the concept of *'ubuntu'*, as well as family values rather than individualism are especially important in Sub-Saharan African societies.<sup>31</sup> In this regard, Adjaye and Aborampah's interviews in Ghana reveal that two thirds of respondents felt that individualism was not important as a family value.<sup>32</sup> Rather, communal labour, reciprocity, interdependence, and social connectedness were listed as central cultural values. The data on educating ones children, mentioned above, reflects a similar concern. While more than half of all respondents cared about reciprocity, further twenty-six per cent hoped that an education would make their children *'good citizens'* and *'develop the nation'* whereas only twenty per cent explicitly stated that being educated would make their children self-reliant and independent.<sup>33</sup> These notions of communal and familial

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<sup>27</sup> INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT93, Youth Organisation, Magburaka; INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun.

<sup>28</sup> INT53, Court Chairman, Koidu.

<sup>29</sup> SV78\_A, Koidu.

<sup>30</sup> cf. Bhat & Dhruvarajan (2001); Izuhara (2002); (2010); Aboderin (2004); (2006); Mehta & Leng (2006); Traphagan (2008); Alber, Van der Geest & Reynolds Whyte (2008); Saraceno (2008).

<sup>31</sup> Hoffmann (2003).

<sup>32</sup> Adjaye & Aborampah (2004), p. 30/31.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, this question not only revealed expectations of intergenerational reciprocity but also dependence on patrimonial networks. 16 per cent of respondents hoped their children would advance to be an *'important person'* to be able to favour their family. One mother (SV73\_A, Koidu) aptly stated *'I*

interdependence stand in contrast to a discourse of individual rights youth propagate in Sierra Leone (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7.3).

Mutual intergenerational support takes on a special importance in the absence of state-sponsored education and social security systems.<sup>34</sup> This goes as well for intergenerational exchanges at the communal level. The exchange focused on in this study, as put forth by the majority of respondents, is youth's energy for adults' experience, as the respondents quoted above put it. Thus, youth take on a central role in providing vital public goods (for example, communal labour and security) while adults and elders dispense their knowledge and experience to the younger generations. The importance of communal labour both in the context of weak state performance as well as youth empowerment will be discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7 as they present important strategies for youth's status negotiations. I focus here on the importance of knowledge transfer and learning for intergenerational relations.

Reverence of elders is common in many Sub-Saharan African cultures.<sup>35</sup> Elders are believed to be the custodians and source of the collective wisdom of a society while also having accumulated a large pool of life-experience and, thus, advice.<sup>36</sup> Sociocultural transmission, the passing on of cultural values, norms and knowledge, is essential to societal stability, cohesion and continuity.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, knowledge and

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*don't want to die suffering because I am voting for other people's children so I need to educate my children so they can be voted for and take care of me and the community.'*

<sup>34</sup> Adjaye & Aborampah (2004), p. 26; 28.

<sup>35</sup> Van der Geest (1998); (2008); Mbele (2004); Adjaye & Aborampah (2004).

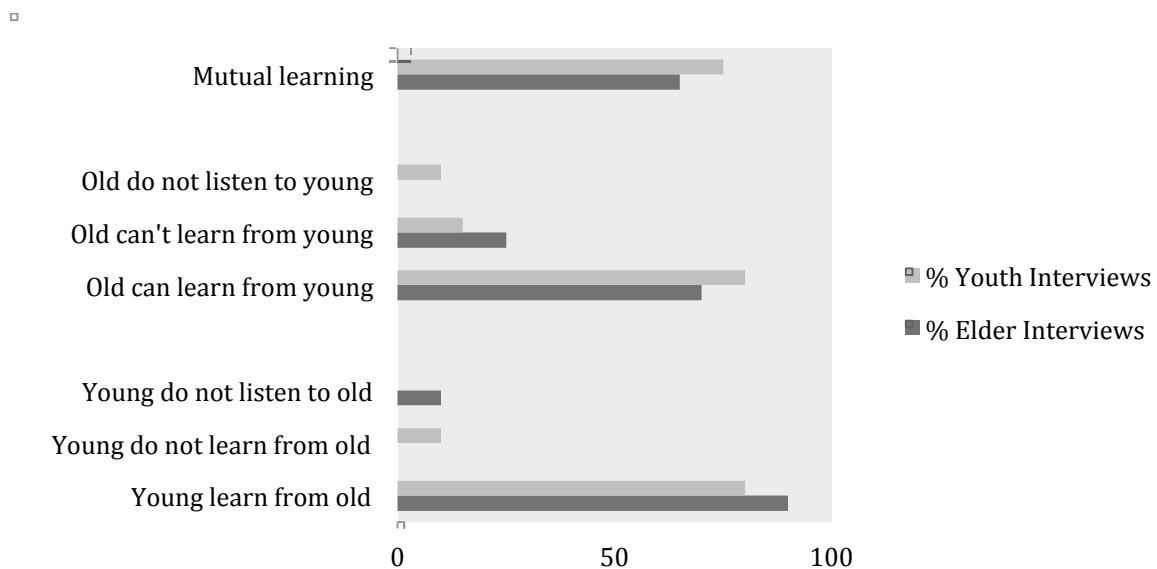
<sup>36</sup> Mbele (2004); Van der Geest (1998); (2008). Moreover, as elders stand closest to the ancestors, who are worshiped, as they are believed to influence worldly affairs, they must be respected to enable blessings and feared to avoid curses (Adjaye & Aborampah (2004), p. 27; Hoffman (2003)).

<sup>37</sup> Adjaye & Aborampah (2004), p. 23.

experience are potentially the biggest assets older generations have vis-à-vis the young.

### Figure 6: Intergenerational Learning

*Consolidated answers to the interview questions: 'In which ways can young people learn from older members of the community?' and 'In which ways can older persons learn from young people?'*<sup>\*</sup>



<sup>\*</sup> Answers in % of 20 adult / 20 youth interview respondents. Open-ended question; answers were grouped into the above categories.

Transmission of professional and customary expertise is a particularly important intergenerational transfer in cultures rooted in oral tradition, that is, where the accumulated knowledge of a society is verbally – or via hands-on demonstration – passed from one generation to the next with the essential mission of social reproduction.<sup>38</sup> This has continued importance for many Sub-Saharan African societies today in so far as influential traditional institutions (for example, chieftaincy or secret societies) often function on the basis of oral knowledge transfer. Moreover, formal schooling, literacy skills and materials are far from universal, especially in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, an important part of youth's transition to adulthood is

<sup>38</sup> Vansina (1981). In this regard, the Malian poet and scholar Amadou Hampatae Baa is credited with saying 'In Africa, when an old person dies, it's a library burning down.'

seen to lie in *'being close'* to elders, *'listening'*, *'watching'* and *'taking advice'*.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the overwhelming majority of interviewees (ninety per cent for adults and eighty per cent for youths) highlighted the importance of younger generations learning from the old. This basic and general statement was expanded in follow-up answers, in which respondents specifically listed adults and elders traditional and cultural knowledge, a more vague field, as well as their practical experiences in leadership, conflict resolution, farming, and other vocational skills (see Figure 6, above).

In his critical article *'Wisdom, an Intergenerational Gift?'* Van der Geest questions the link between wisdom and age and, thus, elderhood and respect from youth.<sup>40</sup> In his view, elders have largely lost their role as sociocultural transmitters because the young nowadays have access to many sources of information and knowledge, such as formal schooling, radio and the internet.<sup>41</sup> More importantly, *'[w]hat they [elders] know about farming, medical herbs, traditional customs, family history and ancestors has grown obsolete in the eyes of the young. The new generation needs other types of knowledge to survive and become successful in life.'*<sup>42</sup> That so many of his respondents nevertheless mentioned a link between wisdom and old age is for Van der Geest to a large extent an empty *'performance of respect'*,<sup>43</sup> with answers being biased by social desirability.

In part this critical view is reflected in the answers respondents for this study gave when asked about intergenerational learning experiences. While only very few youth

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<sup>39</sup> Interviews with elders Kailahun; Pujehun; Koidu (2009); Makeni (2009); (2010); Magburaka (2010).

<sup>40</sup> Van der Geest (2008).

<sup>41</sup> see also Mbele (2004), Adjaye & Aborampah (2004), p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Van der Geest (2008), p. 394; (1998), p. 487.

<sup>43</sup> Van der Geest (2008), p. 392. The author continues to write: *'The young show respect for the elderly by telling the anthropologist that the older generation is wise and that they often go to them for advice; the elders seize on that respect by saying the same thing. Admitting that the young do not come to them is painful and could lower their prestige in the eyes of the visitor.'*

outright rejected that they could learn from older generations,<sup>44</sup> the majority explained that youth and elders, drawing on different sources, hold their own set of knowledge which they then can offer to the other. Elders concurred,

*'[o]lder people only learn from the young people in terms of education like those [who] study history they sometimes tell things we don't know. But in terms of our culture we don't learn from them. Sometimes elders find difficulties with certain things so we consult them.'*<sup>45</sup>

Thus, learning was described as a 'two-way process'<sup>46</sup> whereby elders pass on traditional knowledge and professional experience, while youth teach elders about new technologies, human, child and women's rights, and HIV/AIDS, for instance.

*'Learning from the old starts from the homes. Our parents teach us a lot at home and the traditional leaders put [in place] bylaws and traditions, which we learn from the announcement from the elders. We learn basically from the practices and pronouncements of the elders ... We also learn by observation.'*<sup>47</sup>

*'Yes, the older people can learn from the younger people like boys teaching their parents how to use modern technology, like televisions, etc.'*<sup>48</sup>

Agreeing with the mutual learning process one Paramount Chief laconically stated *'You are never too old to learn, that is why some of us still attend workshops with small boys making presentations.'*<sup>49</sup> Some even accept that they may learn from youth in their own domain, culture,

*'Old persons can learn from young people sometimes from their education like the situation we have now most young people are educated and the older ones are illiterate, so they learn from the young people because of their education. The youths now see the culture of the past as old so the young people now advise the old ones on the culture like FGM [female genital mutilation]. They tell the older members of the [Secret] Society that it is wrong and crude. Even*

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<sup>44</sup> INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun; INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>45</sup> INT66, Speaker, Pujehun.

<sup>46</sup> INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun.

<sup>47</sup> INT94, Youth Leader, Magburaka.

<sup>48</sup> INT59, Section Chief, Koidu.

<sup>49</sup> INT78, Paramount Chief, Makeni.

*in the area of religion, the young people have condemned most of the old practices and the old are now learning from them.*<sup>50</sup>

Still, amongst elder and adult respondents, several were critical of youth's attitude to learning from older members of society. While it was portrayed as convenient and refreshing that youth have a '*sharper intellect*'<sup>51</sup> and could contribute to meetings with '*brilliant ideas*',<sup>52</sup> a Paramount Chief insisted that '*[w]hen elder people gather together it is the duty of young people to come and listen to their deliberation.*'<sup>53</sup> Failing to honour this duty was not only seen as disrespecting the social order but also barring ascent into adulthood.

*'The young people are often invited to listen to cases and chieftom matters when the chiefs and elders are deciding cases. By so doing they learn from us. But we have youths who do not honour these initiatives. So they don't learn from us.'*<sup>54</sup>

*'The youths no longer listen to their elders as a result they go unguided in the community and their role before now was more effective than today.'*<sup>55</sup>

*'Youth graduate to adulthood with the acceptance of elders. They spend time with elders. They teach you about life. The dos and don'ts. So if you are 18 years old and respectful of elders we will accept you as youth. And then by thirty, forty, you will become an adult. If you miss this early education by associating with elders you cannot be recognised by elders as an adult.'*<sup>56</sup>

In this respect, elders emphasised that it was not age that mattered for being classed into socio-generational groups but a person's achievements and, more importantly, conduct. An important part of this conduct is respecting and obeying community elders, '*[i]f the youth is obedient to the elders he is called to serve as headman and later area head, but if the youth does not come closer to the elders he will never be considered an adult. So it is not dependent on age but the obedience and performance of the*

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<sup>50</sup> INT72, Paramount Chief, Pujehun.

<sup>51</sup> INT56, Paramount Chief, Koidu.

<sup>52</sup> INT92, Ceremonial Chief, Magburaka.

<sup>53</sup> INT64, Paramount Chief, Pujehun, emohasis added.

<sup>54</sup> INT69, Speaker, Pujehun.

<sup>55</sup> SV133\_A, Makeni.

<sup>56</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

*youth*.<sup>57</sup> This is underlined forcefully by a chief who consciously differentiated between the age-marker of youth and the responsibility-marker of an elder, *'[y]outh graduate by the way they conduct themselves. They need to respect elders and listen to their advice. They need to come closer to elders. If they do so, some will even remain youth by age but are accepted as elders and given elder responsibilities.'*<sup>58</sup> This brings to the fore again the topic of social control of elders, which Murphy has critically analysed in his studies on secret societies among the Kpelle in Liberia. In his article *'Secret Knowledge as Property and Power in Kpelle Society: Elders versus Youth'* he shows how elders deliberately use their jealously guarded secret knowledge to manipulate community affairs and especially the politics between lineages. He claims that it is not factual knowledge as such that produces power but skilfully applied vagueness and intransparency which enables elders to re-negotiate questions of land ownership and usage, status and power positions in the community over and over again. Moreover, this concealment of the actual contents of their knowledge is consciously drawn upon to produce fear and respect and secure power of the elders over the young.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, in the eyes of elders, transition to adulthood and ultimately generational turnover depends to a large part on obedience to gerontocratic rules and, after careful scrutiny, acceptance by those older and in power. Apart from proper conduct, socio-economic achievements, such as having an independent livelihood and setting up an independent household, as well as traditional rites, such as initiation into the secret societies and marriage, mark the ascent into adulthood. Overall, the question

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<sup>57</sup> INT69, Speaker, Pujehun.

<sup>58</sup> INT45, Section Chief, Freetown. These *'youthful elders'* are important torchbearers for the emancipation of youth as a societal group as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.3.

<sup>59</sup> Murphy (1980).

'How do young people achieve adulthood?' did not result in a standard answer reflecting the complexity and multiple facets of the process of achieving adulthood. However, marriage, initiation into secret societies, economic independence, and an independent household were listed as markers of adulthood by all respondents across fieldsites. Persons from different ethnic groups set slightly different priorities within this list. A Section Chief, for instance stated *'It varies along cultural lines, like the Limbas it is after initiation into the secret societies. Like for us, the Temnes, it is when you get married you are considered an adult.'*<sup>60</sup> Importantly, these stepping-stones, again, present an ideal type of attaining adulthood. It is precisely the dilemma of the current generation of youth that most individuals neither reach all of these adulthood markers nor reach them completely. Many, for instance, earn money by themselves but need to draw on family support to sustain their separate household. Moreover, the marriage ritual is costly and many enter a relationship and found a family without these rites. In this respect one can *'more realistically speak of a process of becoming married, and as often or not it is incomplete at death.'*<sup>61</sup>

Generational turnover not only implies the ascent of youth to adulthood but also younger ranks taking over positions of responsibility and power. In this point, views of youth and elder respondents differed again. A Paramount Chief explained *'For now we had a lot of deaths, especially for the elders so young people take their position, so they become elders. Before the war it was also like that when elders pass away young people take over their positions and they become adults by that means.'*<sup>62</sup> The idea of handing over substantial power while still alive was difficult to envision for many elders *'... This is our custom and tradition that the elders should rule. It is very difficult*

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<sup>60</sup> INT77, Section Chief, Makeni.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Richards, pers. comm.

<sup>62</sup> INT56, Paramount Chief, Koidu.

*for any chief to allow his son to rule as chief when the father is alive.*<sup>63</sup> Youth, however, objected to solely obediently listening and watching, essentially taking a passive learning role, but demanded active involvement as well as an actual voice in committees, including the right to speak up, contradict elders, and present own ideas and preferences. Rather than taking over after elders have died, youth voiced a preference for taking on responsibilities *together* with and *parallel* to elders. This more egalitarian and participatory vision of community governance was viewed sceptically by elders who saw criticism and objections voiced by youth as *'disrespect'*. *'The youth before the war were respectful to elders and hard working but the youths we have here now have no respect for elders and they challenge the authorities in administration.'*<sup>64</sup> While generational turnover presents a topic of tension between youth and elders, it also emerged as a contentious issue amongst elders as some saw communal leadership as the sole responsibility of elders while others emphasised the importance of youth taking on governance positions (see Chapter 6.3 for a detailed discussion on leadership and age).

Despite the fundamental agreement on a basic intergenerational division of labour and roles, several tensions regarding role perception and processes of generational turnover exist and are unsolved. These are rooted in unbalanced power relations discriminating against youth. Youth envision not only a *quantitative* shift of power but a *qualitative* change in intergenerational relations. While complaints were not made about the division of labour within communities as such, *management* of these responsibilities is contested. As mentioned above, youth accept their role as the main provider of community labour. However, whether it is perceived as a legitimate or

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<sup>63</sup> INT65, Town Chief, Pujehun.

<sup>64</sup> INT66, Speaker, Pujehun.

exacted exercise depends on *who* calls for labour, *which* projects labour is used for, and *how* it is organised. Youth demands a say in the responsibilities which are expected from them, and in the community in which they have a stake. This includes not only regular consultation in community matters but permanent representation in decision-making bodies.

## 6. Strategies for Youth Empowerment: Opportunities and Limitations

### 6.1 The ‘Crisis of Youth’ in Sierra Leone and Sub-Saharan Africa

The role of youth has been a contentious issue in Sierra Leone and indeed in many Sub-Saharan African countries for decades. In 1969, the Commonwealth Secretariat issued a report on ‘Youth and Development in Africa’ problematising the role and status of youth in Sub-Saharan African societies. It located *‘the problem of youth’*, among other things, in the inability of the modernising Sub-Saharan African economies to integrate youth in adequate and productive ways.<sup>1</sup> Forty years onwards, the economic integration of youth, closely linked to the group’s social and political standing, has again captured the attention of researchers working on Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Sheer numbers reflecting exponential population growth as well as ‘problem issues’ such as crime, political violence and war, HIV/Aids and mass un(der)employment have shifted the research focus on this demographic group. Youth, measured as the age group between fifteen and thirty-five, make up a third of the population in most

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<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth Secretariat (1969), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> cf. O’Brien (1996); Abdullah (2004); Abbink & Van Kessel (2005); Kagwanja (2005); Rosen (2005); Honwana & De Boeck (2005); Christiansen, Utas & Vigh (2006a); Bay & Donham (2006). For a detailed review of the literature on youth see Honwana & De Boeck (2005a).

Sub-Saharan African countries.<sup>3</sup> Given the low life expectancy across the continent, they are the most productive and active group. At the same time, they are also the most destructive as they are over-represented in armed rebel and insurgency movements as well as in criminal activities.<sup>4</sup> Writing that youth '*have felt their power*', a power emerging '*partly from sheer weight of numbers, partly on a growing capacity and inclination to turn to the use of force*', Comaroff and Comaroff explain how the image of '*youths as trouble*' has come to dominate popular and policy makers' perceptions.<sup>5</sup>

In virtually all Sub-Saharan African countries youth are marginalised in national state policies and have weak legal positions.<sup>6</sup> They face malfunctioning or failing states with declining economies characterised by few employment opportunities and fierce competition for scarce resources. Weak educational and health facilities do little to provide reassurance for tangible changes in the future.<sup>7</sup> In his exploration of '*African Youth at a Crossroads*', Chauveau shows how the deepening of the social, economic and political crisis of many Sub-Saharan African states disproportionately affects young people as a vulnerable social group in African societies.<sup>8</sup> It is against this background that youth are often regarded as marginalised, vulnerable, dependent, and, thus, exploitable. A group disintegrated from traditional family and community structures floating around like '*loose molecules*', as Kaplan so drastically put it.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> This is a generous numerical definition, although defensible in the socio-economic circumstances of the African continent (Abbink (2005), p. 6). A detailed discussion on the definition of the 'youth' category follows below.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Richards (1996); Clapham (1998); Utas (2003); Vigh (2006b); Abbink (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff (2000), p. 309; 308.

<sup>6</sup> Honwana & De Boeck (2005a), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Abbink (2005), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Chauveau (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Kaplan (1994), p. 46.

next negative image of youth then, is that of a '*lost generation*',<sup>10</sup> troublesome, again, as their neglect makes them '*time bombs*.'<sup>11</sup>

In this regard, the issue of youth and (political) violence has received much attention in research as well as policy circles.<sup>12</sup> Looking at youth bulges – extraordinarily large youth cohorts relative to the adult population – Urdal finds that large youth populations significantly increase the risk of domestic armed conflict, especially under conditions of economic stagnation as prevalent in many Sub-Saharan African countries.<sup>13</sup> Likewise the 2007 World Development Report, titled '*Development and the Next Generation*' finds a positive correlation between unemployment among young people and civil violence. Authors more akin to the 'grievance' than 'greed' theory, have focused on the frustrations of youth triggered by a 'crisis of expectations' with regards to ascent into adulthood status. Economic dependence, delays in household, marriage and family formation, coupled to a lack of social responsibility in communities, and, therefore, also a lack of recognition by society have been shown to lead to frustration, hopelessness and a greater potential for violence and crime.<sup>14</sup> The RUF in Sierra Leone took advantage of this '*void of opportunities*', to recruit youthful fighters for the war. In the first two years of the conflict, recruitment under the heading of intergenerational conflict in particular and revolt against authorities more

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<sup>10</sup> Bellagamba (2008), p. 237.

<sup>11</sup> Bellagamba ((2008), p. 237) takes this term from the title of a poem published in a Gambian daily newspaper in 1994: '*Time Bombs*' // *The youth yoke is / Drug addiction / Illiteracy / Joblessness / The youth yoke is the itching desire to quit this / Benezed-desert for greened pastures // The youth yoke is also / Hopelessness / Bitterness / Against all those dream-depriving / Politicians and policies / Which have reduced them / Like our Gambia to / Surviving a-begging and / A-borrowing. // A generation of degeneration / A cavalcade of cadavers / This land's youth.*' On the metaphor of time bombs, see also Enria (2011), p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Clapham (1998); Peters & Richards (1998); Utas (2003); Urdal (2004); Abdullah (2004); WDR (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Urdal (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Richards, Bah & Vincent (2004).

generally was highly successful. This is also reflected in the above-described incidences of violence targeted specifically at chiefs and elders.<sup>15</sup>

However, it is a mistake to deny African youth agency and the intentionality of action. While disadvantaged, they constitute a heterogeneous group of actors constantly challenging and (re)shaping social relations and power formations.<sup>16</sup> As individuals and a group youth actively navigate their (clipped) life chances as both ‘*masterminds AND tools*’, ‘*vanguards AND vandals*’, ‘*makers AND breakers*’.<sup>17</sup> This continuous balancing act between agency and heteronomy is the main focus of this chapter.

Defining youth is surprisingly challenging. As a social category, definitions are culturally dependent, varying globally. Moreover definitions reflect the self-interest of those categorising the group – youth itself, other socio-generational groups, national policy makers, or international organisations.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Balandier writes that “*youth*” is *an imprecise group [of which] definitions compete according to circumstances, events or calculations.*<sup>19</sup> Christiansen and Utas see “*youth*” [as] *a highly context-dependent and fluid signifier*’ while Le Meur writes that during his fieldwork in Benin “*youth*” *manifested itself many times and under different guises ... [as an] actual group of people, a cognitive category or “target group”, an element of political discourse, or a fantasised or real factor of disorder or renewal.*<sup>20</sup> The 2007 World Development Report defines youth as,

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<sup>15</sup> Keen (2005).

<sup>16</sup> Abbink (2005), p. 3; Honwana & De Boeck (2005a), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Last (2005); Abbink & Van Kessel (2005); Honwana & De Boeck (2005); Christiansen, Utas & Vigh (2006a).

<sup>18</sup> Le Meur (2008), p. 216.

<sup>19</sup> Balandier (1985), quoted in Le Meur (2008), p. 211.

<sup>20</sup> Christiansen & Utas (2008), p. 517; Le Meur (2008), p. 211.

*'[A] ... transitional phase from childhood to adulthood when young people, through a process of intense physiological, psychological, social, and economic change, gradually come to be recognized – and to recognize themselves – as adults. So it is more a stage in life than an age.'*<sup>21</sup>

Inherent in this definition is the idea that youth is a transitory phase, preceded by childhood and followed by adulthood. Blocked socio-generational mobility tampers with this system of social reproduction.

The work at hand does not use one fixed definition of youth. To locate youth respondents, I loosely followed the numerical definition of fifteen to thirty-five years of age given in the 2003 Sierra Leone National Youth Policy. However, a major aim of this research has been to explore how youth itself understands its common identity and societal role as well as how its self-understanding differs from the picture other socio-generational groups have of this group. Unsurprisingly, overlaps as well as differences emerged in the way in which these different groups defined youth. Moreover, specific definitions used by policy makers, NGOs and donors have shaped the youth term in Sierra Leone in important ways. In this respect the dissertation explores the multiplicity of definitions drawn on by the different actors in the Sierra Leonean context, showing how these definitions reflect and shape the aims and strategies individuals and groups follow.

This approach stands in contrast to recent research on youth in Sierra Leone. In their analysis of urban youth and electoral violence, Christiansen and Utas specify the following,

*'But the way we use it [the youth term] in this text, which we think reflects the way it is generally used in West Africa, is as a label for marginalized young*

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<sup>21</sup> WDR (2007), p. 27. Numerically and for operational reasons, this phase is usually defined as people ages fifteen to twenty-four.

*(and not so young) people, rather than for a whole population within a certain age bracket. The potential danger of youth is thus not dependent on bulging demographic processes, as popularly supposed, but rather on the number of young people experiencing socio-economic marginalisation and powerlessness.<sup>22</sup>*

While continued marginalisation and limited life-choices of youth have been a main incentive to conduct this research, the work at hand also reveals many positive connotations with the term youth and a certain self-confidence of this socio-generational group. This warrants a look at youth beyond marginalisation and exploitation. In this regard, the chapter concludes that youth representation and organisation represent an important break with earlier patterns of youth marginalisation and exploitation but are in need of nurturing and support to institutionalise themselves as a social force for change. Important continuities with regards to patrimonial politics, elite exploitation and gerontocratic dominance persist and are even regaining strength as increasing political violence has shown.

## **6.2 Qualifying as a Youth in Sierra Leone**

Alarmed by research placing youth at the centre of Sierra Leonean's civil war donors and NGOs have focused their post-conflict interventions on youth policy.<sup>23</sup> The situation of un(der)employed young people is a major concern for policy makers as they are thought to be able to undermine development interventions and ultimately threaten the recently established peace and stability.<sup>24</sup> A comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) program was implemented after the war to integrate approximately 75,000 fighters, the majority of whom were

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<sup>22</sup> Christiansen & Utas (2008), p. 517.

<sup>23</sup> Richards (1996); Peters & Richards (1998).

<sup>24</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 1.

well below twenty-five.<sup>25</sup> Following this, countless international and local initiatives have aimed at integrating youth into the economy and political system to provide stability. The UNDP alone, for instance, spent \$4.2m on youth-focused projects from 2003-2005.<sup>26</sup> Through the Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports, the Government of Sierra Leone has dispatched District Youth Officers, while youth chairmen are elected in chiefdoms and districts to represent youth at the various levels of local government. In 2003 the government launched its National Youth Policy aimed at *'[c]reating a level playing field for youths to actualise their fullest potentials, be competitive nationally and globally, and to contribute as good, responsible citizens to the development of their country.'*<sup>27</sup> Within its focus on youth, the government considers the creation of job opportunities for the youth population its highest priority and a prerequisite for maintaining peace and promoting pro-poor growth.<sup>28</sup> Using quite drastic language, a policy document drawn up by three major donors states,

*'As long as many of the youth remain unemployed, underemployed, uneducated and unskilled, they will remain vulnerable to mobilisation for criminal and other violent activities. ... So serious is the threat that the government of Sierra Leone and the Peace Building Commission have labelled youth a priority security risk area for Sierra Leone, along with corruption and illicit drugs.'*<sup>29</sup>

In 2009 a bill was passed to establish a national youth commission. Launched in November 2011, President Koroma problematised the overly securitised discourse surrounding youth, which his and previous governments had led, acknowledging youth's capacities and potentials,

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<sup>25</sup> Humphreys & Weinstein (2004), p. 14; Peters (2011), p. 166.

<sup>26</sup> Christiansen, Utas & Vigh (2006b), p. 17; For a comprehensive overview see Peeters et al. (2009), p. 154.

<sup>27</sup> Sierra Leone National Youth Policy (2003).

<sup>28</sup> SL PRSP (2005); UN PBC SL (2010), p. 4; UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010), p. 10/11; UN Security Council (2011b), p. 6; Sierra Express Media (2012e).

<sup>29</sup> UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010), p. 11/12.

*'We need to move away from a paradigm that perceives youths as threats to one where youths are seen as the pride of the nation, the mainstay of our development and the promise of our continued survival as a nation. Youths are not a threat to this country; they are the great promise of this nation, the transformation of this country is being possible by the creativity, talent and persistent of our youths. We must all show great respect for the youths of this great nation. Respect the youths and all shall be well with you. ... It is not all one-sided; the youth also have a responsibility. I want to challenge all the youth of Sierra Leone to take up the challenge of developing their own potential, talents, creativity and skills as a way of contributing to the development of Mama Salone.'*<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, the TRC Report remarks that all political rhetoric weighs little when few tangible benefits follow,

*'Although the youth question has been declared as a priority in the policy and in the public speeches of government officials, it has been very difficult to translate such declarative emphasis into practical impact. This deficiency is symptomatic of the continued marginalisation of the youth. What obtains is a prioritisation of youth at the abstract level, with few tangible benefits for youths themselves.'*<sup>31</sup>

What then is the situation of Sierra Leone's youth in numbers? Before delving into the data collected for this study, I present a short overview of youth-related statistics in the realm of economic, political and social integration in Sierra Leone. Of Sierra Leone's population forty-two per cent are under fifteen years of age and about thirty-five per cent are fifteen to thirty-five (the definition of youth in Sierra Leone).<sup>32</sup> As the overview of central development indicators in Table 4, below, as well as the short discussion of human development in the Introduction show, Sierra Leoneans generally and youth in particular face a challenging economic and human development context.

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<sup>30</sup> Koroma (2011).

<sup>31</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 359.

<sup>32</sup> Author's calculation from data from the 2004 Population and Housing Census. Current population estimates range from 5.4m (WDR (2011)) to 5.99m (CIA World Factbook (2012); EIU (2012)).

**Table 4: Selected Development Indicators for Sierra Leone**

Economic Indicators	GDP per capita, 2005 (PPP, current \$)*	805
	Population living below \$2 per day, 2003 (per cent)+	76.1
	Youth unemployment (ages 15-24)§	5.2
	Male§	7.3
	Female§	3.5
	Combined youth unemployment and underemployment (per cent)+	> 60
Health Indicators	<i>Life expectancy at birth, 2011 (years)</i>	
	Total* <sup>33</sup>	47.8
	Male, 2008+	46
	Female, 2008+	49
	<i>Mortality</i>	
	Infant mortality rate, 2012 (est.) (per 1,000 live births)§	77
Under-five mortality rate, 2009 (per 1,000 live births)*+	192	
Maternal mortality ratio, 2008 (per 100,000 live births)*+	970	
Education Indicators	Youth literacy rate#	39.4
	Adult literacy rate, 2009 (per cent age 15+)*	40.9
	Male#	49
	Female#	29
	Mean years of schooling (adults, years)*	2.9
	<i>Net enrolment rate 2003-04 (per cent)</i>	
	Primary#	75
	Junior Secondary#	13
Senior Secondary#	7	

\* Human Development Indicators (<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/default.html>).

§ CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sl.html>).

+ World Development Report (2011).

# Peeters et al. (2009).

†PBC (2010).

Youth in Sierra Leone are disadvantaged relative to today's children or adults, as they grew up during the civil war which affected and continues to affect both their human capital development as well as their transition into adulthood.<sup>34</sup> Due also to these circumstances, roughly forty per cent of twelve to twenty-four year-olds and sixty-three per cent of twenty-five to thirty-five year-olds have never attended school, while only twenty per cent of twenty to thirty-five year-olds finished primary school.<sup>35</sup> These numbers explain the high demand for 'second-chance education'

<sup>33</sup> The CIA World Factbook estimates the life expectancy for 2012 at 56.55 years and thus significantly higher from that of the previous year. As I was unable to find reliable sources to explain this large increase, I have documented here the more conservative number.

<sup>34</sup> Peeters et al (2009), p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> WDR (2007), p. 185.

among war/post-war youth. In this respect, in 2006 about half of sixth-graders were older than thirteen, reflecting the return to schooling of many who were denied education when younger as well as grade repetition.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in the sample of student respondents for this study, a third of secondary school students were already in their early to mid-twenties (see Chapter 3, Figure 3). Indeed, in several studies, including the research at hand (see Chapter 6.4, Figure 9), young people consistently ranked education among their highest priorities<sup>37</sup> while lack of educational opportunities was listed by (former) combatants as one motivation for taking up arms.<sup>38</sup> The education available in Sierra Leonean schools is often of very low quality reflecting low education levels and low pay of teachers as well as lack of adequate learning materials.<sup>39</sup> Sierra Leone's education pyramid narrows sharply, with net enrolment rates of just thirteen per cent at the junior-secondary level and seven per cent at the senior-secondary level.<sup>40</sup>

Partially due to low education and skills levels, underemployment is common among both urban and rural youth, and formal-sector employment is extremely rare: only three per cent of youth are employed in the public sector and two per cent in the non-agricultural private sector.<sup>41</sup> The terminology surrounding a person's job status is somewhat complicated. The policy literature usually differentiates between formal (public and private sector) and informal employment. While (self-)employed, a person can be underemployed, when he/she works less hours than he/she would like. An unemployed person has no job but is searching for one. Those who are not in

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<sup>36</sup> WDR (2007), p. 185.

<sup>37</sup> Peeters et al. (2009); WDR (2007), p. 185.

<sup>38</sup> Peters & Richards (1998); Peters (2011).

<sup>39</sup> INT29, Principal, Kailahun; INT32, Principal, Kailahun; INT33, Principal, Kailahun; see also Peeters et al. (2009), p. 93.

<sup>40</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 92.

<sup>41</sup> WDR (2007), p. 185.

school, nor employed, nor looking for a job are termed 'inactive in the labour market'. This category encompasses persons too old, sick or disabled to work; those only active in house work and/or child rearing; as well as those who have no intention of searching for work. The latter are also often called 'discouraged workers'; they believe that the circumstances on the labour market are such that it will be impossible for them to acquire employment.<sup>42</sup> Truly inactive young men are not a serious problem in Sierra Leone as they represent only five to ten per cent of young men inactive in the labour market. As the overwhelming majority of Sierra Leonean youth can simply not afford to be inactive, most are underemployed working for minimal wages or irregular hand-outs.<sup>43</sup> Urban youth, however, usually use the term unemployed to refer to their own situation. This reflects their perception of working too few hours, for too low wages in the informal sector.<sup>44</sup> Although young people are four times as likely as adults to be unemployed (5.9 and 1.5 per cent, respectively), this is a better situation than in most Sub-Saharan African countries.<sup>45</sup> Even more important is the insight that Peeters et al. gather from their data, namely that *[d]espite their limited access to wage and formal employment opportunities, young people who were teenagers during the conflict seem to be moving through the labor market in the same way as those who were not as directly affected by the conflict.*<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> WDR (2007), p. 100.

<sup>43</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the data on youth employment in Sierra Leone, see Peeters et al. (2009); UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010).

<sup>44</sup> Enria (2011), p. 76.

<sup>45</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 34. More youth combine work and school in Sierra Leone than in other countries in the region. Moreover, inactivity and unemployment rates are significantly lower in Sierra Leone than other Sub-Saharan African countries. In Ethiopia and Mozambique, for instance, inactivity rates for 15- to 35-year olds are estimated at 58 and 45 per cent respectively, while they are only about 19 per cent in Sierra Leone. It is worth noting that globally youth unemployment rates are higher than those for adults (WDR (2007), p. 8).

<sup>46</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 54. A special sub-category of 'war-youth' for which this is not as evenly the case is ex-combatants, especially former RUF rebels. Interview data collected among ex-combatants and employers in 2007 shows that especially former rebels and AFRC members are less likely to be hired (Boersch-Supan (2008)).

In connection with the much-debated youth un(der)employment rate in Sierra Leone, it is critical to understand that it is foremost the overall weakness of the country's economy which limits the absorptive capacity of the labour market. In this respect, a survey of employers conducted by Peeters et al. found that limited job opportunities for young people were linked more closely to the general lack of economic opportunities for business operation and development than to age-related factors.<sup>47</sup> However, young people are also discriminated against in the labour market as many employers, for instance, prefer not to hire people between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four, as they are perceived to be less reliable, less trustworthy, less hard working, less cooperative and less skilled than adults.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, employees tend to be hired based on strong social networks, which young people typically lack.<sup>49</sup> The importance of social connections was also confirmed by youth themselves: many believe people who are well connected – older people, relatives of contractors, government officials, and NGO staff – can more easily obtain paid employment. Thus, many perceive connections to be more important than merit.<sup>50</sup>

The above, however, also suggests that while a strong focus on youth policy is important in Sierra Leone, more general economic development and diversification are imperative to be able to tackle the problem of youth marginalisation.<sup>51</sup> Peeters et al. write,

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<sup>47</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 76.

<sup>49</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 67.

<sup>50</sup> Peeters et al (2009), p. 68; Enria (2010). Curiously, my own interview question: '*Q. How do young people usually go about finding a job? If somebody wants to get a job, is it more important for him to have good skills/a good education or to know the right people?*' did not reveal this pattern. The majority of elder as well as youth respondents claimed that education and skills were more important for finding a job. This goes against the findings of other studies as well as my own observations. I suspect that answers to the question (like the answers regarding corrupt behaviour) may have been tainted by social desirability.

<sup>51</sup> UN, World Bank, GDC, IFAD & EU (2010), p. 3.

*'[M]uch of the postconflict growth ... [has been] a bounce-back effect as a result of recovery in agriculture and mining, large-scale resettlement and reconstruction activities, and the peacekeeping operation and other donor-funded programs ... while [c]ontinuing constraints to improved economic performance include limited private investment; weak local purchasing power; still dilapidated infrastructure ...; and weak governance, as demonstrated by weak institutional capacity, a fragile judicial system, and corruption.'*<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, recent policy documents give a fairly bleak picture of international policy interventions in the field of youth integration in the economy. Drawing on the *'Joint response to youth unemployment in Sierra Leone'* by the UN, GTZ and World Bank, the UN Peacebuilding Commission reported in 2010 – nine years after the end of the war,

*'The international community has been active in the area of youth employment with a significant number of worthy but relatively small scale projects, which, absent [of] an overall strategy, have not fully exploited potential complementarities and linkages. More than 85% of youth employment projects have focused on improving "employability" (mainly skill training) without linking the training to the business market and the labor demand ... The main message is that not enough is known about the status of the labor market in the country and that the many experiences should be better analyzed and future interventions should better adhere to an overall strategy.'*<sup>53</sup>

Youth in Sierra Leone then face considerable macroeconomic as well as policy-related constraints with regards to their economic integration. Donors have, therefore, agreed to focus on short-term interventions, such as public works programs to immediately target youth's employment situation. Ultimately, however, large-scale investments in the public and private sector as well as policy changes are required to bring about broadly based and long-term economic development.

The majority of youth, when employed or self-employed, are active in the informal sector, this includes especially the retail market in urban areas, the agricultural

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<sup>52</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> UN PBC SL (2010), p. 2, emphasis added.

(subsistence) market in rural spaces as well as the artisanal mining sector. In this respect, the post-war period has seen a remarkable rise in self-organised social activism and employment (or more critically put, self-help) among young people who established business cooperatives; developmental organisations at section, town, chiefdom, or district level; as well as occupational groups, such as the well-known bike-riders and tape-sellers associations.<sup>54</sup> Economic integration and subsequent independence are critical factors for access to adult status. Peeters et al. observe that especially *'young men's labor market outcomes are associated with the timing of transition to marriage and parenthood.'*<sup>55</sup> In this respect, Sierra Leonean men become household heads comparatively late in their life: only twenty-two per cent head a household at the age of twenty-four, and just sixty-five per cent are household heads by thirty-five. About fifty per cent of young men are married at twenty-seven, and fifteen per cent are still not married at thirty-five. Delays in marriage – together with economic independence as the quintessence of manhood and adulthood – may lead to social exclusion causing frustration and anger, which may be vented in violence.<sup>56</sup>

Sierra Leone's youth population is more urbanised than other socio-generational groups. This demographic change is, in part, a legacy of the civil war.<sup>57</sup> 47 per cent of 20- to 24-year olds and 42 per cent of 25- to 29-year olds live in urban areas. This is

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<sup>54</sup> Fanthorpe & Machonachie (2010).

<sup>55</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Correia & Bannon (2006). Entry into parenthood and, thus, adulthood starts earlier for females. Teenage motherhood levels are high, with 17 per cent of 16-year-olds and 47 per cent of 19-year-old females being mothers. Almost 80 per cent of 25-year-olds are mothers in Sierra Leone, compared with only about 60 per cent of young women in developing countries overall (Peeters (2009), p. 21). However, the African continent as a whole has by far the highest rates of teenage pregnancies, thus, within the African context, Sierra Leone's numbers do not stand out (WDR (2007), p. 146). In contrast to young men, more than half of young women are married at 19; and 71 per cent are married at 24. As elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, young people transition earlier into family life in rural areas than urban areas.

<sup>57</sup> Wood (2008).

10 (5) per cent higher than the overall population.<sup>58</sup> Concentrated in the Freetown area, younger people were more likely to search for protection in urban areas during the war and continue to show a greater propensity to migrate to the capital as well as remain there than older persons.<sup>59</sup> Among other reasons, post-conflict migration to urban areas is an important consequence of continued social control of elders in rural areas. While Peeters et al. stress the disruptive effect of these moves in claiming that they lead to separation from families and traditional ties, potentially resulting in a breakdown of communal traditions and family bonds,<sup>60</sup> it is important to acknowledge that migration – seasonal, short and/or long-term – is a long established practice in Sierra Leone and, thus, its challenges well-anticipated by families and the community as a whole. Moreover, the spread of mobile phones and enhanced transportation have made communication and travelling between family members much easier and much more likely.<sup>61</sup>

While pervasive poverty makes economic integration an especially important factor for youth empowerment, any economic limitations are closely linked to political and social marginalisation, driving grievances as well. In rural parts of Sierra Leone traditional modes of governance, authority and social control still dominate social relations. Family lineage, passed along the male line (patrilineage), is the foundation of social organisation. Traditional society is strictly hierarchical and gerontocratic. Village elders maintain control over land, the allocation of labour and often marriage.

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<sup>58</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> On the effects this has for agricultural production see Maconachie (2008); Sierra Express Media (2010b).

<sup>60</sup> Peeters et al (2009), p. 13.

<sup>61</sup> As mentioned above, the work at hand focuses on rural and semi-urban (youth) populations. While this neglects a good half of the Sierra Leonean youth population and, thus, an important reality for the country, I justify this focus, first, with the relative dearth in post-conflict studies on rural youth versus Freetown's youth and, second, with the fact that the recruitment of fighters for the civil war mainly took place among rural youth (Peters (2011)).

Those with the smallest stake of all are young people (as well as women and strangers).<sup>62</sup> Land is at the heart of local power and rural social organisation. Access to and control over land is usually the defining resource of power and capital for elites. Similar to age-related discrimination in the urban labour market, Maconachie has found that youths are less likely to be allocated the most fertile land and the land closest to the communities.<sup>63</sup> Thus, strict control over land allocation by elders deters youth from farming even though arable land in Sierra Leone is abundant and much fertile soil stays untapped.<sup>64</sup> Continuous migration of youth to Freetown and other urban and mining centres has, ironically, resulted in labour supply bottlenecks in some rural areas.<sup>65</sup> While farming is also acknowledged to be very hard physical work and many youth shun it, especially after having acquired a high school or higher education, evidence from other West African countries and accounts for this study show that the attractiveness of agricultural work significantly increases with security in land tenure and the possibility to grow viable cash crops rather than engaging only in subsistence farming.<sup>66</sup>

In the context of elders' control and political as well as social inclusion, Miguel et al. report that young people feel excluded from decision-making in many communities.<sup>67</sup> They are, for instance, significantly less likely to believe that they can change unjust policies or laws; they attend fewer community meetings, and are less likely to speak

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<sup>62</sup> Anybody who leaves his/her chiefdom of birth is considered a stranger wherever he settles. Upon the decision to leave their chiefdom of birth, young people lose rights to land, which are assigned only to members of a family lineage. Lack of family connections is still a major source of vulnerability and poverty, especially in rural Sierra Leone (Maconachie (2008); Peeters et al. (2009), p. 15).

<sup>63</sup> Machonachie (2008).

<sup>64</sup> WDR (2007), p. 186.

<sup>65</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 17; Sierra Express Media (2010b).

<sup>66</sup> INT8, GTZ Officer for Kailahun, Freetown; INT11, BRA, Kailahun; CV12, High School Teacher, Kailahun. For the topic of youth-led tomato cash cropping in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, see MacLean (2005).

<sup>67</sup> Miguel et al. (2006).

during meetings. Moreover, the researchers find, that community youth leaders, who are appointed rather than chosen by youths themselves, may not represent the interests of young people as half are over the age of thirty-five, and a tenth are over fifty. At the same time the post-war period has seen a boom in self-organised social activism among youth. Several studies from the post-conflict years have observed a kind of ‘youth emancipation.’ Due to youth’s awareness and self-confidence but also due to their eroded financial powers, elders cannot rely as much as in the past on their customary authority.<sup>68</sup> Moreover youth have shown high interest and participation rates in the multiple post-conflict elections. The topic of youth representation and organisation lies at the heart of this dissertation and will be discussed in detail below.

The disproportionate focus on the socio-economic group of youth has established a national discourse on youth empowerment and opened a potential path to resources, making youth an ‘*aid taker category*.’<sup>69</sup> Given this disproportionate attention and support, it is interesting to explore how those targeted by the youth policy perceive their own identity as a group.

For young people, the policy focus on youth has created an acute awareness of numerical age. Age brackets are easiest to operationalise for policy and project implementation purposes; thus, the 2003 Sierra Leone National Youth Policy defines

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<sup>68</sup> Richards, Bah & Vincent (2004); Richards (2005); Peters (2011).

<sup>69</sup> Christiansen, Utas & Vigh (2006b), p. 17. Roughly \$ US 100 million were invested in youth related projects during the last five years in Sierra Leone. In 2010, overall ODA was ca. \$ US half a billion of which \$ US 50 million were earmarked for youth related projects (World Development Indicators; Sierra Express Media (2012b)).

youth as *'all Sierra Leonean female and male between the ages of 15 and 35.'*<sup>70</sup> With project benefits targeted at this age group, asking for somebody's age has become a sensitive issue, as ambiguity in stating one's age is an important strategy to navigate potential gains from project resources. When asked how they define youth, the overwhelming majority of youth respondents for this study took the *'age perspective'*<sup>71</sup> solely quoting the age bracket of fifteen to thirty-five. Even when asked for their age or the age of other persons, youth respondents would clarify that they were *'within the age bracket'*<sup>72</sup> or *'qualified as a youth.'*<sup>73</sup> Adults and elders, in contrast, would describe a range of socio-economic features. These definitions reflect adults and elders' understanding of youth's role in the community as has been presented in Chapter 5.

The wide numerical definition mainly drawn on by youth has an interesting uniting and integrating dimension. In contrast to more sociologically embedded definitions focusing on societal roles and achievements (or lack thereof), the age category encompasses youth irrespective of their socio-economic features. This forges a distinct youth identity vis-à-vis other socio-generational groups rather than, for instance, status groups. The majority of respondents between the ages of 18-35 who were married with a family, held a job and led an independent household – thus, had in many ways graduated into adulthood – nevertheless insisted on using the youth label for themselves. Moreover, especially youth leaders, many of whom act as patrons to other youth, were particularly adamant to claim the youth label for

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<sup>70</sup> Sierra Leone National Youth Policy (2003). Note that this differs from most other international and national youth definitions, which encompass those 15/18-24 years old. The wider definition takes into account the generation of 'lost youth', those who were 15-24 during the decade long civil war.

<sup>71</sup> INT86, Vice Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka.

<sup>72</sup> INT93, Youth Organisation, Magburaka.

<sup>73</sup> INT61, P.R.O. Kono Youth Coalition, Koidu.

themselves.<sup>74</sup> Thus, while some elders still use the term youth in a negative way to denote the lack of status, the youths themselves draw on the label with a certain pride and self-confidence. On the one hand this sharpens the societal cleavage of socio-generational groups adding a distinct age-twist, on the other hand this also means that the youth category encompasses a highly heterogeneous group of actors regarding social, political and economic status. In this regard it is important to re-emphasise that the work at hand focuses on the interplay between groups rather than intragroup differences. However, important variations and crosscutting cleavages are discussed where appropriate.

The preceding chapter (Chapter 5) has shown that in post-conflict Sierra Leone, many youths draw their self-confidence as a group from their role as providers of basic public goods within their communities and, thus, drivers of development. With this awareness youth follows an agenda of change in Sierra Leone. Unsurprisingly for one of the poorest countries worldwide, their foremost concern is economic security and educational opportunities; these are two of the main problems and challenges youth respondents listed (see Chapter 6.4, Figure 9). Economic independence and educational attainment for all youths, however, do not only depend on jobs and schools. Rather, Sierra Leone's narrow gerontocratic and patrimonial system of power and resource distribution needs to be opened to allow for the inclusion and participation of youth. Ultimately, this is only possible through more egalitarian and democratic access to social, economic and political resources. Moreover, such an agenda does not only necessitate adaptation and change of governance institutions but calls for a broad transformation of the underlying ideas, norms and values of the

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<sup>74</sup> My interviews revealed no resistance by less successful and established youth against this broader youth label. Instead, youth drew on the age definition independent of socio-economic status.

social contract in society. It is on these multiple fronts that youth challenge their elders in post-conflict Sierra Leone. The following section presents two important interdependent strategies of youth to attain these goals, namely, youth empowerment through youth organisations and representation.

### **6.3 Empowering Youth? Youth Organisations and Representation**

Within their focus on youth policy, international actors propagate the establishment of youth within the civil society realm by supporting non-political grassroots organisations and a non-partisan representation structure for youth.<sup>75</sup> Thus, in post-conflict Sierra Leone, youth representatives have been elected at all governance levels and an industry of youth organisations has sprung up competing for project funding.<sup>76</sup> A 2004 survey, for instance, found 139 registered youth groups in rural Kono District alone<sup>77</sup> while in Calaba Town, a suburb of Freetown observed for this study forty-two youth groups were active in 2009.<sup>78</sup> These local groups address myriad issues ranging from sports events to waste management, (human) rights campaigns to the provision of community latrines, skills training to anti-violence initiatives.<sup>79</sup> They differ widely in their levels of organisation, capacity, efficiency, financial and human resources.<sup>80</sup> Their common denominator is their claim to integrate and support youth as part of the wider peacebuilding and development

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<sup>75</sup> TRC (2004d), p. 359; UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010). INT73, NGO, Pujehun; INT75, Elected Officer, District Council, Pujehun; INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun.

<sup>76</sup> Youth chairmen at village, chiefdom and district levels are often closely connected with youth organisations. Many chairmen were former executives of youth organisations (and vice-versa) and these institutions work together to feed information up to governance institutions and down to the youth population. They also co-organise events and activities as well as communal labour. Because of their interlinking functions, their impact is presented together in this section.

<sup>77</sup> Christiansen, Utas & Vigh (2006b), p. 17.

<sup>78</sup> INT41, Youth Serving Organisation, Freetown.

<sup>79</sup> Interviews with youth leaders and youth organisations. See also TRC (2004d), p. 359/360.

<sup>80</sup> For details see Fanthorpe & Maconachie (2010).

agenda for the country. Youth organisations and representation straddle private and public aims by addressing individual wellbeing and livelihoods as well as youth representation in local governance bodies and public goods provision. In both domains youth strive to improve their socio-economic situation as a group as well as strengthen their societal status relative to older generations. With their specific focus on the socio-generational category of youth, these institutions reinforce the societal cleavage of (social) age. While providing the space for youth's empowerment strategies they are at the same time the target of the deliberate counter-strategies of elders and established elites who try to co-opt successful youth leaders, for instance, or do their best to undermine and obstruct youth engagement. Thus, struggles surrounding the establishment and functioning of independent and effective youth organisations and representation have the potential for lasting transformations in intergenerational relations.

The majority of youth leaders interviewed saw the importance of youth organisations in their potential to unite youth as a productive societal group.<sup>81</sup> In this regard, it was seen as vital that youth organisations as well as the representational structure of youth stay non-partisan and non-political as the traditional rift between the APC and SLPP party is perceived as the biggest divisive factor.<sup>82</sup> This is a tall order in a country where political patronage networks permeate the majority of social relations often offering access to income and education as well as basic survival. When non-political,

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<sup>81</sup> INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT68, Youth Organisation, Pujehun; INT55, District Youth Chairman, Koidu; INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu; INT85, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT87, Assistance Secretary Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT93, Youth organisation, Magburaka.

<sup>82</sup> Youth leaders from Koidu and Pujehun, where youth had been involved in politically motivated violence around the time of data collection, pointed to the challenges of uniting a politically divided youth (INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu) and urgently called for non-political institutions for youth (INT73, NGO, Pujehun; INT75, Elected Officer, District Council, Pujehun; INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun). The challenges for youth empowerment coming from youth's involvement in political violence are discussed in a separate section of this chapter below (Chapter 6.4.).

organisations are meant to forge a *'common agenda'* for youth and let the group *'speak with one voice.'*<sup>83</sup> This is important for the negotiation and coordination of services to the community such as communal labour and informal mediation between youngsters and elders in the community.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, organised in a visible structure, such groups are hoped to act as a link between the government and the youth population<sup>85</sup> and, more importantly, attract (inter)national NGO funding and collaboration.<sup>86</sup> Finally, youth organisations are seen as important as they bring tangible support to the youth population by creating social spaces and entertainment events as well as educational projects and income generating opportunities.<sup>87</sup>

Interestingly, most youth organisations observed followed initiatives on multiple fronts. In Kailahun, a training centre for women, for instance, also regularly conducted sensitisation campaigns on health issues and child and women rights.<sup>88</sup> A youth chairman in a neighbourhood of eastern Freetown not only mediates between the police, petty criminals and affected community members but also runs several businesses in which youth are trained and employed. To attract funding from donors and NGOs he has structured some of these activities into specific youth organisations.<sup>89</sup> Overall a mix of flexibility to address shifting local issues and demands, and dependence on limited and partly targeted funding steered the activities the organisations and youth leaders implemented during the time of

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<sup>83</sup> INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu.

<sup>84</sup> INT62, BRA, Koidu; INT93, Youth organisation, Magburaka; INT94, Youth leader, Magburaka.

<sup>85</sup> INT79, District Youth Chairman, Makeni.

<sup>86</sup> INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT14x, Youth Chairman, Freetown; INT23x, Youth Organisation, Freetown.

<sup>87</sup> INT71, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT62, BRA, Koidu; INT87, Assistance Secretary Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT71, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Pujehun.

<sup>88</sup> INT15, Women's Organisation, Kailahun.

<sup>89</sup> INT23x, Youth Organisation, Freetown; INT41, Youth serving organisation, Freetown.

observation for this study.<sup>90</sup> Rather than presenting a series of case studies, the data is presented thematically, first tracing the work youth organisations and youth leaders do to support the wellbeing and livelihoods of youths individually and as a group and then describing their engagement in strengthening youth vis-à-vis established elites directly.

Supporting the wellbeing and livelihoods of youth, youth organisations and youth leaders are active in the realm of entertainment, sensitisation, training, and income generation. In villages and towns youths hang out in places such as ‘pojo huts’ (palm wine bars) or ‘ataya bases’ (tea shops). Here young men (and occasionally women) meet to drink, smoke marijuana, gamble, listen to music, and debate.<sup>91</sup> As laid out above, Abdullah traces the emergence and reinforcement of a subaltern urban culture and a rebellious youth culture to the ‘pote’ – young people’s meeting points – in Sierra Leone’s urban centres.<sup>92</sup> As such, these spaces have been essential in forging a distinct and often radical youth identity. Research conducted in post-conflict Sierra Leone confirms the continued importance of these meeting places as *‘the locus of formation of identities separate from the mainstream.’*<sup>93</sup> In her study Enria shows how three key features, unemployment and informal trading, notions of ‘youthhood’ and recreational social networks forge a distinctive identity felt and propagated by the youth of Belgium and Sweissy, two neighbourhoods in central Freetown.<sup>94</sup> Many youth respondents for the study at hand were contacted at such meeting places.

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<sup>90</sup> The activities of several organisations in eastern Freetown were tracked over the course of 3 years, 2007-2010. In all other fieldsites data collection was limited to multiple encounters over a few weeks.

<sup>91</sup> Ataya bases and poyo huts are male dominated spaces. Indeed, the entire discourse on youth focuses on young un(der)employed males, while females are usually targeted in women and child rights policies and projects. Nevertheless, youth leaders and organisations also integrate the wider youth population in sports events and dances, for instances. Especially at the former, sensitisation on HIV/Aids and other health issues, human, child and women rights as well as non-violence takes place.

<sup>92</sup> Abdullah (1997); (2002).

<sup>93</sup> Enria (2011), p. 75; Christensen & Utas (2008).

<sup>94</sup> Enria (2011).

However, possibly due to the research focus of the study on rural and peri-urban fieldsites and accordingly formulated questions, it is not only the separateness and distinctness of youth that emerges from these interviews but also youth's links with wider society.<sup>95</sup> In this respect youth leaders played an essential role in making '*ataya bases*' and '*poyo huts*' prime places of access to the youth population. Indeed in several cases, youth leaders had financed the construction of such a hut for recreational meetings or gone through considerable negotiations with community elders to acquire permission to build on community land.<sup>96</sup> Since youth congregates here, it is at these hubs that youth leaders casually sensitise youth on non-violence, rights and health issues,<sup>97</sup> informal mediation with the police and community elders takes place,<sup>98</sup> youth leaders report back from meetings,<sup>99</sup> and chiefs approach youth to discuss community matters.<sup>100</sup> It is also here that youth are recruited for political campaigns and violence.<sup>101</sup> The *ataya bases* integrative dimension is matched by a marginalising aspect, as the *ataya bases* and their night-time equivalents of various dance venues epitomise what elders and established elites reject about youth: idleness, drug and alcohol consumption, gambling, teenage sex and pregnancies. This perceived and at times very real display of the rejection of traditional moral standards, including deference to authority and elders, is a direct challenge by youth to a societal order dominated by elderly men.

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<sup>95</sup> Overall, youth respondents for the study at hand displayed little radicalism in their answers and emphasised youth's aim to become more empowered by working towards integration in established institutions.

<sup>96</sup> INT14x, Youth Chairman, Freetown; INT23x, Youth Organisation, Freetown; INT41, Youth serving Agency, Freetown; INT42, Youth Chairman, Freetown.

<sup>97</sup> INT14x, Youth Chairman, Freetown.

<sup>98</sup> NT28x, Notes on police incident at *poyo hut*, Freetown.

<sup>99</sup> SV163\_Y, Magburaka.

<sup>100</sup> SV159\_Y, Magburaka.

<sup>101</sup> SV163\_Y, Magburaka.

Advancing from youth to adulthood crucially depends on economic independence, especially the ability to pay a bride price and set up an independent household,<sup>102</sup> as several elders confirmed, *'[w]hen the young person has the capacity to take care of him or herself we consider you as an adult.'*<sup>103</sup> To foster economic autonomy and counter the dearth of employment options, most youth organisations address the issue of livelihoods through skills training, employment provision or agricultural activities. Thus, organisations providing or structuring youth employment are especially interesting as they usually function specifically under the heading of a youth organisation while offering youth the opportunity for economic emancipation, one of the most important features of ascending to adulthood.

An instructive and prominent example is the motorbike taxi business, which provides transportation in almost all towns and villages, employing 10,000s of youths throughout urban and rural Sierra Leone.<sup>104</sup> The executive of the Bike Rider Association (BRA) in Koidu summarised the economic impact of their organisation in a self-confident way,

*'Like for us, the bikers, we create job facility for ourselves and also in the process of licensing the bikes we are bringing revenue for the government. The bike system has helped youths refrain from armed robbery. We as young people we help with transportation, which the elders can't do. In terms of road maintenance we the youth undertake what the old people cannot.'*<sup>105</sup>

The chairman goes on to emphasise, *'[w]ithout the youth nothing will actually work in our community. For instance if we, the riders, decide to withhold our services just for*

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<sup>102</sup> Vigh (2006a).

<sup>103</sup> INT92, Ceremonial Chief, Magburaka; INT76, Section Chief, Makeni; INT91, Paramount Chief, Magburaka; INT89, Court Chairman, Magburaka. Importantly, this also again reflects the male biased definition of youth as women are not expected to be economically independent.

<sup>104</sup> Fithen & Richards (2005), p. 134-5.

<sup>105</sup> INT62, BRA, Koidu.

*two days nothing will work in the community.*<sup>106</sup> Moreover, bike riding is a non-agrarian livelihood option removing youths from the influence of elders who control land.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, BRAs representing and organising bike riders in every town were established from the grassroots without external/NGO support.<sup>108</sup>

In Kailahun town the bike riders are organised around an elected executive with a financial system of savings and reinvestment to purchase and repair bikes and, thus, guarantee maximum independence from patrons. The group trains new riders and ensures the licensing of their bikes and drivers to minimise harassment by the police. Interestingly, the group has diversified into other activities running the (then) only restaurant in Kailahun town and growing cassava for the market.<sup>109</sup> These activities are led by the wives of the bike riders providing the families with comparatively secure and comfortable incomes.<sup>110</sup> Offshoots of this transportation business are bike washes and garages where other youth provide services to the bike riders.

The bike riders stir up mixed feelings among the greater community. Fithen & Richards reported in the early post-war years that the provision of a crucial transportation service had led to the popular support of the BRAs and a greater acceptance of these youth, especially among market women.<sup>111</sup> While it is difficult to imagine transportation without motorbike taxis today, a fact acknowledged by many respondents of this study who were reliant on this service, bike riders have increasingly attained a negative reputation. In part this is connected to their risky

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<sup>106</sup> INT62, BRA, Koidu.

<sup>107</sup> The limits of this autonomy are discussed below.

<sup>108</sup> Krijn Peters, pers. comm.

<sup>109</sup> Kailahun town has rapidly changed in the few years since fieldwork for this dissertation took place there. Since 2011, the rural town features, for instance, the Luawa Resort Hotel (<http://www.luawa-resort.com>), while in 2009 guesthouses were limited to accommodation provided by the GTZ and WFP.

<sup>110</sup> INT11, BRA, Kailahun.

<sup>111</sup> Fithen & Richards (2005).

style of driving as well as a certain ‘culture’ of drinking, smoking and hanging around, which many adults disapprove of. However, it also, in my view, reflects an uneasiness with the groups’ relative autonomy from the communities’ social norms and social control mechanisms.

While the transportation business and services surrounding it are clearly dominated by males, the example of another group in Kailahun, shows the empowerment of women in the economic sphere. The local NGO ‘Women in Action’ trains predominantly young, single-mothers in a variety of trades, such as soap making, ‘gara’ (tie dye) and tailoring. All products produced are sold to finance the NGO and those being trained there.<sup>112</sup>

To strengthen youth’s influence and status within communities relative to older generations and established elites, youth organisations and youth leaders also engage in informal mediation, the negotiation and organisation of communal labour as well as the formal representation of youth in governance institutions. On a day-to-day basis, youth leaders often take the position of mediators within the community as *‘youth can encourage each other better than if it is done by elders.’*<sup>113</sup> They solve fights among youths and community tensions more generally in an informal manner.<sup>114</sup> In a Freetown suburb, for example, the community was enraged by many un(der)employed youths openly smoking marijuana in the streets. The youth chairman reports,

*‘Before, there was a lot of smoking. Now they are cool. We have negotiated that they find somewhere to go. They will not hang out in public and smoke.’*

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<sup>112</sup> INT15, Women’s Organisation, Kailahun.

<sup>113</sup> NT28x, Notes on police incident at poyo hut, Freetown.

<sup>114</sup> INT23x, Youth Organisation, Freetown.

*You cannot stop them, when they have started to smoke. But now they smoke in private, they do not disturb anybody.*<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, youth leaders negotiate a resolution to minor crimes, such as petty theft. JB is an example,

*'When I arrived in this village four years ago, I observed that the people were using youths to settle their disputes. ... I started with a football organisation to mobilise the people. I thought it fit to transform it into a proper youth organisation... After that, I engaged in mobilisation and sensitisation. I talked with youths to abstain from violence and work for development. ... When the community wants to complain, they come to me and complain to me ... They tell me of abusive language or provocation. I am a member of the Community Policing Board. We deal with such things like the use of insulting language [and petty theft], whereas only stabbing incidents or worse are dealt with by the public police.'*<sup>116</sup>

The executives of another Freetown youth organisation show a similar concern,

*'We, the youth, we unite.'*

*'Any youth, who has a problem, comes to me. I solve the problem with the police or the court.'*

*'Some get caught because of bad behaviour. We take them out of court, out of prison. We talk to them about proper behaviour. Then, we keep them busy. We have the car wash. We have the garage.'*<sup>117</sup>

More generally youth leaders see it as their task to *'organise the youth not to be violent.'*<sup>118</sup> In their eyes, youth organisations can *'modify rules of conduct ... allowing for discipline.'*<sup>119</sup> These informal interventions are received positively by elders, who attribute peaceful communal relations to *'the goodwill of [these] organisations'*<sup>120</sup> and observe that *'... we don't have any troubles with the youths because they have a leader... He organises all the youths not to cause problems... The leadership of the youth is the most important reason for the peace we enjoy.'*<sup>121</sup> An adult survey respondent even saw youth as a mediating body for the wider society, *'[t]he youths are the builders of*

<sup>115</sup> INT41, Youth Serving Organisation, Freetown.

<sup>116</sup> INT18x, Youth organisation, Freetown.

<sup>117</sup> INT23x, Youth Organisation, Freetown.

<sup>118</sup> INT55, District Youth Chairman, Koidu.

<sup>119</sup> INT81, Youth organisation, Makeni.

<sup>120</sup> INT15, Section Chief, Freetown.

<sup>121</sup> INT70, Town Chief, Pujehun.

*the next generation. They bridge the gap between the ordinary people and the elders. Help build the community.*<sup>122</sup> Thus, concerned youth leaders improve and stabilise communal relations. All do this in an honorary capacity relying on their good rapport with youth, organisation and mediation skills. Some, however, also make it clear that you have to *'dip into your pockets to help here'*<sup>123</sup> and that it is often a matter of *'settling problems by paying the damages of their [youths'] crimes.'*<sup>124</sup> While this raises concerns regarding a functioning rule of law, it is important to understand that such informal conflict resolution keeps costs for youthful delinquents at a minimum, helping youths to avoid becoming indebted to their elders. In this regard a youth leader stated, *'The young ... embark on conflict resolution in the community. We are peacemakers. The adults solve conflicts but theirs is based on ... fines.'*<sup>125</sup> Another youth contends, *'... sometimes we settle [disputes] among ourselves as youths to avoid cost and fines.'*<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, *'settling problems'* for youths is seldom free. In some communities youths who have an income pay contributions to the organisations. These are then also used to pay the bail for their troublesome colleagues. In other cases, youth leaders take on these costs. This is more likely to be the case when youth leaders are successful businessmen essentially acting as patrons to their fellow youths. This highlights again the heterogeneity encompassed in a numerical youth definition. While youth leaders were adamant – as part of their legitimation – to label themselves as youth, one could argue that their socioeconomic and political status made them much more similar to elders in terms of social control and power. Problems arising from this are discussed further below.

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<sup>122</sup> SV78\_A, Koidu.

<sup>123</sup> INT41, Youth Serving Organisation, Freetown.

<sup>124</sup> INT14x, Youth Chairman, Freetown; INT18x, Youth organisation, Freetown; INT18x, Youth organisation, Freetown.

<sup>125</sup> INT71, Youth Leader, Pujehun.

<sup>126</sup> SV76\_Y, Koidu.

In many places requests for communal labour are now channelled through youth leaders and associations. Groups of youth repair roads, dig wells, do community farming, build latrines, community halls or school buildings. Miguel et al. show that the local organisation and production of these basic public goods has important ramifications for local economic development.<sup>127</sup> Eighty per cent of male youth and sixty-eight per cent of female youth surveyed stated that they had been involved in community labour. All youth respondents (but one) expressed positive or neutral sentiments towards these tasks with seventy-two per cent of males and sixty-four per cent of females regarding communal labour as *'the role of youth in the community'* (see Chapter 4, Figure 4). However, as a youth representative points out, it is also clear that the nature of communal labour has changed,

*'Road work, farming [and] community constructions ... are organised by authorities putting the youth into groups. In fact before the war youth were seen by their singular duty as errand boys, communal workers by authorities. Now youth are properly consulted, negotiated with, called to a meeting before they engage in communal work. It is no longer by force.'*<sup>128</sup>

The organisation of community labour varies according to the scope of the project and the level at which it takes place. Bi-weekly or monthly cleaning exercises are firmly incorporated in households' schedules, whereas larger-scale projects, such as road construction command more formal consultation and negotiation and are often remunerated. More difficult projects with a developmental aim are now also co-organised by the district councils. Unsurprisingly, consultation with youth in regard to community labour was highest where fairly strong youth organisation and representation was in place (see Table 5 and discussion in Chapter 7.3). In the fieldsites where youth participation was not encouraged, youth were generally not consulted with chiefs convening community labour in a predominantly top-down

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<sup>127</sup> Miguel, Glennerster & Jameel (2011), p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

manner. Thus, youth have been empowered regarding communal labour in three ways. First, and most importantly on a practical level youth now manage communal labour in three of the five chosen fieldsites. They have a say over which projects they carry out, when and how. Secondly, some projects are remunerated and create temporary employment for youth. In some cases communal labour, then, takes on the form of small-scale public works projects. Given the high un(der)employment rate, it is likely that these latter projects, which are seen positively in their income-generating capacity, influence the acceptance of communal labour more generally. Lastly and most importantly, by transforming communal labour from a duty of communal subjects towards the chief to a negotiated provision of public goods and services, youth can draw self-confidence and pride from their central role in community development.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, formal representation of youth is a major step towards democratising gerontocratic local governance institutions. Strongly supported by international NGOs and donors, elections for youth leaders have been organised across Sierra Leone at village, town, chiefdom, and district level.<sup>130</sup> According to the youth respondents, these youth chairmen (and in my sample they were all men, although some vice-chairladies existed) are supposed to form an apolitical, non-partisan

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<sup>129</sup> Differences in the organisation of communal labour and chiefs' level of control are discussed further in Chapter 7.3.

<sup>130</sup> All those within the youth age-bracket were qualified to vote at village/town level. Village/town chairmen came together to vote for chiefdom level representatives, these in turn elected the district youth chairmen. Up to now, elections for youth leaders have not taken place in a concerted effort across the whole of the country. This is one of the goals the National Youth Commission is suppose to realise though it still lacks adequate funding and capacity. So far, elections have been organised by chiefdom or by district in a collaborative effort of local institutions, such as the National Youth Commission, District Youth Commissions or local grass-roots youth organisations, with the financial and organisational support of various donors, such as the Worldbank, UNDP or KNSL/PYD. As discussed below this explains in part variations in youth empowerment and representational structure across fieldsites.

representation structure for youths on every tier of governance.<sup>131</sup> In many cases youth chairmen have similar tasks as youth organisations, that is, uniting youth,<sup>132</sup> sensitising the group on rights, health issues and non-violence,<sup>133</sup> organising and coordinating events and projects,<sup>134</sup> and attracting NGOs and external funding for youth projects.<sup>135</sup> Their most important function, however, is seen as acting as channels of information between authorities and youth.<sup>136</sup> Advocating youth's demands and opinions, they sit on established governance committees and take an active part in decision-making.<sup>137</sup> It is in this realm that youth can acquire actual power and negotiate its ideas and demands with established elites. Well-functioning youth representation, featuring youth leaders legitimated by the youth population and able to communicate youth's concerns as well as influence communal decisions accordingly, therefore, holds promises for structural change, while flawed and suppressed representation help to consolidate the status quo.

At this point it is worth noting a rural/urban difference emerging from the comparison of my own data with that collected by Enria in several neighbourhoods of central Freetown. The author finds that youth have created informal governance

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<sup>131</sup> INT73, NGO, Pujehun.

<sup>132</sup> INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun; INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT85, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT93, Youth organisation, Magburaka.

<sup>133</sup> INT55, District Youth Chairman, Koidu; INT79, District Youth Chairman, Makeni; INT71, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT85, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT93, Youth organisation, Magburaka.

<sup>134</sup> INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu; INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT62, BRA, Koidu; INT83, Youth organisation, Makeni; INT87, Assistance Secretary Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka.

<sup>135</sup> INT23x, Youth Organisation, Freetown; INT14x, Youth Chairman, Freetown int.; INT94, Youth leader, Magburaka.

<sup>136</sup> INT62, BRA, Koidu; INT80, District Youth Executive, Makeni; INT83, Youth organisation, Makeni.

<sup>137</sup> INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu; INT61, P.R.O. Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT62, BRA, Koidu; INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun; INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT93, Youth organisation, Magburaka; INT86, Vice Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT93, Youth organisation, Magburaka.

structures in response to the perceived exclusionary nature of the state.<sup>138</sup> These organise public works (the equivalent to communal labour), function as business and labour associations and provide basic safety nets. Importantly, these governance structures work in a highly and consciously autonomous manner from the rest of Freetown's governance institutions. The data collected for this study revealed a different pattern and ambition of youth. Youth wished to set up their representational structures as a way of accessing and influencing established modes of authority and governance. While they affirm their stance to represent youth as a unified, distinct societal group, their way to empowerment lies in integration into the larger and established institutional framework of authority and governance.

The majority of all survey and interview respondents regarded youth representation and participation as important. However, assessments of the level and quality of participation differed substantially across fieldwork locations and even in nearby places such as sections within one town. While eighty-eight per cent of youth respondents surveyed in Kailahun and eighty-five per cent in Magburaka felt that youth were represented in their community, a mere thirty-six per cent felt this way in Pujehun. Indeed, here fifty-five per cent stated that no youth representation existed. In Koidu half of the respondents reported functioning youth representation, while a third did not feel represented at all and twenty per cent claimed representation was heavily flawed. A similar picture emerged in Makeni (see Table 5, below).

A valid question therefore is which underlying factors may be influencing these differences between fieldsites. As no clear-cut or systematic patterns regarding this

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<sup>138</sup> Enria (2011), p. 81-83.

emerged from the data, I put forth several probable hypotheses. My main observation hereby is that each of the fieldsites featured a distinct mix of enabling and disabling factors regarding youth empowerment. A first factor is physical accessibility as seen from Freetown, the locus of power and policy discourses. Access is worst to Pujehun and best to Makeni and by extension its neighbouring town Magburaka. Kono can also be reached with an acceptable transportational effort. The exception to this rule would be Kailahun, which boasted effective youth representation but is furthest away from Freetown in my sample. Similarly, urbanity is more conducive to the spread of alternative ideas and the mobilisation of a separate social group, such as youth. Again, this would explain better youth representation in Makeni and Magburaka as well as to a certain extent in Koidu and its dearth in Pujehun. Kailahun falls out of the roster again. Thirdly, local diversity in terms of ethnic composition and place of origin could drive the influx of new ideas, such as youth empowerment, as well as matter for competition between societal groups. In this respect Koidu stands out as a migratory destination of youth from all over Sierra Leone. One would expect less social cohesion and thus more contestation around communal politics here than in a place like Pujehun firmly dominated by one ethnic group. Fourth, in Koidu and Kono District more generally, the stakes of communal control are also particularly high due to the constant struggle over mining rights and especially illicit mining, in which most youth are engaged. This conflictual environment is reflected in the stand-off regarding the management of communal labour between elders and youth in Koidu. Looking back at the wartime, the distinct imprint the presence of fighting forces left is a fifth plausible explanation for regional differences. Kailahun was a stronghold of the RUF over many years. The rebels' command structure featured relatively flat hierarchies while in the CDF-dominated south where Pujehun lies local, gerontocratic structures

persisted throughout the war. A sixth factor is the availability of funding and external intervention, which is also spread unevenly across Sierra Leone. Here again, Pujehun has lost out on attention. Lastly, individual initiative and perseverance on the side of (potential) youth leaders as well as flexibility and openness of individual chiefs obviously have a great impact on communal politics which are so distinctly shaped by personalities and personal networks. Here Kailahun town stands out with several young and open-minded chiefs among the respondents and a very vocal youth leader. Similarly, Magburaka had an exceptionally active youth leader. In Pujehun, in contrast, youth leaders did not put forth a distinctly self-confident stance and chiefs had a very conservative outlook. In sum, it can be said that it is broader factors coming together in a distinct local mix, which affect the differences between fieldsites with regards to youth representation and empowerment.

**Table 5: Youth Representation**

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: How is youth represented in the community?\**

	<b>Represented</b>	<b>Representation with flaws</b>	<b>Not Represented</b>	<b>Representation is a youth problem</b>
<b>Kailahun</b>	88	0	6	0
<b>Koidu</b>	50	20	30	10
<b>Pujehun</b>	36	9	55	0
<b>Makeni</b>	59	12	29	18
<b>Magburaka</b>	85	8	8	15
<b>ALL</b>	65	9	22	9

\* Answers in % of all 69 youth survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible; answers were grouped into the above categories.

Within communities the perceptions of youth and elders respondents regarding the access to decision-making bodies for youth and their effectiveness in these committees differed greatly. Taking a closer look at these regional and socio-generational variations reveals the many dimensions in which changes in the

relationship between generations are contested and negotiated. Moreover, it shows how youth have successfully carved out space to voice their needs and opinions, in many cases against considerable suspicion of and resistance from elders.

In Kailahun and Magburaka a largely collaborative picture of youth involvement in decision-making was painted by survey as well as interview respondents. In Kailahun elders and youth agreed that youth were represented in the various chiefly committees at section, town and chiefdom level.

*'The post-war situation has given rise to youth inclusion. This goes for the chiefdom as well. There is a youth representative in the Chief Committee meeting. ... Almost every decision that we make, we ask for a youth representative to be here. They even sit in on such [court] matters to learn. They witness the proceedings.'*<sup>139</sup>

While Kailahun District's Youth Chairman complained about ineffective youth representation in District Council meetings, he agreed that *'[i]n the Chief Committee the youth are represented. This space is given to us. We rotate in and out of taking part in meetings for decision-making. They make statements about us not only in terms of trouble but make use of us.'*<sup>140</sup> Similarly, respondents from Magburaka claimed to be represented through their youth leader who actively contributes in various committees. *'The youths are represented through the youth leader elected by us. He meets with all other authorities and government bodies and reports back to us.'*<sup>141</sup>

Having a youth representative, elected by the youth population and at liberty to contribute at stakeholder meetings, however, is far from the norm. Youth leaders in Koidu complained that youth representation was not only highly disproportionate to

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<sup>139</sup> INT30, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>140</sup> INT37, District Youth Chairman, Kailahun.

<sup>141</sup> SV160\_Y, Magburaka

actual youth population numbers but also, rather than being elected by the youths representatives are often *'hand-picked'* and *'appointed'* by chiefs. These representatives are *'dormant'* and more active engagement is discouraged.<sup>142</sup>

*'Yes, the youth chairman is part of community committees but we are underrepresented. Like if you have a decision-making body of fifty members with just a youth leader his voice is insignificant. ... Sometimes the chiefs appoint youth representatives that are dormant and know very little about youth activities. ... They most times handpick youth representation. The process of selection of youth representation is often biased in favour of the choice of the chiefs and politicians.'*<sup>143</sup>

The youthful population in Koidu as well as in other fieldsites concurred with this criticism, *'[v]ery few youth are allowed to represent the whole ... The majority of us are not actually represented.'*<sup>144</sup> Even in places like Magburaka, where the youth representative is taken more seriously he is *'surrounded by old men'*<sup>145</sup> and, therefore, easily outvoted as *'[i]f there is a controversy we go into vote and majority wins.'*<sup>146</sup>

Thus, in Koidu and Makeni, youth felt that they *'always force their way into these processes.'*<sup>147</sup> Displaying considerable activism and engagement, they demanded representation *'as a matter of right. So we were successful in educating the public through radio discussions; by this way we have forced our participation in these committees.'*<sup>148</sup> The government's policy focus on youth supports youth's claims as *'elders/chiefs do encourage youth participation through adhering to government policies ...'*<sup>149</sup>; *'They [the chiefs] don't like to be checked. So we are only on these*

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<sup>142</sup> INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu; INT61, P.R.O. Kono Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>143</sup> INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu.

<sup>144</sup> SV70\_Y, Koidu.

<sup>145</sup> INT87, Assistance Secretary Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka.

<sup>146</sup> INT84, Speaker, Makeni.

<sup>147</sup> INT61, P.R.O. Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>148</sup> INT80, District Youth Executive, Makeni.

<sup>149</sup> INT79, District Youth Chairman, Makeni.

*committees because the law says so.*<sup>150</sup> Elders not only try to direct who represents youth and whether and how much these people contribute but are claimed to display considerably opportunistic and corrupt strategies towards youth participation.

*'No youth representation. The elders don't involve us, we are not represented even where we have stipends to do the roads the elders eat all the money.'*<sup>151</sup>

*'Yes, the youths are represented but this is only limited to the time when the elders need our assistance after that we are not considered.'*<sup>152</sup>

In Pujehun, youth representation was highly limited at the time of fieldwork (September 2009); although elections for a district youth council were scheduled for late 2009.<sup>153</sup> Here youth representation was less perceived as a right of youth but a privilege at the discretion of the chiefs who closely control access to participation. As in Makeni and Koidu, youth criticised opportunistic behaviour of elders, stating that *'[t]hey only encourage us when there is work to be done'*<sup>154</sup> but *'[a]ny project that has to do with money no youth is invited/represented.'*<sup>155</sup> Moreover, *'[w]hen we go to attend meetings they don't allow us to talk'*<sup>156</sup> However, the criticism from Pujehun was fairly mild in comparison to the former two fieldsites and none of the respondents listed the lack of youth representation as a specific problem of the socio-generational group of youth, while this was the case in the other fieldsites where youth reported only

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<sup>150</sup> INT83, Youth organisation, Makeni.

<sup>151</sup> SV172\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>152</sup> SV175\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>153</sup> Several youth respondents from the survey pointed out that youth representation was only available in the youth party wings of the political parties and, thus, *'[i]t is only during political campaigns that youths are organised to undertake campaigning for political parties'* (SV117\_Y, Pujehun). Pointing to exactly this problem, a local NGO worker in Pujehun (INT73, NGO, Pujehun) explains the importance of non-partisan youth representation: *'Before this time, youths have been highly involved in politics. And before now there was no youth structure. The only structures that were here were the political party youth structures like the SLPP youth wing and the APC youth wing and we have decided to put up a non-partisan youth structure. And then the youth can feel empowered and stand on their own rather than be used by politicians as instruments of political violence.'*

<sup>154</sup> INT71, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Pujehun.

<sup>155</sup> SV122\_Y, Pujehun.

<sup>156</sup> INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun.

limited representation (see Table 5, above). The careful interpretation of this offered here is that the existence of youth representation and, thus, experience with it is needed to form opinions and grievances on this matter. While the lack of representation and participation resulted in critical assessments of chiefs and elders being too powerful in Pujehun, respondents did not necessarily make the connection to more equitable access to power resources. Thus, a greater awareness of the logic of more democratic representation seemed to be lacking.<sup>157</sup>

Connected to the issue of youth representation in established governance institutions is a more general debate on age and leadership. The majority of youth leaders believed that youth themselves were better suited for leadership positions, as they have '*faster brains*', '*are more energetic*' and have '*better education*', especially when it comes to new technologies.<sup>158</sup> Elders were seen as self-absorbed, selfish and corrupt with only one youth leader stating that older people were better suited for leadership positions in the community because of their experience.<sup>159</sup> Surprisingly, only a third of elders insisted that older people should lead, referring to their experience and cultural knowledge as well as tradition.<sup>160</sup> Another third actually pointed out the merits of younger people leading, listing examples of relatively young council members, headmen and chiefs,

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<sup>157</sup> The above findings resonate with the results from a nationally representative BBC survey taken before the 2007 elections. It finds that involvement in organised social and political activity varies considerably across Sierra Leone's districts. While noting particularly high levels of activity in Kailahun, the Freetown Area and Kono District, Pujehun had relatively low levels of activity (BBC (2007), p. 43).

<sup>158</sup> INT86, Vice Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT87, Assistance Secretary Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Magburaka; INT62, BRA, Koidu; INT74, Candidate Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT71, Chiefdom Youth Chairman, Pujehun; INT81, Youth organisation, Makeni.

<sup>159</sup> INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>160</sup> INT90, Section Chief, Magburaka; INT91, Section Chief, Magburaka; INT65, Town Chief, Pujehun; INT69, Speaker, Pujehun; INT56, Paramount Chief, Koidu; INT58, Speaker, Koidu; INT60, Speaker, Koidu.

*'It is not in all cases that older people are best suited for leadership positions as we have a lot of young chiefs these days and they are doing very well in terms of administering their towns and villages. Even myself I am the youngest court chairman ever in the history of the chiefdom although I cannot praise myself but people say I am doing a good job.'*<sup>161</sup>

And a Speaker in Makeni stated that *'even young people are better suited. Not old people. Most of my village headmen are young people. Even the old are now electing youths. It's not just for the old, leadership, but the young can act better and this is the age of democracy.'*<sup>162</sup> A caveat regarding these statements must be made. Who is young and who is old differed in the perception of youth and elders. While youth would like to see more persons in their twenties and thirties as community leaders, elders regarded those in their forties as young. Not coincidentally, the pitch for 'younger' leaders from the side of elders was mostly made by chiefs and elders in their forties. Nevertheless it is a good sign that a considerable number of high-ranking chiefs (Paramount Chief, Speaker, Court Chairmen) are relatively young (a topic discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.3).

Most interestingly, in the context of this dissertation, was the answer of one third of elders and youth interview respondents, respectively, favouring an age mix in leadership.<sup>163</sup> The two main arguments for this were, first, that the youth *'... have to work with the old and learn their experience before they take over ...'*<sup>164</sup> and, second, that youth and elders have different capabilities and knowledge and are, thus,

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<sup>161</sup> INT53, Court Chairman, Koidu.

<sup>162</sup> INT84, Speaker, Makeni. A youth leader in Freetown commented on this issue by stating: *'More youth are elected today. Most of the local authorities are youth. Q. How do elders see them? [The] first group is happy about change. They think the children should take over. The second think they are not qualified to hold power. With more sensitization the process will change gradually.'* (INT47, Former Youth Chairman, Freetown).

<sup>163</sup> INT94, Youth leader, Magburaka; INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT61, P.R.O. Kono Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT53, Court Chairman, Koidu; INT59, Section Chief, Koidu; INT92, Ceremonial Chief, Magburaka; INT76, Section Chief, Makeni; INT67, Youth leader, Pujehun; INT68, Youth Organisation, Pujehun; INT64, Paramount Chief, Pujehun; INT66, Speaker, Pujehun; INT70, Town Chief, Pujehun; INT83, Youth organisation, Makeni.

<sup>164</sup> INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu; INT94, Youth leader, Magburaka.

qualified for different leadership positions, *'Yes, in some areas of leadership old people are better suited but in some areas you need the youth. We rely much on the experience of the old people but with other leaderships we need young people because of their strength.'*<sup>165</sup> Chapter 5 explored different perceptions of intergenerational learning in detail. At this point it is important to note that youth, on the one hand, expressed a demand for strategic as well as operational leadership. Indeed many youth propagated a more egalitarian and individual notion of leadership selection, *'[i]t is a matter of assessing individual cases. Where you have a youth with the capability to lead he should be allowed to lead, the same goes for old people.'*<sup>166</sup> Many elders, on the other hand, held on to assessments of the capacities of socio-generational groups as a whole and conceded only that youth were superior with regards to their physical strength and, thus, appropriate for operational positions such as coordinating community labour or implementing development projects.<sup>167</sup>

Thus, in some Sierra Leonean communities youth effectively influence decision-making through elected representatives. Here, youth and elders also report higher numbers of youth in political (ward members, district councillors) and traditional leadership (chief) positions. These authorities, who are *'youth by age, elder by status'*,<sup>168</sup> as a twenty-five year old chief put it, are important as they are *'purely putting attention on youth'*<sup>169</sup> and are in positions with actual and direct power. In other places youth representation is still limited and closely guarded by chiefs and elders. As mentioned above, differences in youth representation impact on youth's negotiating power over communal labour.

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<sup>165</sup> INT66, Speaker, Pujehun

<sup>166</sup> INT80, District Youth Executive, Makeni

<sup>167</sup> INT66, Speaker, Pujehun; INT76, Section Chief, Makeni.

<sup>168</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>169</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

### ***Limitations of Change***

For all of the positive effects they have, it is important to realise that youth organisation and representation have serious limitations. From an economic standpoint, *[m]any organisations are weak. They seek support, but as long as they do not get any, they will pool [their own] money to do their activities. So they are self-help groups.*<sup>170</sup> Many local youth organisations have sprung up in reaction to the lack of governmental training facilities and formal employment opportunities. As such, they react to the basic problems, which the majority of Sierra Leoneans voice: endemic poverty and un(der)employment. While they are able to make a significant change in the lives of youth here and there, they are in no way equipped to provide large-scale economic change for youth. As has been laid out at the beginning of this chapter, it is the overall weakness of the Sierra Leonean labour market, which needs to be tackled by broad structural reforms.<sup>171</sup> However, it is not only a comprehensive micro- as well as macroeconomic strategy, which is needed to create mass employment for Sierra Leoneans more generally and youth in particular. Rather, economic advancement also crucially depends on political and social change, such as access to secure land tenure for youth, integration of youth in local decision-making and changes in customary law.

Youth creating employment for other youth is not only important for the obvious benefit of income generation but more so for the overall empowerment of the group vis-à-vis established networks of patron-client relations. However, taking a closer

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<sup>170</sup> INT10, Volunteer, Youth Officer, District Council, Kailahun. The TRC Report writes in this regard, *'NGOs serving youths, however, must overcome ... the perennial issue of resource shortages. Most NGOs access funds for programme implementation from donors outside of Sierra Leone. They have not been able to generate funds locally. Donor support in turn is inherently erratic. ... Most NGOs depend on the services of volunteers because they lack funds to pay their staff adequate remuneration. ... The youth NGO sector requires considerable further investment if it is to become a viable contributor to the social, political and economic development of the country's youths.'* (TRC (2004d), p. 359/360).

<sup>171</sup> UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010).

look at who youth chairmen and the executives of youth organisations are or where their main funding sources lie reveals that many youth leaders and their organisations are deeply enmeshed in local patronage politics and often propel only limited change to the power asymmetries between youth and elders.

While Kailahun's BRA displays a self-confident stance and actively seeks autonomy, many riders drive vehicles belonging to town elders and businessmen. A survey of bike riders in Bo town found that the majority of bike riders are dependent on the investments of local big men. Contrary to the Kailahun case, it finds that

*'this is ... why [the bike riders] see the profession as attractive: it gets them into contact with prominent people in society. Ninety percent of the employed riders claim that their employers are top businessmen, government, and non-governmental organisation workers in the township.'*<sup>172</sup>

Similarly, Fanthorpe and Maconachie report that Koidu's BRA is well embedded in patrimonial networks.<sup>173</sup> Interviews revealed that youth representatives in local governance bodies and chairmen of youth organisations are often members of chiefly ruling families.<sup>174</sup> Others openly stated that being a youth leader was a 'stepping stone' to positions in political parties or the state. Indeed in Koidu and Freetown, former youth leaders interviewed for this study have moved on to become ward committee members and local councillors. Moreover, in the post-conflict setting

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<sup>172</sup> Juana (2008), p. 33. One can hypothesise whether the reasons for these differences lie in wartime modalities. Kailahun was under RUF control during the war, governed by relatively more meritocratic and cooperative principles. Compared to Bo's BRA employing several hundred riders, Kailahun's is a small and tightly knit organisation encompassing almost exclusively ex-RUF combatants. Several riders specifically mentioned that the organisation functions so well because its members fought together in the war. While ex-combatants also dominate the bike riders' business in Bo, its members fought in the RUF, CDF and army. The latter two, who controlled Bo, were organised relatively more hierarchically and geared towards patrons. I thank Krijn Peters for this insight.

<sup>173</sup> Fanthorpe & Maconachie (2010).

<sup>174</sup> Ruling families hold the right to put forward candidates in competitive chieftaincy elections. While not all families supply chiefs at any given point in time, they form an elite stratum of Sierra Leone society.

former commanders control a hierarchy of former foot soldiers.<sup>175</sup> Finally, a local NGO staff criticised what Manning terms '*elders among youths*',<sup>176</sup> namely that '*... the leaders of these groups ... are usually forty or even fifty. ... There is a conflict of interest between being a youth leader and belonging to the group of adults or elders ...*'<sup>177</sup> Two important insights follow: first, the logic of power and resource distribution via patrons stays unchanged, with access to patrons determining access to resources. Second, power and resources ultimately lie with those who do not belong to the youth age group and/or who held elite positions before whether in the realm of business, traditional authority or during the war. This resonates with Fanthorpe and Maconachie's enquiry into the impact of youth organisations in Kono District. They find little '*to suggest that post-war associational life in Sierra Leone is departing from earlier ... [patron-client] modalities.*'<sup>178</sup> Moreover, they report that established elites are actively undermining the independence of youth organisations and representation by co-opting successful youth leaders into party politics and state institutions. This clearly shows the limits of societal transformation in Sierra Leonean communities regarding positions of power and the logic of resource distribution.

However, these observations also reveal the complexity of the status of youth leaders getting back to the question posed in Chapter 4, namely whether youth strive for a transformation of the logic of accountability and governance in Sierra Leone or merely wish to be part of the patrimonial game. The data collected for this study suggests that it comes down to individual cases. Some youth leaders 'use' the youth

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<sup>175</sup> Examples of this can be found in Boersch-Supan (2008). Several youth groups interviewed for this dissertation were also predominantly made up of ex-combatants and led by former commanders, such as the bike riders in Kailahun (INT11, BRA, Kailahun).

<sup>176</sup> Manning (2009), p. 3.

<sup>177</sup> CV39, GTZ officers, Freetown.

<sup>178</sup> Fanthorpe & Maconachie (2010), p. 262.

discourse and its new institutions to propel their own career and establish themselves as patrons.<sup>179</sup> As mentioned above, some youth leaders used their own funds to bail out troublesome youths and give handouts and occasional jobs to youth, also essentially acting as patrons. Nevertheless, the example of *'elders among youths'* exhibits societal change as well. Many youth leaders genuinely care for youth's concerns and make a real difference in youths' lives. Data for this dissertation observing the activities of several Freetown-based youth organisations between 2007-2010 shows the commitment of 'adult' youth leaders to a youth agenda. Beyond their personal profit margin, these local businessmen worked to diversify employment options for youth and give youth an independent social standing within the community. In this regard, the author followed a number of court cases lasting several years, in which youth leaders wrested pieces of community land from elders to establish a youth centre for social activities as well as land for gardening and fishing as further employment options. This long-term and genuinely youth-focused agenda stands in stark contrast to the ad hoc 'hire and drop' tactics with which many politicians abuse their role as patrons.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, many youth reported that an 'adult' leader can bridge relations between the young and old in communities more effectively.<sup>181</sup> With regards to youth leaders who join party/state politics voluntarily or are co-opted, it is also still too early to assess which kind of policies they propagate. A former youth leader from Freetown who is now a ward committee member, for instance, saw this path as a natural way of progressing his activities for youth. Claiming that he was too old to be a youth chairman, he stated that he continues to push for 'youth friendly' development in the ward committee.<sup>182</sup> Thus,

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<sup>179</sup> See also examples in Fanthorpe & Machonachie (2010).

<sup>180</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008).

<sup>181</sup> For similar findings, see Peters (2006), p. 141.

<sup>182</sup> INT47, Former Youth Chairman, Freetown.

from an optimistic point of view, ‘adult’ youth leaders may be a first step towards decreasing the age of those making decisions and holding power in Sierra Leonean communities, presenting a phenomenon worth further observation and research.<sup>183</sup>

The above also questions the effectiveness of youth projects funded by the international community. Choosing a specific target group in a desperately poor society has led to all age groups devising strategies to access this financial resource. This is in no way a novel insight but is well documented for other interventions focused on specific target groups. Examples include DDR programs exploited by civilians or refugee programs attracting local populations.<sup>184</sup> In this regard, Fanthorpe contends that post-war interventions create a *‘moral economy of needs assessments and benefit prioritisation that rural people are desperate to influence in their advantage.’*<sup>185</sup> Thus, the specific focus of agencies on an issue such as ‘youth’ leads to grievances, such as intergenerational power asymmetries, to be framed in a particular way and pushed to the fore. This does not entail that these grievances are not real but the focus limits the analysis of local power struggles to one or few perspectives and subsequently shapes local actors’ behaviour and strategies.

On the side of youths one ‘negative’ strategy is opportunism. Project funding is a lucrative source of income and organisations spring up in an effort to catch as much of it as possible. In the worst cases, funds are misappropriated, lining the pockets of the chairmen. When readily available external funding dries up and funding bodies insist on increasing self-sufficiency and self-sustainability many organisations

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<sup>183</sup> Young or ‘youth’ chiefs are a similar phenomenon, discussed in Chapter 7.3.

<sup>184</sup> For DDR exploitation, see HRW (2005), p. 50; Meek & Malan (2004), p. 19; Tesfamichael, Ball & Nenon (2004), p. 15; Pouligny (2004); Fitz-Gerald (2005). On refugees, see for example Crisp (2003), p. 6; Landau (2001), p. 18; Jamal (2000), p. 28; Whitaker (1999).

<sup>185</sup> Fanthorpe (2005), p. 40.

collapse as their members move on to other projects or opt for un(der)employment instead.<sup>186</sup> A prominent case in point is the waste management project ‘Klin Salone’ which operated in various neighbourhoods in Freetown. The project collapsed when several major donors started decreasing their funding to encourage self-sustainability. With less funding to go around, it emerged that the majority of the budget had vanished into pockets of the executives of the organisation.<sup>187</sup>

Adults and elders, in contrast, have found ways to circumvent the age restrictions on project funding and tap into available resources. An example is ‘youth service agencies’, which claim to ‘represent youth’ or ‘take activities to youth.’<sup>188</sup> Endorsed by the National Youth Policy as ‘outfit[s] managed by adults or co-managed by youths and adults that provide services for the development of young people or [are] specialised in activities that centre on youths’,<sup>189</sup> they provide local elites with the chance to use their economic and political connections to tap into government and international funds. This is all the more relevant as on a practical level many donors and NGOs are either obliged to or choose to work with established governance structures. This means that project planning and implementation as well as funding runs through the central or local government or traditional authorities. In this respect several youth respondents pointed to elders who ‘chew up every funds for the youths.’<sup>190</sup>

Youth organisations are an important feature of intergenerational negotiation and contestation in post-conflict Sierra Leone. They build awareness of rights and developmental issues, bolster youth participation and representation and provide

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<sup>186</sup> See also Kaarsholm (2006) for examples in South Africa.

<sup>187</sup> INT6, GTZ officer, Freetown.

<sup>188</sup> INT41, Youth serving organisation, Freetown.

<sup>189</sup> Sierra Leone National Youth Policy (2003).

<sup>190</sup> SV174\_Y, Makeni.

steps towards more independent livelihoods or simply keep idle youths off the street. Organising community labour and representing youth in government institutions they add self-confidence and pride to the label of 'youth' and establish the group as a necessary actor for local development.

However, in many cases leaders of youth organisations have an elite background or are on their way to establish themselves as patrons. This buttresses the age fault line and perpetuates the logic of patrimonialism. More importantly, it is adults and elders, who arguably have different goals and interests, who set the agendas of these organisations, command their resources and serve as the representatives of youth in community bodies. This limited change to local power structures is indirectly and directly fostered by international interventions. In a resource-starved environment such as Sierra Leone any path to resources receives overwhelming attention, influencing and creating strategies and behaviour. Moreover, too often established elites who are easily identifiable, speak English and have governmental connections, are chosen as contacts through which resources are channelled. This reinforces patrons' positions blocking effective changes towards more egalitarian and democratic distributions of power. Thus, target-group focused projects need to take into account how their definition of a target group will influence local strategies and must carefully choose those whom they channel project money through.

## 6.4 ‘Behind every ‘youngmen’ trouble is a group of elders.’ Violence and unemployment in Sierra Leone

Powerful elders have long instrumentalised young men in intra-elite struggles in Sierra Leone. The habit of exploiting youth’s physical strength and dependence on patrons to violently pursue conflicts between ruling houses or individual traditional leaders, was easily transferred to the realm of party and state politics following independence.<sup>191</sup> Sierra Leone has commonly been hailed as a peacebuilding success with low levels of post-conflict violence and crime. However, developments since 2006 show that the shock of the civil war may be wearing off with patterns of political violence re-emerging and intensifying with every election.<sup>192</sup> Focusing on processes of violent mobilisation in the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, Christensen and Utas establish a clear continuity in the political use of violence between pre-war and post-war Sierra Leone:

*‘The military violence that the civil war brought about was, thus, the natural continuation of pre-war political violence. And, as we show ... the offshoot of civil war violence in the post-war democratic election campaign is the sustained logic of political youth violence, albeit in democratic guise.’<sup>193</sup>*

Their findings resonate with those of Waldock who analyses several instances of political violence during 2009, concluding that intra-elite power-struggles account for much of the violent mobilisation of youth by politicians and local leaders.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Barrows (1976).

<sup>192</sup> Indeed local and international observers are expecting significantly higher levels of violence to surround the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections. Written in late 2011 and early 2012, this dissertation can only partially integrate these events into its analysis.

<sup>193</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008), p. 518.

<sup>194</sup> Waldock (2010).

Post-conflict political violence in itself was not a systematic focus of the interviews and surveys conducted for this dissertation. However, almost a quarter of all adult and youth survey respondents mentioned intra-elite and inter-party conflicts when asked which disputes take place in their community (see Chapter 7.3, Figure 11). The majority of this subset of respondents even listed these as the most prevalent. Moreover, many specifically referred to the connection between youth and political violence in Sierra Leone. Thus, drawing on this limited, more indirect data and the recent findings of other researchers, the preceding section on the emancipation of youth needs to be qualified by the continued exploitation of youths for political purposes.<sup>195</sup> This manipulation goes hand in hand with youth's overall precarious economic situation and problematic state-society relations.

Talking about the roles of youth in the community, the Vice Chairman of the Kono Youth Coalition stated,

*'The positive role of the youth is their engagement in civil society activism, working with NGOs. They play the role of advocates. Also they serve as the human resource man power in the community, agriculture, mining, etc., and they are in the majority. Most youth also serve their families as breadwinners. [Their] negative roles: during political campaigns they serve as thugs. The politicians use them a lot in campaign period.'*<sup>196</sup>

Similarly, a local NGO worker in Pujehun listed a few recent incidents of youth involvement in political violence. His words reflect a subtly ambiguous assessment of youth which often emerged in interview and survey answers. Namely, that youth are

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<sup>195</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008); Waldock (2010); Enria (2011). It is important to reiterate that these authors solely or predominantly conducted their fieldwork in Freetown. While a disproportionate number of (unemployed) youth live in Freetown and the capital surely is the ultimate locus for political rivalry, the data for this study was collected in semi-urban and rural locations. As such, respondent's answers did not reflect a similarly politicised and radical stance as those presented by the above mentioned authors. Moreover, political disputes surrounding local and chieftaincy politics clearly moved to the fore in the provinces.

<sup>196</sup> INT63, Vice Chairlady Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

simultaneously active perpetrators and ‘used’ victims when it comes to political violence.<sup>197</sup>

*‘Youths have been the perpetrators of political violence. They have been used to cause all political violence. For example in the local council bi-elections in one of the wards in Segbwema chiefdom (Ward 323); the youths were highly involved in this. In another example, in Bo after elections, and even in Freetown when the SLPP party office was stormed by the youths. This violence can never be undertaken by elders but [only by] youths.’<sup>198</sup>*

The District Youth Chairman of Kailahun pointed out that it is not only national and party politics in which youth are instrumentalised but that local rivalries between ruling families still play a significant role in violent outbursts,

*‘Still a number of youth are misused by elderly. In the gone elections the division between youths was a problem. ...’*

*Q. With elderly using youth do you mean only politicians?*

*‘It is mostly politicians. But non-politicians as well. They initiate local politics. It is the old time problem of chief elections. Those who did not win keep ideas of this loss in their family. The problem is that they do not say the truth, are not clear here. So then there is violence.’<sup>199</sup>*

An adult concurs, *‘There is a lot of dispute around politics in this town. We have the Banyas, Ngobehs and Bundes who dispute what their leadership.’<sup>200</sup>*

The intimate connection between politics and violence becomes most pronounced in electoral moments.<sup>201</sup> A volunteer to the Youth Officer at the Kailahun District Council contended that *‘[f]ighting is minor. Only during political campaigns. ... It starts with very minor arguments, just one group singing “we win, we win”, or somebody with the wrong colours shows up.’<sup>202</sup>* A group of interviewed bike riders echoed this view, saying that *‘[t]here are normally tensions when politicians are around. But outside of*

<sup>197</sup> This will be discussed below in more detail. See Christensen & Utas (2008) for a discussion on the agency youth can develop within the ‘*politricks*’ of Sierra Leonean political competition and violence.

<sup>198</sup> INT73, NGO, Pujehun.

<sup>199</sup> INT37, District Youth Chairman, Kailahun.

<sup>200</sup> SV16\_A, Kailahun.

<sup>201</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008), p. 517.

<sup>202</sup> INT10, Volunteer, Youth Officer, District Council, Kailahun.

*elections not.*<sup>203</sup> In the surveys, youth stated that, *[a]part from elections, we are peaceful. It is only election periods when youth are divided, we have a lot of disputes.*<sup>204</sup>

Respondents agreed that it is the elites who hold the key to violence: *‘Yes, the politicians have the power to stop political violence but they are influencing it. For me the politicians encourage political violence. This is the only way some politicians feel they can attain their goal. Especially those who feel they are not popular.’*<sup>205</sup> A local politician from Pujehun District concurs *Q. Do you think politicians have the power to stop political violence? ‘Of course because we control our people, we are telling them what to do. So if we tell them that our approach as a politician is non-violence they will resist.’*<sup>206</sup> Obviously, politicians need to actually call for non-violence rather than strategically use their power over youths to instrumentalise violence.

Political violence conducted by youth but orchestrated by elites, presents a challenge to youth emancipation in two ways. First, violently charged partisan politics threaten the unity of youth as a societal group.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, several youth leaders saw political division as

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<sup>203</sup> INT17, BRA, Kailahun.

<sup>204</sup> SV70\_Y, Koidu. In December 2010, the youth wings of all major political parties (SLPP, APC, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the People’s Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), with technical and financial support from UNIPSIL and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, established the ‘All Political Parties Youth Association’. The goal of the Association is to prevent political violence among youths and to foster greater cooperation among youths with diverse political backgrounds.

<sup>205</sup> INT73, NGO, Pujehun.

<sup>206</sup> INT73, NGO, Pujehun.

<sup>207</sup> In this regard Miguel, Glennerster & Jameel ((2011), p. 38) note the exceptional effects of ethnicity in Sierra Leone. They find that ethnic identity strongly determines choice of residence/patterns of migration as well as voting behaviour. Both major parties are ethnically and thus in the Sierra Leonean context regionally based. However, ethnicity was no leading factor in the civil war. Moreover, the researchers find that high inter-ethnic collaboration (even across party lines) plays a crucial role in the provision of local public goods. The authors suggest that interethnic collaboration trumping political division in non-election times stems from the common bonds of language (Krio as the lingua franca, which is distinct from either Temne or Mende, the two major ethnic groups) and national identity (this, ironically, forged against the common enemy of the Temne and Mende, the Krio). Additionally, high rates of intermarriage seem to drive ethnic cooperation.

*'the biggest challenge existing between the youths in the country. Normally, you see the youths together but when it is election time they are divided. I will give you an example currently it is difficult to talk about the SLPP here. Even with the selection of the chairman for the youth commission is a difficult thing to do because politics has a role to play. So we are divided by political party interests.'*<sup>208</sup>

Similar voices came from other parts of the country, a member of a youth organisation in Koidu stated that *'At certain levels they are organised but at a larger extent they are divided along political lines.'*<sup>209</sup> In the eyes of youth leaders, political divisions threaten the unity of the societal group they aim to represent and strengthen. Party politics endanger the cohesiveness with which youth could act as a pressure group on politicians and local authorities. For this reason, youth leaders in Pujehun, Koidu and Makeni called for politically neutral structures of youth representation. *'How the youth can make themselves passive in politics is the challenge for the youth'*,<sup>210</sup> a Makeni youth leader stated. The Chairman of a Pujehun youth organisation appealed to youth to *'avoid too much of political involvement, forget about partisan politics and undertake skills training. ... youths should stay out of partisan politics and only partake by voting.'*<sup>211</sup>

Second, political violence reinforces the patrimonial logic and thus short-term tit-for-tats between youth and elites rather than a long-term institutionalised relationship in which youth as citizens voice their needs and preferences to be answered by policy outcomes via responsive elites. Youth are, thus, only in the electoral moment perceived as a vital constituency and abused as a power tool to mobilise further

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<sup>208</sup> INT80, District Youth Executive, Makeni.

<sup>209</sup> INT54, Youth organisation, Koidu.

<sup>210</sup> INT83, Youth organisation, Makeni.

<sup>211</sup> INT68, Youth Organisation, Pujehun.

political support. The precariousness of youth's status is, thus, partially rooted in the specific state-society relations permeated by clientelistic structures.

As has been outlined above in sketching pre-colonial as well as colonial power relations in Sierra Leone and Sub-Saharan Africa, more generally, patronage, especially in the form of patron-client relationships has been central to the construction and maintenance of political power for a long time. Broadly understood, patronage simply refers to the transfer of resources, such as jobs, cash or favours, in exchange for support between actors of unequal *'wealth, status, or influence.'*<sup>212</sup> Patron-client relations are one specific form of patronage characterised by a highly personalised *'exchange relationship between unequals.'*<sup>213</sup> They make up vertical networks of personal dependence along which vertical mobility is expected to take place. In this respect, Berman contends that colonial rule established *'patron/client relations as not only the fundamental mode of access to the state and its resources, but also, as in pre-colonial society, the fundamental relationship between ordinary people and those with wealth and power.'*<sup>214</sup> As Mustapha and Whitfield observe, neopatrimonialism, the customs and practices of patrimonial rule co-existing with and suffusing the rational legal institutions of the state, are a key feature of contemporary Sub-Saharan African states.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Lemarchand (1972), p. 69. Cheeseman ((2006), p, 38) emphasises that patronage does not only run through individuals but *'may be distributed through political parties and general government expenditure policy as well as by local patrons. Furthermore, patronage may be received by regions and organizations, as well as by individual clients.'*

<sup>213</sup> Clapham (1982a).

<sup>214</sup> Berman (1998), p. 316.

<sup>215</sup> Mustapha and Whitfield (2010a), p. 8. A whole body of academic literature analyses African politics and political economy putting clientelism at its core. Central works include Bayart (1993); Fatton (1992); Chabal & Daloz (1999); Joseph (1987); Reno (1995). A detailed review of the literature and a discussion of key concepts can be found in Chapter 2 of Bratton & van de Walle (1997).

Reviewing the intersection of patronage and corruption in post-conflict Sierra Leone, Labonte uses the term *'elite capture'* to characterise the mix of prebendalism and patronage<sup>216</sup> pursued by the Sierra Leonean national and local elite.<sup>217</sup> The author finds that *'[e]lites routinely utilize public resources both to gain political support and to punish uncooperative elements in society, perpetuating deep marginalization and social instability within rural communities.'*<sup>218</sup> This is done by the

*'... use of public goods for private gains; community resource theft; falsifying financial accounts, over- or under-reporting statistics related to tax revenue collection, under-performance by contractors for services; use of low-quality materials; partial or biased selection of beneficiaries; exclusion of specific community members or groups from receiving benefits or social goods.'*<sup>219</sup>

Importantly, elite perceptions and attitudes are deeply embedded in the larger logic of clientelism as elites may perceive it as their 'right' to engage in elite capture: they invest time and resources in community affairs, thus, they should benefit as a result. In this respect, post-conflict Sierra Leone with its focus on the electoral process has seen a surge in patronage strategies as well as high levels of prebendalism, confirming to some extent Van de Walle's predictions regarding the changes of neopatrimonialism under progressing democratisation.<sup>220</sup> One of the most blatant examples for this has been the daily cash handouts high ranking politicians have come to give out immediately preceding elections. In 2007, Solomon Berewa went so far as to let his staff court long lines of clients at his Freetown residence.<sup>221</sup> Despite its asymmetrical structure, it is important to realise that patronage politics and the

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<sup>216</sup> To recap: Prebendalism is a highly personalistic form of elite clientelism usually located in the executive. Here individuals are given a public office to gain personal access to state resources. With patronage, on the other hand, individuals aim to gain political support by using state resources to provide jobs and services for political clients.

<sup>217</sup> The author writes, *'[e]lite capture occurs when elites control, shape, or manipulate decision-making processes or institutions in ways that serve their self-interests and priorities, typically resulting in personal gain at the expense of non-elites and local communities.'* (Labonte (2011), p. 91).

<sup>218</sup> Labonte (2011), p. 93.

<sup>219</sup> Labonte (2011), p. 109.

<sup>220</sup> Van de Walle (2007); (2012).

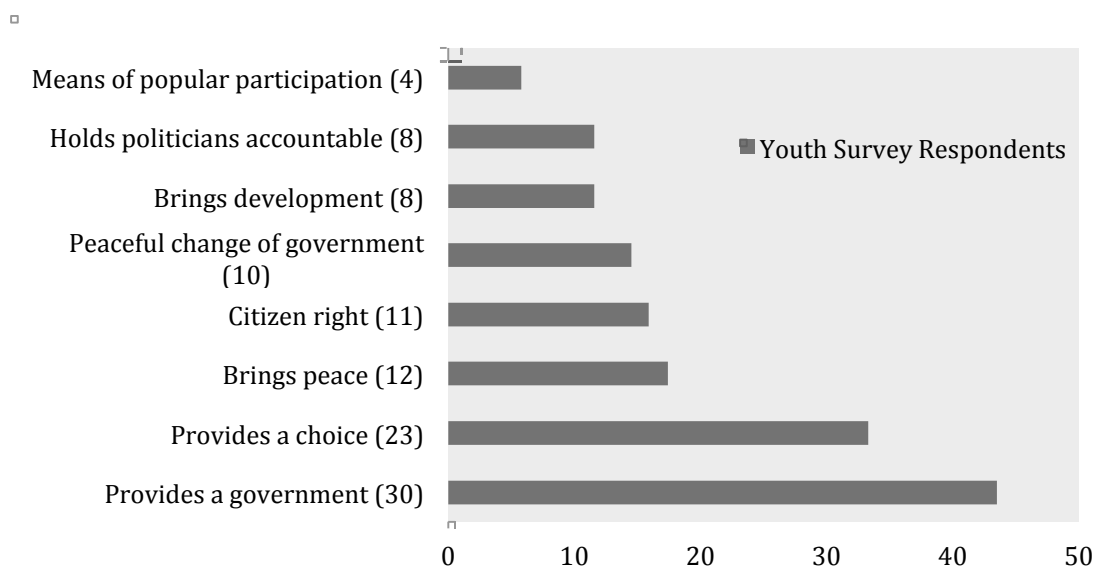
<sup>221</sup> Kandeh (2008).

resulting competing logics of accountability are not simply extended from above but are also demanded and contested from below.<sup>222</sup> Non-elites, therefore, reinforce patrons' power when they internalise the norms and principles of clientelism and fail to question the exercise of elite power.<sup>223</sup>

For many Sierra Leoneans, especially in rural areas, interactions with the state, and more specifically with the elite dominating state institutions, are foremost in the informal realm of clientelism rather than an exchange with formal governance structures. Thus, patronage as state-society relations in practice, and especially the memory of exclusionary politics of the past, shape the image of the state in the minds of youths, influencing the claims they make on it. As neopatrimonialism meshes formal and informal practices, youth's attitude towards the state reflected in itself a tension between formal and informal processes (see Figure 7 & Figure 8, below).

### Figure 7: Importance of Elections

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: 'What is the importance of elections?'*\*



\* number of respondents in (); answers in % of all 69 youth survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

<sup>222</sup> Smith (2006); Cheeseman (2006), p. 41.

<sup>223</sup> Labonte (2011), p. 109.

Participation among youth has been consistently high in all post-war elections.<sup>224</sup> Showing a firm belief in formal institutions, the importance of elections was very much couched in an emancipated language of rights, democracy and accountability. *'[Elections are] important because it shows that I am a citizen of this country'*, one youth stated.<sup>225</sup> At the same time, respondents emphasised that *'... nobody can impose himself on the people but elections are the people's choice.'*<sup>226</sup> Moreover, respondents used a normative language of accountability in saying that elections ensure that *'bad'* leaders can be voted out of government and be replaced by *'good'* ones. In this regard, twenty per cent of respondents highlighted that elections provided a peaceful mechanism to change government. Despite political violence surrounding elections throughout Sierra Leone's post-colonial history, the same number saw peace as a direct outcome of elections. Thus, elections are positively valued by youth, not only for the mechanism and outcome they provide but also as a privilege open to them as citizens in an otherwise confined political environment.<sup>227</sup> At the same time it is exactly this political institution that is captured by patronage practice as well as being intimately linked to violence.

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<sup>224</sup> This echoes a more general regional and global trend of growing and high interest in politics among youth in low-income countries (WDR (2007), p. 162). A survey by the BBC in Sierra Leone in 2007 found that 90 per cent of its respondents across age groups placed a high value on the importance of voting (BBC (2007), p. 33/34).

<sup>225</sup> SV158\_Y, Magburaka.

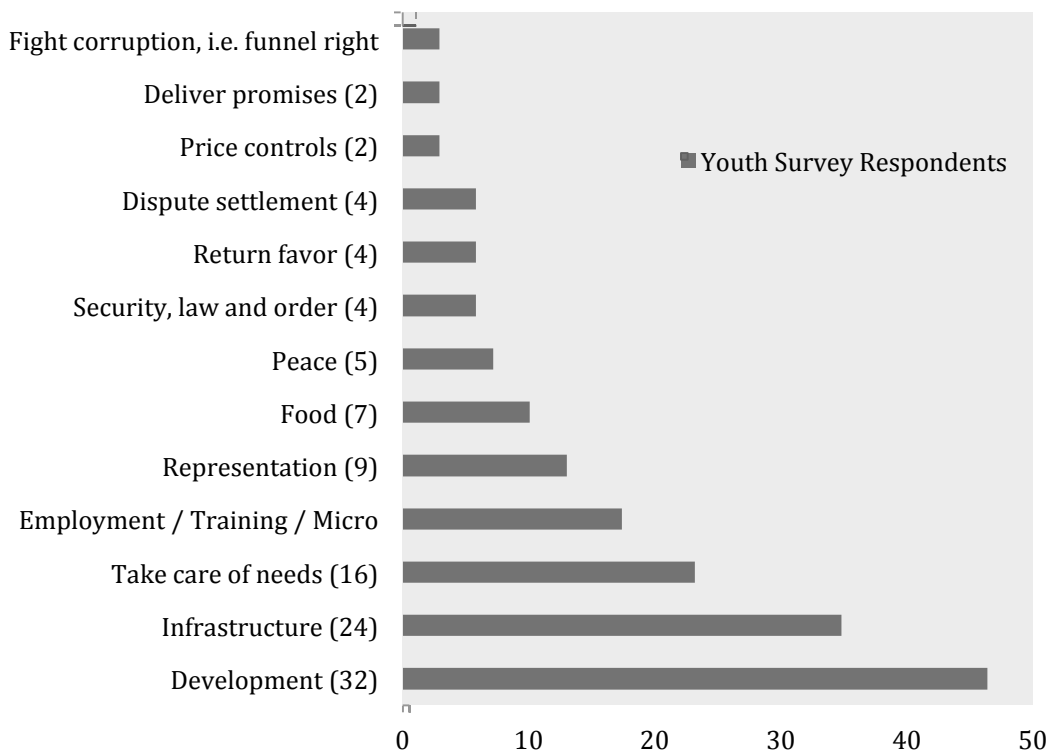
<sup>226</sup> SV177\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>227</sup> This positive connotation seemed to hold irrespective of the lack of actual political outcomes associated with both parties. Enria (2011) confirms this observation for youth from Freetown.

**Figure 8: Responsibility of Elected**

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: 'What is the responsibility of elected officials?'*<sup>\*</sup>

□



<sup>\*</sup> number of respondents in (); answers in % of all 69 youth survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

Youth show an awareness of this, not only in their explicit mentioning of the connection between elections and violence but more so when displaying a very personalised idea of the responsibilities of elected officials as individuals and the state as a whole (see Figure 8, above).<sup>228</sup> Asked what the responsibilities of elected officials were, several respondents openly stated that *'he/she [the elected] should be in a position to return my favours with generosity since I voted for him/her'*,<sup>229</sup> demanding

<sup>228</sup> The politicisation of youth, especially in Freetown, and their critical engagement in the national political discourse has occupied several researchers observing Sierra Leone. Especially the medium of musical lyrics has been drawn on by youth to voice their resentment towards the corrupt political elite and the continued marginalisation of youth as well as communicate their differing ideas of morals, norms and values in comparison to older generations (Shepler (2010)). Most pronounced, music has been used during election times to communicate political criticism as well as party affiliation (Christiansen & Utas (2008); Wai (2008); Zack-Williams (2008b); Abdullah (2009); Shepler (2010)).

<sup>229</sup> SV16\_Y, Kailahun.

personalised benefits such as *'paying my school fees.'*<sup>230</sup> While the majority formulated their requests more generally, listing physical and social infrastructure under the banner of *'development'*, almost a quarter of respondents couched these requests in a *'needs'* rhetoric, assigning the state agents a highly paternal role.<sup>231</sup> These needs not only included arguably legitimate claims on a state such as physical and social infrastructure provision but also requests to provide food (ten per cent) and (youth) employment (seventeen per cent), *'They have the major responsibility of creating job facilities by opening factories and provide for our needs: light, water, health, etc.'*<sup>232</sup> Others requested *'projects that will create employment'*<sup>233</sup> and *'finance [for ...] our business through political party.'*<sup>234</sup>

Thus, on the one hand, youth negatively comment on the state's agents, accusing them of using youth for violence and only showing an interest in this constituency when elections are close, on the other hand they envision the state and its representatives as providers of their daily needs. It is likely that a mixture of the democratic logic with the patrimonial logic prevails without much contradiction in the minds of youth, reflecting the hybrid reality of the state.<sup>235</sup> Smith suggests that the intertwining of the ideals of bureaucratic transparency and accountability with the moral economy of reciprocal patron-clientelism has produced a profound

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<sup>230</sup> SV169\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>231</sup> This resonates with Hayward and Kandeh's (1987) study on pre-war elections in Sierra Leone. They report that constituents viewed politicians as their agents whose job it was to channel material benefits, such as jobs, loans or cash, to their local community. Similarly, the above-mentioned BBC survey found that across all districts basic public goods and in particular education, water and electricity appear within the top five most mentioned political priorities. The survey also notes that across age and gender respondents shared these political priorities (BBC (2007), p. 24-29).

<sup>232</sup> SV86\_Y, Koidu.

<sup>233</sup> SV119\_Y, Pujehun.

<sup>234</sup> SV117\_Y, Pujehun.

<sup>235</sup> A similar 'love-hate' relationship surrounds chiefs who are criticised for authoritarian modes of governance and social control while expected to support the local population in private as well as public matters.

ambivalence on the part of common people.<sup>236</sup> This also means that youth negotiates its status as a group mainly 'horizontally' by drawing on the support and backing of its peeps. Where youth organisations provide gainful employment and hence financial independent as well as youth representation gives the concerns of youth an effective voice, horizontal ties are also crucial for individual social ascent and mobility. However, the majority of individuals still also aims to create vertical ties with patrons to access such resources as education and jobs and gain entry to positions of political influence. These vertical networks then stand in tension with the horizontal project of uniting youth as a viable societal force and are, as the data shows, at the same time contested and criticised as drawn upon and demanded.

Moreover, it is important not to forget youth's agency in this regard. Several authors suggest that youth are not only victims of exploitation but have learned to play the game of '*politricks*'<sup>237</sup> to their advantage as well. Enria finds that youth mirror the securitised discourse on youth and violence by using the threat of violence to express the urgency of their needs. The author quotes an ex-rebel, '*[t]he government has to do great things for us, or there is going to be another war ... There will be great violence in 2012 [an election year].*'<sup>238</sup> Both studies contend, however, that in most cases patrons have considerably more leverage and only few youths manage to build lasting and profitable patrimonial connections.

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<sup>236</sup> Smith (2006), p. 129; 143. Drawing on data from his fieldwork, he finds that Nigerians '*juggle two seemingly irreconcilable idioms of accountability*' when criticising corrupt behaviour while cultivating patron-client relationships for personal gains. Youth's strong belief in the state as the solution for their problems may well also be based on the fact that Sierra Leone, as many other African countries, lacks a strong private sector, which could provide formal employment. The concentration of power and resources within the state arena directs attention away from alternative routes to economic development and, therefore, an emancipation of youth from state actors and their requests of violence.

<sup>237</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008), p. 532.

<sup>238</sup> Enria (2011), p. 89.

The Sierra Leonean state presents itself in youths' lives predominantly through the informal practices of its agents. Patronage and political violence create an ambivalent attitude of youth towards the state, challenging youths' emancipation as individual actors and a societal force as a whole. Both of the above points raise the question of the underlying causes for youth's involvement in political violence. Explanations for the availability of youth for violent conduct usually hinge on the group's precarious socio-economic position.

As touched upon in the introduction to this chapter, the policy literature draws a broad link between unemployment and the risk of conflict,<sup>239</sup> reflected subsequently in post-conflict skills training and employment projects being placed in an emergency and security framework.<sup>240</sup> The proposed logic is that the unemployed have little to lose by perpetrating violence while gainful employment drives up an individual's opportunity costs.<sup>241</sup> In the meantime, barred social mobility stores up frustration, as a UNDP official explains,

*'... the youth was one of the causes of conflict. Why the youth? Because the majority of them are frustrated, because they cannot access any opportunity for education, employment, land, decision-making, to develop their own family ... That frustrated youth is easily used by the means of conflict. ... Youth is seen as a potential threat for the stability of this country.'*<sup>242</sup>

In her interviews with UN officials working on peacebuilding projects in Sierra Leone, Enria, thus, finds that *'unemployed youth are ... collectively portrayed as "ticking bombs" ... as victims of poverty and idleness whose frustration makes them inherently prone to violence.'*<sup>243</sup> This portrayal has important ramifications for the language surrounding youth policy. Given the dominance of international actors in the policy

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<sup>239</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 2; Sierra Express Media (2012e).

<sup>240</sup> UN PBC SL (2011).

<sup>241</sup> Collier & Hoeffler (2000).

<sup>242</sup> UNDP official, quoted in Enria (2011), p. 60.

<sup>243</sup> Enria (2011), p. 60.

landscape it has driven a broader political and societal discourse on youth as a security threat. Indeed, the government together with the Peacebuilding Commission list youth (unemployment) as one of the three *'main risks to peace consolidation.'*<sup>244</sup> Published during the 2007 elections, a press release brings together international and national voices shaping this discourse,

*'[Already in 2004] Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended, "youth questions be viewed as a national emergency." [... A] UN Secretary General report in May 2007 said overall poor living conditions along with "high rates of youth unemployment... remain key threats to the country's fragile stability. [... While the APC was saying that] "the youth problem has become chronic with a potential for explosion" [... the] SLPP party manifesto calls youth issues "a human development and security challenge that must be given appropriate attention to help the country consolidate peace [...]"*<sup>245</sup>

Drawing on this language, local NGOs, youth groups and even youth themselves expressed a connection between unemployment and violence in the interviews. The Youth Chairman for Kono District states that, *'[u]nemployment is the biggest challenge the young people are faced with. Poverty and illiteracy are also key challenges. It is because of unemployment youths are used as thugs by politicians.'*<sup>246</sup> His colleague from Pujehun specifies, *'[t]he youths are highly politically minded because most of them do not have something to do. They are always fighting for their politicians which help them get jobs but they are not trained and qualified.'*<sup>247</sup> This is in line with what youth reflect on themselves, namely that it is their lack of skills and education and, more importantly, gainful employment that drives many to take part in political violence,

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<sup>244</sup> UN PBC SL (2011).

<sup>245</sup> IRIN (2007b). In this regard the quote provided from President Koroma in Chapter 6.2 shows a refreshing change of tone. However, in how far this will lead to a substantial change in the overall youth discourse, especially during an election year, is doubtful. For media coverage on youth as a threat to development and security, see Sierra Express Media (2010a); (2011); (2012b); (2012e).

<sup>246</sup> INT55, District Youth Chairman, Koidu.

<sup>247</sup> INT75, Elected Officer, District Council, Pujehun.

*'Q. What is the biggest problem for youth?*

*1) Lack of employment*

*2) Financial constraint*

*3) Youth concentrated in political activities. They fool us, give us drinks then we cause problems.*

*4) Ignorance, no education*

*5) Not empowered. They talk about women's rights everywhere but they do not talk about youth rights.*

*The most needed is employment. Since we are not empowered we are used. If we were engaged we would not take part in political activities.'*<sup>248</sup>

In a previous study, focusing on the integration of former RUF-combatants, I have highlighted both sides of this coin, a nexus between economic engagement, integration and ultimately peacebuilding and the danger stemming especially from unemployed ex-combatants, skilled in the perpetration of violence.<sup>249</sup> Respondents from several communities agreed that employment is the most important need of youth in general and ex-combatants in particular. Training and employment provision to ex-combatants was seen as particularly important to stabilise the peace and reduce the crime rate,

*'[We need to] strengthen their integration by offering occupation and training.'*

*'Just basic training. What do they say, "The idle brain brings destruction".'*

*'Why we need to assist them is that they are disgruntled. They have done bad, did atrocities.'*

*'Now they do not have the means to support their life. To keep the peace in the community, we must assist them.'*<sup>250</sup>

*'It would 'kol' down their temper and regulate their behaviour if they had something to do, something to earn money.'*

*'Since the war has ended, they have had no opportunities and at the same time they threaten us. A job will eradicate thieving. Because now they are idle, that is why they do stealing and threatening.'*<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> INT11, BRA, Kailahun.

<sup>249</sup> Boersch-Supan (2008).

<sup>250</sup> INT21x, Focus Group, Community Males, Freetown, emphasis added.

<sup>251</sup> INT35x, Focus Group, Community Females, Freetown. 'Kol' is the Krio term for 'cool' or 'calm'.

Ex-Combatants themselves also voiced unemployment as their most pressing concern. Like the members of the community quoted above they linked idleness to crime and violence,

*'[w]hen someone is not eating, there is no job, he will think differently. I don't blame the RUF for fighting back then. The idle mind is the devil's workshop. Most are idle now. They do nothing. Then, what they think about is causing trouble, stealing, fighting, doing drugs.'*<sup>252</sup>

However, it would be stretching a constructivist argument on the influence of international intervention too far to suggest that the notion of a link between unemployment and conflict is entirely externally driven. Importantly, the post-conflict discourse is also rooted in Sierra Leone's historical experience with the violent capability of frustrated youths. Indeed, as Chapter 2 has shown blocked social mobility and lack of education and employment opportunities emerge as a root cause of the civil war.<sup>253</sup> Christensen and Utas, thus, observe that the 'crisis of youth' is extending itself into the post-war society.<sup>254</sup> In this respect, the answers to the survey question *'What problems does youth face in this community?'* paint an all-too familiar picture (see Figure 8, below), below).

*'We now live in peace after the war but things are actually difficult for us. We can hardly send our children to school. Our businesses are no longer helpful for us. Everything is difficult for us, it is difficult to get food on the table to eat and prices for commodities are high and this is a major problem for us who are poor.'*<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> INT52x, Ex-combatant, Freetown. More importantly, former rebel fighters saw employment as being potentially beneficial for the community as a whole driving social acceptance. Community people affirmed that contributions to the community are fostering integration (INT14x, Youth Chairman, Freetown; INT27x, Focus Group, Freetown).

<sup>253</sup> Richards (1996); Peters (2011); Keen (2005); Abdullah (2004).

<sup>254</sup> Christensen & Utas (2008), p. 523.

<sup>255</sup> SV128\_Y, Makeni.

*'Unemployment is a major problem here. ... There is also the problem of illiteracy, especially for us the school leavers, we need to go back to learning institutions like adult education schools.'*<sup>256</sup>

*'No job facility; no support for agricultural activities even when labour is available [it is] plenty labour for small money.'*<sup>257</sup>

*'The biggest challenge is lack of job. There are no job facilities. Very few youths are employed and they can't adequately provide for their families and the unemployed youth.'*<sup>258</sup>

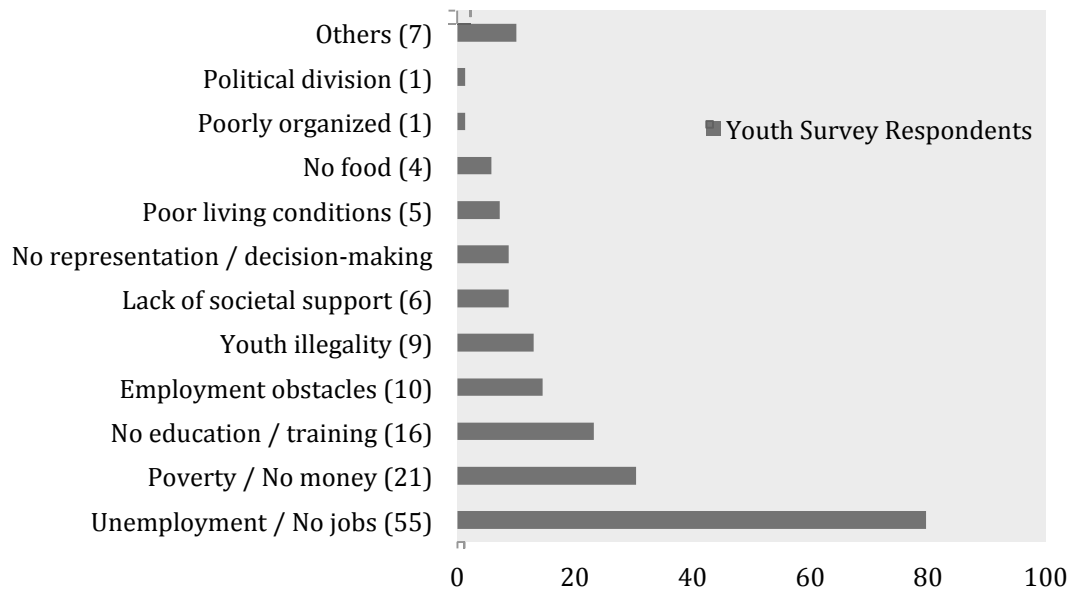
*'Youths can't afford to attend schools. No job not even manual and temporary jobs for a living and most of us have lost our parents.'*<sup>259</sup>

The main problems youth respondents then list for themselves are employment and poverty related (see Figure 9, below).

**Figure 9: Youth Problems**

**Consolidated answers to the survey question: 'What problems do youths face in this community?'**\*

□



\* Number of respondents in (); answers in % of all 69 youth survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

<sup>256</sup> SV80\_Y, Koidu.

<sup>257</sup> SV42\_Y, Kailahun.

<sup>258</sup> INT62, BRA, Koidu.

<sup>259</sup> SV169\_Y, Makeni.

Almost eighty per cent complain of youth unemployment. One youth stated that *'[u]nemployment is the major problem, it is leading to all other problems.'*<sup>260</sup> Thus, from unemployment and obstacles to youth employment flow poverty (thirty per cent), lack of resources for education (twenty-three per cent) and disruptive and destructive behaviour such as crime, violence, drug abuse and gambling (thirteen per cent). Several respondents listed a lack of societal support for youth (nine per cent) and its marginalised political status (nine per cent) in communities, *'... The youths are also neglected in terms of decision-making in the community. Elders hold negative perceptions about the youths that they are unserious.'*<sup>261</sup> Similarly, the Secretary General of the Kono Youth Coalition stated that *'[t]he biggest challenge is the low recognition of youth by those in authority.'*<sup>262</sup> Thus, economic, political and social marginalisation of youth persist in post-conflict Sierra Leone and are decried by a societal group which is not only more aware of the opportunities of democracy, the rule of law and human rights but also experienced in the conduct of violence.

It is also significant to point out, however, that while many youth leaders were concerned about the political division of youth, only one youth survey respondent picked this out as a central problem for youth connecting it to political violence.<sup>263</sup> Thus, youth from this study are predominantly aggrieved by limited livelihood options and thwarted communal participation with the threat of violence being an exception. From this perspective, an overly securitised tone, therefore, seems unnecessary and potentially dangerous as it marginalises and criminalises youth. A

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<sup>260</sup> SV177\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>261</sup> SV152\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>262</sup> INT57, Secretary General Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>263</sup> SV47\_Y, Koidu.

more constructive discourse supporting youth's emancipation might be to work with a language of untapped physical, intellectual and creative potential, for instance.<sup>264</sup>

## 6.5 A New Generation of Youth?

International engagement in Sierra Leone has pushed the socio-generational category of youth to the fore. So much so that one respondent stated, *'[b]efore [the war] nobody knew what youth was in the country.'*<sup>265</sup> Another agrees with this sentiment, *'[b]efore the war people knew very little about the word youth.'*<sup>266</sup> And a third adds, *'[y]ouths are now famous ...'*<sup>267</sup> Youth revolted against economic, political and social marginalisation during the war and continues to push for its own emancipation with various organisational and institutional strategies. Youth representation and youth organisations presented here unite the societal groups of youth and are active in a multitude of fields focusing their attention and support on youth's concerns. In this respect, Labonte finds that NGOs (international and national) and civil society organisations predominantly use a 'co-opt elite' approach in community sensitisation programming, focusing on an attitudinal shift between non-elites and elites in order to rebalance the power asymmetries among these actors. She states that, *'[t]he results indicate that when non-elites believe they can challenge or hold elites accountable without arbitrary sanction, they are more likely to do so.'* However, as this dissertation also contends, *'these programmes will take years if not decades before deep*

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<sup>264</sup> Once again one must contrast these findings from the 'provinces' with Enria's (2011) observations from Freetown. There, youth were very concerned with violence and drew freely on the threat of violence to position themselves vis-à-vis the government and politicians.

<sup>265</sup> SV183\_A, Magburaka.

<sup>266</sup> SV180\_A, Magburaka.

<sup>267</sup> SV89\_A, Pujehun.

*transformation occurs, and depending on donor commitment and the political, economic, and social climate, progress is likely to be slow and punctuated.*<sup>268</sup>

Importantly, youth and elders both show a keen interest in the intergenerational contract between them. While displaying a basic agreement on the distribution of roles and responsibilities in local communities, youth's aim is not to completely overturn established institutions and power relations but to be integrated making them less hierarchical and more accountable to the majority of the population. Youth representation is a major step towards inclusion and breaking up gerontocratic structures. However, success is slow and uneven with youth needing considerable determination and stamina to counter elders' reluctance to relinquish their grip on power. In this regard, it is encouraging to see that a third of youth and adult respondents preferred a mixed leadership model. The data, however, leaves open how far youth wishes to push the transformation of power relations. Supporting both the democratic and patrimonial logic, it becomes clear how difficult it would be for youthful actors to truly emancipate themselves from the given reality of hybrid political structures in Sierra Leone.

Youth demand respect and acknowledgement for their central role as stakeholders in development. In this regard the change of community labour from a duty to the chief to public goods provision is a crucial transformation of local power relations.

By predominantly drawing on the numerical definition of an age group, youth have reacted strongly to the presence of international interventions in their country. At the

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<sup>268</sup> Labonte (2011), p. 110.

same time, I propose that this definition has a unifying and integrating effect, with the heterogeneous societal group often drawing on the label of youth in a self-confident and proud manner. For the researcher this adds considerable complexity to the youth label as it may denote marginalisation and the lack of adulthood prospects as well as a proud stance as stakeholders of development. These extremes are epitomised in the marginalised, un(der)employed youth of Freetown versus '*elders among youth*' acting successfully as patrons vis-à-vis other youth. While a careful suspicion should guide future research on this latter group, it is important to emphasise the links within the heterogeneous group of youth, as many youth leaders truly follow an agenda of youth empowerment and the transformation of power relations.

However, one should not underestimate that strong continuities are present in the form of elders' counter-strategies to youth empowerment and youth's continued political exploitation. The manipulation of youth for violent intra-elite competition threatens the unity of youth as a societal group, limiting the pressure it can apply on local and national political actors. Moreover it reinforces the patrimonial logic, which in itself is a challenge to more meritocratic and egalitarian modes of participation and social ascent. The emancipation of youth, therefore, ideally needs to go hand in hand with a transformation of elite-society relations to actual state-society relations. In this respect the state needs to step in as a provider of basic social services and physical infrastructure while at the same time youth's overly paternalistic expectations towards state actors need to be channelled in more appropriate and realistic directions.

All this requires economic prospects for youth. The continuation of the *'crisis of youth'* into the post-conflict era is not only a dangerous continuity but also shows the failure to learn from a decade of brutal civil war. Not transforming Sierra Leone's social system may not immediately lead to yet another war in West Africa but all signs point to an all too familiar descent into political violence for the 2012 elections further tarnishing the group of youth and distracting from its actual problems and aspirations.

In his report on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, the UN Secretary General stressed in March 2011 that

*'[a]mong the three risk areas – youth unemployment, corruption and illegal narcotics – ... overcoming youth unemployment remains an intractable problem that will require greater commitment on the part of the Government and support from its international partners.'*<sup>269</sup>

Limited job opportunities for young people are linked more to the overall lack of economic opportunities for business operation than to specificities associated with their age. Overall, employment is a structural issue requiring long-term equitable growth across sectors and regions to reach the majority of the 800,000 considered to be un(der)employed.<sup>270</sup> The World Bank sees the agricultural and agrobusiness sector as the main driver of poverty reduction in the short and medium term as the sector has the potential to absorb unskilled youth on a large scale. Moreover, agricultural producers' labour demand currently exceeds supply, while much fertile soil in Sierra Leone lies fallow.<sup>271</sup> Additionally, in urban centres as well as rural areas services surrounding infrastructure (for instance, garbage collection, maintenance of roads and drains, etc.) can be organised by youth groups and thus absorb unskilled as

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<sup>269</sup> UN Security Council (2011), p. 13.

<sup>270</sup> UN, World Bank, GDC, IFAD & EU (2010), p. 3.

<sup>271</sup> Peeters et al. (2009), p. 68.

well as more educated youth labour. In this regard the major donors have started to fund public works projects as a short-term relaxation of youth's un(der)employment situation.<sup>272</sup>

With low education levels, preparing young people with the skills required by the labour market is critical. In this regard, Peeters et al. as well as the World Development Report suggest to rely more strongly on on-the-job training and traditional apprenticeships as cost-effective alternatives to international skills training, especially for lower-skilled occupations, *'[o]n-the-job training is one of the most effective approaches for skill strengthening. It also avoids the common pitfall of providing training for skills for which demand is weak or non-existent;*<sup>273</sup> the later being a somewhat tragic outcome of much of the skills training provided within the DDR programmes in particular and youth skills' trainings in general. Optimistically conceptualised, this suggestion links back to the issue of intergenerational learning; apprenticeships could provide another realm of intergenerational learning and cooperation as well as potentially fostering generational turn-over with crafts(wo)men instructing the next generation of artisan workers. However, apprenticeships tend to be heavily embedded in patronage networks with highly asymmetrical power of the master over his/her apprentices.<sup>274</sup> In this respect micro-funds on the one hand granting the apprentice independence from the master during the training and on the other hand supporting the start-up of his/her own business would be worthwhile investments.

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<sup>272</sup> UN, GTZ & World Bank (2010); Machonachie (2008).

<sup>273</sup> WDR (2007), p. 112; Peeters et al. (2009), p. 88.

<sup>274</sup> For a detailed analysis of apprenticeships and patronage networks in the context of Nigeria's informal economy, see Meagher (2010).

While this study confirms what other researchers conducting fieldwork in post-conflict Sierra Leone are warning of, namely that the post-conflict society in Sierra Leone has too many similarities with the status quo ante, the pre-war era, this chapter will still end on a carefully optimistic note suggesting that seeds of change have been laid. Nurturing these could indeed lead to more general and fundamental transformations in Sierra Leonean society. I take this optimism from the respondents interviewed for this research.

Asked whether the role of youth has changed from before the war, a fifth of adult respondents gave a negative assessment of youth in Sierra Leone today, reflecting for the most part their loss of power over youth and thus a significant change in the way generations communicate and understand their status in the community (see Table 6, below).

**Table 6: Adult Respondents' Assessment of Change to Youth's Societal Role**  
*Consolidated answers to the survey question: 'Has the role of youth changed from before the war?'*\*

	%
<b>Positive</b> assessment of the change of youth's role and behaviour compared to pre-war (29)	41
Drive development; are development oriented (22)	31
Show rights awareness; advocate human rights (14)	20
Are organised (7)	10
<b>Neutral</b> assessment of the change of youth's role and behaviour compared to pre-war (18)	25
<b>Negative</b> assessment of the change of youth's role and behaviour compared to pre-war (14)	20
Are disrespectful towards elders (10)	14
No unconditional communal labour (7)	10

\* Number of respondents in (); answers in % of all 70 adult survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible. Answers were grouped into the above categories.

Two kinds of comments dominated a negative view on youth. First, adult respondents complained that youth were disrespectful towards elders, refusing to learn from the older generation, *'[t]he change is that youths were obedient to the elders but these days*

*they don't listen to us the elders.*<sup>275</sup> Second, adults and elders criticised that youth demand certain conditions for taking part in communal labour, *'[w]e in prewar, we assisted the elders for no pay but the youths won't work except for payments and they won't serve their parents.'*<sup>276</sup> Overall negative assessments implied that youth no longer fulfilled their agreed societal role. This 'complaint discourse' has been observed in other African contexts. Reynolds Whyte, Alber and Von der Geest suggest that elders' expressions of dissatisfaction should be interpreted as a struggle over respect and reputation.<sup>277</sup> While a sign of discord between generations, potentially aggravating rivalry and enhancing alienation, it is also a clear reflection of social change.

Importantly, looking back, forty-one per cent of adult respondents observe a positive change in the role of youth compared to pre-war times (see Table 6, above). More than a third see today's youth as drivers of development. By this they not only imply that youth are *'... the dynamo of development, they have the physique. They have a role to effect change as agents of change, implementers of change'*<sup>278</sup> but more importantly, *'...youth are more focused [on development] nowadays as compared to before the war.'*<sup>279</sup> Adults and elders further commend youth's self and rights awareness and engagement for rights.

*'The youth are seeking more for their rights than before. They were used before and now they do question that.'*<sup>280</sup>

*'The youths organise social programmes. They force the girl child in the community to school.'*<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> SV94\_A, Pujehun.

<sup>276</sup> SV186\_A, Makeni.

<sup>277</sup> Reynolds Whyte, Alber & Von der Geest (2008), p. 10.

<sup>278</sup> SV77\_A, Koidu.

<sup>279</sup> SV196\_A, Magburaka.

<sup>280</sup> SV22\_A, Kailahun.

All of this is only possible because youth is organised as a group now, acting with more independence from chiefs and elders and actively participating in community affairs, even leading them.

*'The chiefs used to dictate the role of the youth activities but for now the youths undertake community activities and they now champion their [own] activities ...'*<sup>282</sup>

*'The youths were docile before the war. But for now the awareness is there. This has changed their role a lot in terms of community participation.'*<sup>283</sup>

*'The youth, they are there to take care of the chiefdom and the district like administering the chiefdom/district. It was for this reason we accepted one of the youths to have one of the youths as the District Council Chairman.'*<sup>284</sup>

Perceptions of older members of society (35+) differed as to whether youths' involvement in political violence had increased or decreased compared to the pre-war period. Several reported that political violence with youth involvement still takes place regularly. These respondents saw no or little difference between the violent conduct of youths before and after the war. A similar number of respondents, however, specifically pointed out changes in the role and behaviour of youth,

*'Q. Has the role of youth changed from before the war?  
Yes, before the war the youths were used by politicians to fight one another but this has changed. In post-war Sierra Leone there is awareness amongst the youth.'*<sup>285</sup>

*'Youths were not organised. They were only political thugs but for now the youths are development oriented.'*<sup>286</sup>

The Makeni District Youth Chairman, who was seventeen years old when the war started, also has a positive perspective, *'Q. If you look back to the time before the war, was the role of youth different then? Yes, there is a difference. The youths were heavily*

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<sup>281</sup> SV83\_A, Koidu.

<sup>282</sup> SV95\_A, Pujehun.

<sup>283</sup> SV132\_A, Makeni.

<sup>284</sup> SV94\_A, Pujehun.

<sup>285</sup> SV191\_A, Magburaka.

<sup>286</sup> SV193\_A, Magburaka.

*misused by politicians before the war. They only needed to provide alcohol for youths. But this has changed considerably.*<sup>287</sup>

Key factors for lasting change are awareness of youth's societal position, an alternative goal (development orientation) and adequate representation structures to communicate and affect youth's agenda.

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<sup>287</sup> INT79, District Youth Chairman, Makeni.

## **7. Community Failure Revisited: Changes and Continuities in Chiefly Power**

### **7.1 Chiefs in Sub-Saharan Africa and Sierra Leone: Tradition, Invention or Imagination?**

As Jackson writes, '*[c]hieftaincy is an integral part of Sierra Leone's governance structure.*'<sup>1</sup> Given the limited outreach of government and administration beyond Freetown, in rural areas chiefs are key sources of authority. Moreover, with the abolishment of local government in 1972 the main burden of governance and administration, until recently, rested with chiefs.<sup>2</sup> However, the chieftaincy system has been in a crisis of legitimacy due to its association with kleptocratic and repressive tendencies in the post-independence phase. As outlined in Chapter 2, chiefs' behaviour lay at the heart of community failure triggering the civil war as autocratic gerontocracies marginalised rising numbers of youth. Thus, during the war chiefs and elders were specific targets of the RUF and many were killed or fled.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> The 2004 Local Government Act devolves state powers to the local level as well as dividing up governance responsibilities between chiefs and the newly established District Councils. While regular elections have been held in 2004, 2008 and are due again in late 2012, division of power and labour between the chiefs and councilors continues to be unclear leading to tensions and struggles over authority. See also p. 263, fn. 157.

<sup>3</sup> However, Vincent observes that many chiefs played an important role for their communities during the war. He reports that in the 28 chiefdoms surveyed across Sierra Leone for his study a third of the chiefs remained with their people throughout the war. In the South and East, these chiefs continued to administer townships, often with the support of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) (Vincent 2012, p. 13).

Given its involvement in fuelling communal intergenerational conflict, chieftaincy is one of the major areas in need of reform in the post-conflict phase and, thus, another central arena of contestation and negotiation. Since the end of the war nearly half of all chiefdoms have held elections for vacant Paramount Chieftaincies bringing into office younger and more educated candidates.<sup>4</sup> The following chapter explores the situation of the chieftaincy in Sierra Leone today analysing how strategies of youth, the rights discourse, international interventions, as well as governance reforms are transforming or consolidating chiefly powers. Two central chiefly functions, namely informal chiefly courts and the control over community labour, will serve as examples for a more detailed discussion.

Compared to the topic of youth which has undoubtedly due to its connection with violence and conflict received overwhelming attention from anthropologists, economists, political scientists, and sociologists in recent years, the institution of chieftaincy has been covered in much less detail. Unsurprisingly, much of the literature over the past 150 years has focused on the interplay of colonialism and traditional authorities<sup>5</sup> with more recent research dealing with constructivist notions of traditional leadership, customary law, ethnicity, and conflict.<sup>6</sup> The early literature is especially dominated by accounts of researchers or officials connected to the colonial offices.<sup>7</sup> A second large topic covered in the literature is the time of decolonisation centring on the tensions and conflicts between traditional authorities

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<sup>4</sup> DfID (2004), p. 4. The UK's Department for International Development (DfID) supported President Kabbah's aim of resurrecting the chieftaincy system after the war by spearheading the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme (CGRP), which ran from 1999 to 2001.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Little (1955); Richards (1960); Crowder & Ikime (1970); Vaughan (2000); Vaughan (2003).

<sup>6</sup> cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983); Mamdani (1996).

<sup>7</sup> cf. Fortes & Evans-Pritchard (1940); Radcliffe-Brown & Farde (1950).

and post-independence political elites.<sup>8</sup> The topic of chiefs has also seen a revival in more recent publications concerned with ‘indigenous’ approaches to post-conflict reconciliation and transitional justice.<sup>9</sup> However, for the most part contemporary studies analysing more recent developments concerning traditional authorities as well as their relationship with the communities they preside over have been few and in between. While this is most likely due to the higher priority of ‘disaster’ topics such as conflict and violence, humanitarian crises, failed states, and HIV/Aids, it is nevertheless surprising, as the chieftaincy has emerged as one of the most constant and flexible institutions during the colonial and post-colonial era, constantly adapting to secure not only its survival but also its influence on (local) politics and the lives of rural communities, in particular.<sup>10</sup> The literature on chieftaincy in Sierra Leone is something of an exception. As well as good coverage of traditional leadership systems in (pre-)colonial times,<sup>11</sup> Paul Richards’ hypothesis that the exploitative behaviour of chiefs in the post-colonial phase ultimately triggered one of the most gruesome conflicts of the 1990s, has assured a lively debate on the position of chiefs in Sierra Leonean politics and society.<sup>12</sup> The following sketches the key debates concerning chieftaincy in Sub-Saharan Africa as they are relevant to the work at hand before moving to the Sierra Leonean case.

In his extensive comparison of chieftaincy under colonialism, Newbury shows that pre-colonial political systems varied widely in their structure, size and complexity not

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<sup>8</sup> cf. Richards (1960); Crowder & Ikime (1970); Jones (1983); Rathbone (2000); Vaughan (1989); (2000); (2003); Nugent (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Nugent (2004), p. 106; Allen (2006); (2007).

<sup>10</sup> Van Kessel & Oomen (1997).

<sup>11</sup> cf. Little (1951); (1955); Finnegan (1965); Wylie (1969); (1977); Abraham (1978).

<sup>12</sup> Richards (2005); Fanthorpe (2001); (2004a); (2004b); (2005); Hanlon (2005); Jackson (2005); (2006); Sawyer (2008); Chauveau & Richards (2008); Mokuwa et al. (2011).

only across the colonised world but also within Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>13</sup> It is, thus, crucial to understand that what colonial officials termed so homogeneously as ‘chieftaincy’ incorporated a multitude of systems of traditional governance with ‘chiefs’ taking on very different powers, responsibilities and privileges. Traditional political systems ranged from highly centralised and bureaucratised kingdoms as in the inter-lacustrine societies of central and eastern Africa – stretching from today’s eastern DRC to Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, the Sudan, Tanzania, and Kenya – as well as among the Asante and Yoruba in contemporary Ghana and Nigeria, respectively;<sup>14</sup> to acephalos and segmentary societies, as for example in Sierra Leone, governed by clan leaders – chiefs who can best be described as big men.<sup>15</sup>

Newbury, however, claims that in all of these societies clientelism and patrimonialism were the common principles underpinning power hierarchies.<sup>16</sup> Chiefly leaders, be they kings, emirs, sultans, paramount chiefs or big men, functioned as patrons whose legitimacy was based on material, political and social support of their clients. Thus, dyadic patron-client relationships pervaded the majority of African societies. Analysing the inter-lacustrine kingdoms, Mair observes that clientelism *‘runs through the whole society from top to bottom, everyone except the king being somebody’s client, and everyone except the lowliest peasant having clients of his own.’*<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, while hereditary principles for succession of some form were in place in many societies, performance in the sense of providing patronage was vital for the retention

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<sup>13</sup> Newbury (2003).

<sup>14</sup> Mair (1962); (1977); Newbury (2003), p. 101-145.

<sup>15</sup> Little (1955); Newbury (2003), p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Newbury (2003), p. 102; 124.

<sup>17</sup> Mair (1962), p. 113/14; Mair (1977).

of power. As Little observes for Sierra Leone, chiefly status was, thus, partly ascribed, partly achieved.<sup>18</sup>

This historical understanding of local African power relations is vital for understanding contemporary themes in Sub-Saharan African politics. On the one hand it highlights a notion of legitimacy based as much on ascription through tradition and customs as on performance. Chiefs' failure to fulfil their roles as patrons led to the discrediting of chiefs in Sierra Leone and other Sub-Saharan African states. On the other hand, and possibly more importantly, the patron-client culture of the traditional society was immediately picked up by political elites and dominates Sub-Saharan African politics today.<sup>19</sup>

A common thread in the varied colonial experiences<sup>20</sup> is what Cooper has called '*preservationist colonialism*', which dominated until the 1940s. This describes the colonial '*state's efforts to make itself the patron of patrons, particularly of chiefly elites who brought coercion and the distribution of rewards to the village level.*'<sup>21</sup> Colonialism, thus, in its paternalistic aspirations as well as pragmatic considerations, set out to 'preserve' what it believed to be the foundations of traditional African societies, namely, governance through chiefs and customary law, the division of the

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<sup>18</sup> Little (1955); Barrows (1976), p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> Bayart (1993); Chabal & Daloz (1999); Van de Walle (2001); (2007); (2012). See the discussion in Chapters 2.2. and 6.4.

<sup>20</sup> A second insight, which flows from Newbury's analysis, is that colonial systems, even if portrayed under the common heading of 'indirect rule' in the British sphere of influence, for instance, varied as widely as the political systems they were confronted with. '*In each of the colonial states carved out of West African societies the pattern of British (and sometimes French or German) over-rule was conditioned by the political structures found in place.*' (Newbury (2003), p. 143). While colonialism undoubtedly triggered deep changes within all societies affected, the level and scale of intervention as well as the instruments used varied not only from country to country but also within colonies. In Ghana, for example, the Akan and other chiefdoms were allowed considerable autonomy to continue customary courts and extract rents, while in the Ashanti region the king was removed and then restored as head of a delimited 'confederacy' (Newbury (2003), p. 143).

<sup>21</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 197.

people into tribes with set tribal languages as well as the introduction of fixed territories and borders.

The insight that many ‘traditions’ and ‘customs’ are ‘*products of codification, petrification and coercion under the modernist project of colonial rule and missionary activity*’,<sup>22</sup> was put forth by Hobsbawm and Ranger as ‘*The Invention of Tradition*.’<sup>23</sup> Importantly, however, traditional leaders displayed agency in appropriating the agenda of ‘invented tradition’ to curb internal rivalry and the fluidity in their societies stabilising their own claim to power.<sup>24</sup> Chieftaincy under colonialisation, therefore, was shaped by the constant interplay of chiefly as well as colonial agendas and actions.<sup>25</sup>

In a careful generalisation, it can then be said that colonial powers emasculated chiefly leaders in so far as they made them their junior partners in colonial governance, cutting privileges and powers when they collided with colonial interest while at the same time equipping them with many unprecedented powers to alter and coerce the societies below them.<sup>26</sup> Traditional leaders were, thus, established as intermediaries between the population and the state, putting them in a role, in which they have been exploited and suppressed, courted and empowered by the colonial as

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<sup>22</sup> Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal & Van Dijk (1999), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983). How many traditions and customs were invented, depended again on the pre-conditions encountered by the Europeans. Where a form of chieftaincy existed already it was molded to the liking of the colonial administration (for example, McCaskie (1995) for the Asantehene of Kumasi); where acephalous societies featured unpronounced leadership structures, colonial administrators put in place chiefs and truly invented a tradition of chiefly leadership (for example, Geschiere (1993); (1996) for Cameroon; Hawkins (1996) for northern Ghana). Thus, Geschiere ((1996), p. 307) writes ‘*it is clear that in Africa the ‘traditionality’ of [...chiefs] is highly variable.*’

<sup>24</sup> Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal & Van Dijk (1999), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Adding another layer of influence and understanding, Ranger incorporated insights from Anderson’s ‘*Imagined Communities*’ (1983) to analyse ‘*imagined traditions*’. This term aims at capturing not only the invention of tradition and its appropriation by local elites but also reflects the responding imaginations of local communities, which shaped debates and discourses on traditions and customs as well.

<sup>26</sup> Nugent (2004), p. 107; 119.

well as post-colonial state in a process which Ray has termed the '*encapsulation*' of chiefly traditions by external powers.<sup>27</sup> Further, Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal observe that this led to the '*hybrid*' nature of the chieftaincy since it combines political and administrative tasks with socio-religious and judicial roles.<sup>28</sup> In this sense chiefs are '*syncretic leaders*' drawing their power, resources and legitimacy from different models and ideologies of political organisation, constantly adapting and changing.

The decentralised and authoritarian mode within which local chiefly administration functioned came under scrutiny with the onset of what Cooper terms '*developmentalist colonialism*', a more interventionist and centralised vision of the colonial state, and the eventual development towards decolonialisation with its introduction of electoral politics.<sup>29</sup> While the British mostly held on to their chiefly allies even in the wake of Africa's first shot at democratisation,<sup>30</sup> chieftaincy in many Sub-Saharan African countries was about to undergo important changes once more as chiefs tried to adapt to the new indigenous elites.

Decolonisation involved a transfer of power at two levels simultaneously, namely from European officials to African politicians and from chiefs to locally elected leaders. This transfer was based in part on an ideological shift surrounding the notion of legitimacy. Traditional elites' claim to legitimacy was undermined by the introduction of the electoral principle. Countering these democratic claims, chiefs fought back by presenting themselves as custodians of hallowed tradition, embodying a deeper legitimacy than politicians who come and go with every new election. The

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<sup>27</sup> Ray (1986).

<sup>28</sup> Ray & Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1996), p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Cooper (2002), p. 197.

<sup>30</sup> Newbury (2003), p. 122.

issue of chiefly authority vis-à-vis the central state as well as local government, however, can be better understood in terms of power. As potential contestants in the political sphere, politicians aimed at reducing the chiefs' threat to their own power. As in relation to colonial officials, chiefs therefore had to position themselves in such a way that they would be of relevance to the new political elite. In this respect, chiefs' control and influence over local populations quickly turned out to be crucial for politicians who sought access to the electorate. Chiefs, Nugent argues, command 'influence' over local populations based on 'prestige' bound to tradition and custom,

*'... which lies beyond the ken of the politicians. The latter have courted the chiefs precisely because they preside over a cultural commodity which they do not possess. ... The salience of chieftaincy therefore varied depending on the skill with which the chiefs played their card as intermediaries between national leaders and their local constituents.'*<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Newbury observes a clear continuity of reciprocity between new rulers and old leaders from colonialism into independence, citing as an example the support of Protectorate chiefs for Milton Margai's SLPP Party in the elections of 1956 and 1961 accompanying decolonisation, in return for confirmation of status and stipends.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup> Nugent (2003), p. 107/108. Despite this mutual dependence, Nugent observes that chiefs were ultimately the losers in this power game, as 'formal power' stayed in the hand of politicians who all too often would meddle with chieftaincy succession or candidacy if the 'wrong' party was supported. In many former British colonies chiefs lost almost all of their powers connected to the collection of taxes, the extraction of forced labour, the regulation of local markets, policing and adjudication. In Nigeria, for instance, successive regimes of civilian and military governments cut the formal duties, responsibilities and powers of chiefs while putting in place measures of control (Vaughan (1989); Vaughan (2000); Newbury (2003), p. 110-121; Nugent (2004), p. 119-122). An even starker example is Ghana, where Nkrumah restricted chiefly power to an extreme extent in favour of elected local government (Rathbone (2000); Cooper (2002), p. 68; Newbury (2003), p. 108; Nugent (2004), p. 122-124). But whereas the Asante monarchy survived by making a humiliating peace with the Nkrumah regimes, its counterpart in Uganda, the Buganda kingdom, was completely dismantled by the Obote government as it posed a larger threat to a relatively weak leader (Nugent (2004), p. 126). Finally, in Tanzania, chiefly power linked inherently to the idea of ethnicity and tribes, fell victim to Nyerere's vision of socialist nationalism and Pan-Africanism and was outright abolished (Nugent (2004), p. 126-127; 136). A notable exception to this pattern and interesting model is Botswana where the government firmly integrated chiefs into the state's bureaucracy by making them official civil servants. While Nugent ((2003), p. 127/128; 426) points out that this has secured their influence in rural politics and within the local adjudication, Jones (1983) analyses more critically the opposition of chiefs to the government's reforms, which abolished their extensive independence, challenged the principle of hereditary office, placed them in the lower ranks of the civil service and conferred on them 'desk responsibilities' and submission to principles of hierarchy and accountability.

<sup>32</sup> Newbury (2003), p. 141.

discussion below will show that the mutual dependence of elected officials and chiefs continues to be an important factor for the consolidation and continuity of chiefly power in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

Political elites were not the only ones to challenge chiefly authority. On the one hand urban and mining settlements with their mixed populations as well as constant in- and outflow have not lent themselves to traditional governance systems more adapted to a homogenous populace and moderate population movement. Moreover, migratory labourers returning from the city or mining compounds challenged the authority of elders who had stayed behind while they brought home cash and new experiences. On the other hand educated Africans rejected the leadership pretensions of chiefs, demanding direct say in their own governance.<sup>33</sup> In both of these examples, however, Sierra Leone is to a large extent an exception. As ‘custodians of the land’, chiefs in diamond-rich areas hold significant powers. Moreover, the Sierra Leonean system of ‘elite accommodation’, as discussed in Chapter 2.2, has guaranteed close ties between modern and traditional elites. Thus, the chieftaincy has survived through manifold adaptations in the urban and industrial and especially rural realm. Their importance for rural communities lies in their informal duties as arbitrators of local disputes and as local interlocutors between their communities and the government.<sup>34</sup> Legitimacy also stems from reverence towards traditions and customs, which are often linked to religious leadership or the sphere of mystical power, for example in the secret societies of West Africa. Rather than focusing on traditional and historical trajectories, chieftaincy needs to be analysed as a living, dynamic, contemporary phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa today.

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<sup>33</sup> Nugent (2004), p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Sawyer (2008).

## 7.2 Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone

Writing on *'Central-Local Politics in Sierra Leone'* in the late 1970s, Tangri observes that *'[t]he chiefdoms ... constitute the chief focus of loyalty for the vast majority of the people ... The individual is largely first and foremost a member of a chiefdom whose geographical limits are known, whose officials are often dealt with on a personal basis, and whose authority system is understood.'*<sup>35</sup> In this respect, Leonard et al. observe that the social contract in Sierra Leone, as in many other Sub-Saharan African countries, is not so much between citizens and the state but mediated through community leaders, namely chiefs.<sup>36</sup> Essential 'from below', that is, with respect to the local population, chiefs have also been a focal point of central politics 'from above'. Indeed, several researchers have discussed and commented on Sierra Leone's *'parochialism'* and the *'localism in Sierra Leonean politics.'*<sup>37</sup> The latter is a major function of the system of elite accommodation in Sierra Leone and has been closely connected to political conflict and violence throughout Sierra Leone's post-independence history.<sup>38</sup>

Following his election in 1996, President Kabbah pledged to resurrect the chieftaincy system, which had been weakened during the war. Against considerable international resistance, as the traditional governance system was seen as incompatible with such liberal peacebuilding principles as transparency, democracy and equity, Paramount

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<sup>35</sup> Tangri (1978), p. 165. See also BBC (2007); Sawyer 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard et al. (2011), p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Milikin (1973); Allen (1968); Cartwright (1970); Barrows (1976). See also the discussion in Chapter 2.2.

<sup>38</sup> Tangri (1976), p.311. See also the prominence of 'political conflicts' put forth by survey respondents for this study (Figure 11, below).

Chiefs were reinstalled throughout the country following the war between 2000 and 2002.<sup>39</sup>

Outside of the Western Area,<sup>40</sup> Sierra Leone is divided into 149 chiefdoms. The administrative arrangements for chiefdoms, as well as regulations regarding local taxation and customary law, are set out in a series of grossly out-dated legal documents from the colonial and immediate post-colonial phase.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note, however, that much in the realm of customary law and procedures, including the exact privileges and responsibilities of chiefs are not set down in writing but handed down orally from one generation to the next.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, as discussed above, ‘tradition’ and ‘custom’ have continuously evolved.

The focal point of every chiefdom is the Paramount Chief whose legitimacy is based on a ‘*social contract*’ between himself and his ‘subjects’, the local populace.<sup>43</sup> Below him (or much more rarely her)<sup>44</sup> Section, Village and Town Chiefs as well as headmen have authority and jurisdiction over smaller areas and are answerable to the

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<sup>39</sup> Labonte (2011), p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> The Western Area comprises the Freetown Peninsula and the immediate surrounding region. It is dominated by the Krio who are not governed by a chieftaincy governance system. However, chiefs do exist in Freetown, especially in the suburbs, representing Freetown’s ‘tribal’ populations.

<sup>41</sup> These include the 1938 Tribal Authorities Ordinance; the 1938 Chiefdom Treasuries Act; the 1954 Local Tax Ordinance; the 1963 Local Courts Act; and the 1964 Tribal Authorities Amendment Act. Additionally, the Paramount Chieftaincy as well as the validity of customary law and community labour are enshrined in the 1991 Constitution.

<sup>42</sup> Albrecht (2005), p. 15; Sesay & Hughes (2005), p. 55; on oral tradition more generally, see Vansina (1971).

<sup>43</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 98.

<sup>44</sup> The male form is used throughout the text referring to all chiefs, male and female, to make the text more easily readable. While female chiefs exist, even at the Paramount Chieftaincy level, they are still a small minority. Women have traditionally been barred from the Paramount Chieftaincy in northern and eastern Sierra Leone, though they were accepted in the south. In the last years, female members of ruling families have successfully challenged this custom in courts (BBC News (2009c); (2010)). However, this legal support still needs to be translated into changed practice. For this dissertation one female chief was interviewed in Eastern Freetown. On ‘*Gender and Power in Sierra Leone*’, see Day (2007); (2012).

Paramount Chief.<sup>45</sup> Chiefly legitimacy hinges on chiefs as the representatives and custodians of tradition and custom, including their socio-religious role in the secret societies, as well as their performance as political and economic patrons and, most importantly, adjudicators of local disputes. Despite criticism of exploitative chiefly behaviour, reverence for chiefs and elders is still deeply embedded in the attitudes of Sierra Leoneans, confirming the social contract. Taking on leadership and mediating roles in the private and public realm, chiefs were portrayed by many respondents as benevolent paternal authorities. Terms such as *'protection'*, *'care'* and *'welfare'*, *'representation'* and *'advocacy'* were used to describe the role of chiefs. One respondent went so far to state that he *'see[s] him [chief] as a father.'*<sup>46</sup> Forty per cent of all respondents agreed that they *'look up to [the chief] for advice and guidance'*<sup>47</sup> on such varied issues as marital and family affairs, inheritance, education and career advice, community initiatives, as well as quarrels with friends and colleagues (see Figure 13 & **Figure 14**, below). It is important to note that the respect shown towards chiefs as well as the high consultancy rate may also be driven by an element of fear vis-à-vis these powerful local authorities, who hold the key to social and economic sanctions. Exactly because chiefs' authority permeates the private as well as public realm it is difficult for individual community members to remove themselves from their influence. The data analysed for this dissertation reflects the ambiguity with which respondents on the one hand expressed their respect and support of chiefly

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<sup>45</sup> An electoral college elects Paramount Chiefs for life from hereditary families, so-called 'ruling houses'. The chieftom councillors forming the electoral college, in turn, are each nominated by 20 taxpayers. The election of lesser chiefs takes place in a similar fashion with the electorate being confined to the section, village or town the chief presides over. As established in the Local Tax Ordinance (1954), all adult males above the age of 21 who have been resident in a chieftom in the previous six months and every female who has been carrying out trade in the chieftom are liable to pay local tax. The definition of the term 'taxpayer' has long been a means of effective control over the electoral college, successfully favouring men with income over women and the poor.

<sup>46</sup> SV201\_A, Makeni.

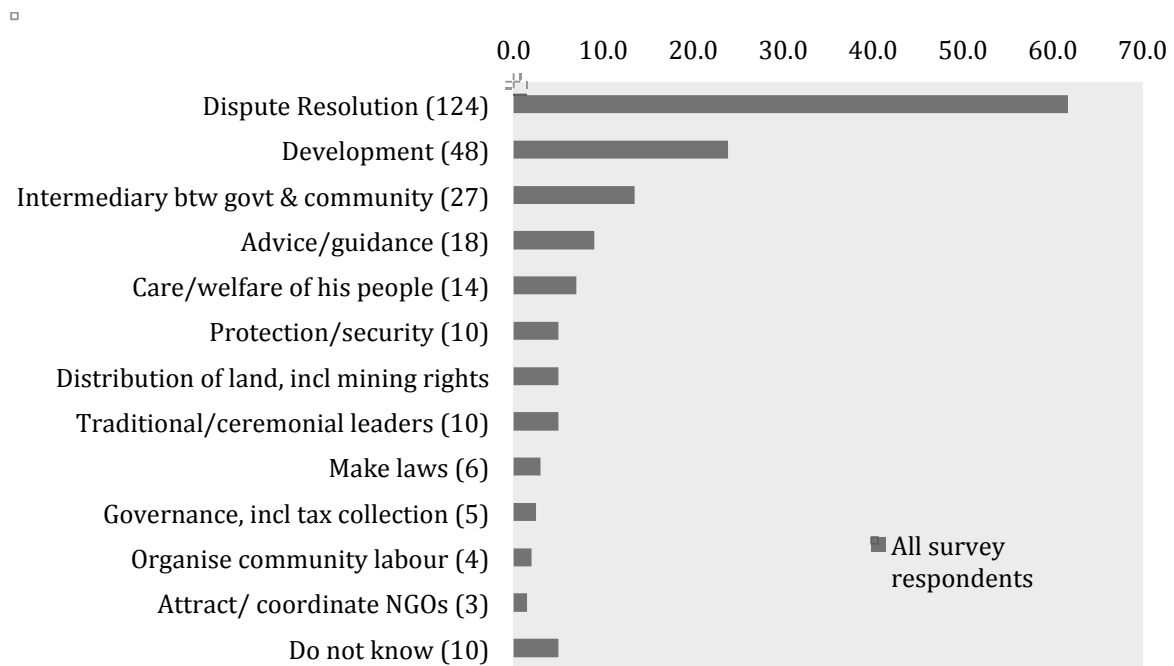
<sup>47</sup> SV185\_A, Makeni.

governance and on the other hand voiced their disapproval of exploitative and partisan tendencies, especially in connection with court fines.

Because of their encompassing role in the public and private realm of community members' lives, chiefly functions are manifold. Depending on the perspective taken, for instance from the side of the central government, chiefs themselves or the populace of a chiefdom, different responsibilities were emphasised by respondents.

### Figure 10: Role of the Chief

*Consolidated answer to the survey question: What is the role of the chief?\**



\* Number of respondents in (); answers in % of all 201 survey respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

The majority of survey and interview respondents saw it as the most important function of the chief to maintain law and order by solving disputes (see Figure 10, above). Some phrased this task as *'to bring peace among the people in the community'*<sup>48</sup> while others provided more detailed answers by stating, for instance,

<sup>48</sup> SV25\_S, Kailahun; SV35\_S, Kailahun.

that the chiefs '*maintain law and order. Like levying fines for use of abusive language*'<sup>49</sup> or that '*[w]hen there are problems they [chiefs] intervene and if you feel badly treated you take your complaint to them [chiefs] before going to the police.*'<sup>50</sup> Customary justice is *formally* dealt out in local courts. As formal court fees can be substantial and courts only sit every few weeks, disputants often prefer to bring their case directly before the Paramount Chief or some lesser chief. In these *informal* courts, which have no official status and are, thus, not circumscribed by legal documents, chiefs adjudicate civil and criminal cases, levy fees and impose fines or other punishments. The analysis at hand deals exclusively with these later informal courts, although both institutions have been criticised for their biased and exploitative rulings in the pre-war period.<sup>51</sup>

Implicit in answers which assign the chief the task of solving land disputes is the fact that chiefs are regarded as custodians of the land in Sierra Leone. '*The chiefs are in charge of the land. They sell the land. They sell mining plots. They have the responsibility to bring development to their chiefdom. They also register NGOs and mining companies in their chiefdoms*'<sup>52</sup> stated one youth. Beyond jurisdiction over '*bush, plantation or land palava*'<sup>53</sup> this gives them significant local power in several ways. First, as written land titles are still rare in rural Sierra Leone, it is through oral transmission between elders that details of borders and land rights are locally recorded. Mediating and solving land disputes is a source of income to chiefs and given the importance of agriculture in much of Sierra Leone assures the chief a

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<sup>49</sup> SV5\_5, Kailahun; SV126\_S, Makeni.

<sup>50</sup> SV9\_S, Kailahun. Interestingly, youth and student respondents readily listed chiefly responsibilities, providing more or less neutral answers. Few adults, in contrast, listed functions of chiefs. Rather, they expanded on the post-war change in chiefly behaviour and gave highly critical assessments. This is discussed further below.

<sup>51</sup> see also Sawyer (2008); Mokuwa et al. (2011).

<sup>52</sup> SV81\_Y, Koidu. See also Maconachie (2008), p. 244.

<sup>53</sup> 'Palava' is the Krio term for palaver, i.e. dispute, argument or trouble.

position of power over his 'subjects'. This becomes especially obvious in cases, in which the chief can 'flag' land forbidding a party to work their land either on account of a land dispute under consideration or as punishment for some other crime.<sup>54</sup> Second, chieftom land is reserved for 'natives', whereas 'non-natives' or 'strangers' are required to take out a lease to build on chieftom land. The definition of who is native is unwritten and decided upon and enforced by chiefs.<sup>55</sup> Achieving the status of 'native' grants not only rights to land but also residence, the law and political representation. Locally, thus, the authorisation and protection of traditional rights of 'native citizenship' makes chiefs extremely powerful.<sup>56</sup> Lastly, as the quote above indicates, a chief's powers are magnified if the land contains valuable resources and minerals. As guardians of the land, no mining operation, artisanal or industrial, is possible without the chiefs' agreement.<sup>57</sup>

Chiefs themselves also prioritised their role as adjudicators. While Kailahun's Town Chief has focused on law and order stating that his main task is to '*...deal with abusive language, fighting, [and] see that people abide by the law of the community*',<sup>58</sup> a Section Chief described his responsibilities more broadly, '*[t]he first thing is to take care of the people. Then to know their problems, the difficulties they face and to settle disputes*'.<sup>59</sup> The later quote reflects again that chiefs straddle the public and private aspects of community life. Despite popular agreement on the role of chiefs as adjudicators, chiefly courts are also an important arena of contestation and criticism. This will be discussed further below as one of the changes taking place regarding chieftaincy.

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<sup>54</sup> INT26, Elder, Kailahun; INT35, Speaker, Kailahun.

<sup>55</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 53.

<sup>57</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 55. For a detailed discussion on the power dynamics embedded in questions of land allocation, see Maconachie (2008).

<sup>58</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>59</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

Chiefs are further seen as having a responsibility to ‘bring development’. While this phrasing certainly echoes the penetration of NGO-lingo, it reflects several chiefly roles. First, despite the very recent moves to decentralisation chiefs are still regarded as the main governance authorities. Paramount chiefs and their sub-chiefs are the leaders of the chiefdom governance system, which consists of chiefdom councils, chiefdom committees and the chiefdom administration combining elements of traditional patriarchal leadership with modern bureaucracy.<sup>60</sup> These are the various institutions which youth wishes to permeate with its representatives to influence local governance, as discussed in Chapter 6.3. In their role as local leaders they are expected to organise and coordinate local development projects as well as attract NGOs for these purposes. Moreover, in return for the many functions they administrate, chiefs hold the right to summon their ‘subjects’, traditionally youths, for community labour. In principle, this includes ‘developmental’ activities such as road brushing, communal farming, maintaining of bridges and erecting and refurbishing community buildings, thus, benefitting the wider community. While only few survey respondents listed this as the role of the chiefs, the importance of chiefs’ coordinating role in regards to communal labour was reflected in interviews with chiefs themselves and youth leaders. As an important arena of contestation and negotiation between youth and elders, this will be discussed in more detail below. Finally, many respondents described chiefs as the intermediaries between the community and the

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<sup>60</sup> DfID (2004), p. 6. Chiefdoms are ruled through the chiefdom councils presided over by the chief and his deputy, the Speaker. The councils further consist of sub-chiefs with jurisdiction over sections and villages, councillors and ‘*men of note elected by the people*’ (Tribal Authority Ordinance (1938)). The main functions of the councils pertain to law and order, public health, environmental care and food security (Tribal Authorities Ordinance (1938)). Chiefdom committees are the executive arms of chiefdom councils and their function is to act as deliberative and advisory bodies while also taking on a supervisory and scrutinising role regarding contracts, the budget and accounting. In addition they appoint chieftaincy staff (Tribal Authorities (Amendment) Act (1964)). The chiefdom administration provides administrative and technical support for the chiefdom councils. It comprises the treasury clerk, bailiff and court clerks, chiefdom police and in some cases health and works functionaries.

government. This certainly also reflects part of their ‘development role’ since funding and the distribution of taxes is still highly centralised in Sierra Leone.

In the spiritual realm, chiefs are usually closely connected to or hold powerful positions within the secret societies. While the secret societies have themselves undergone important changes over the last years, they still regulate much of rural community life, moral codes as well as the crucial initiation of boys and girls. As virtually all members of the community are initiated into the secret societies they ensure a broad power base for each chief, reinforcing through strict hierarchies of power and rituals a predominantly male gerontocracy.<sup>61</sup>

Chiefs, therefore, hold critical power in multiple realms, the political, the customary and the occult. Richards identifies the abuse of chiefly powers as a key driver of the civil war.<sup>62</sup> In his assessment, chiefs and elders formed a rural agricultural elite descended from local warlords with hegemony over slaves and dependent populations. This historical slave structure, solidified in the pre-colonial and early colonial days, was perpetuated by ‘customs’ and ‘traditions’ throughout the colonial and post-colonial phase and included a marriage and court system structured to extract labour and obedience. The war, in his view, should be understood as a form of slave revolt. Richards bases his claims not only on years of fieldwork but especially on in-depth interviews with youths voicing their resentment over chiefs’ demands for labour, community work and their control over marriage.<sup>63</sup> More importantly, he and Chauveau claim that much of this repressive system is still in place in post-war Sierra

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<sup>61</sup> DfID (2004), p. 13/14.

<sup>62</sup> Richards (1996); (2005).

<sup>63</sup> Peters & Richards (2005).

Leone endangering the development of a sustainable peace.<sup>64</sup> The study at hand concurs with the fact that post-conflict Sierra Leone shows important (and depressing) continuities with past power imbalances. However, a third of all adult survey respondents remarked that chiefs had substantially lost power. None claimed that chiefs were more powerful than before the war. It is to these changes in the realm of chiefly power that I turn now.

### **7.3 Changes to the Chieftaincy: Decentralisation, Youth's Rights Discourse and a Change of the Old Guard**

Challenges to chiefly power come mainly from two sides. First, a broad movement towards decentralisation makes chiefs no longer the sole bearers of governance, administration and policing in the countryside. Second, changes in the attitudes and self-confidence of youth mean that the populace is no longer a mass of subjects at chiefs' free disposal. This has impacted on two central chiefly functions, namely dispute resolution and the organisation of communal labour. In both of these areas a local rights discourse plays a central role. Moreover, many newly elected chiefs are now significantly younger, belonging not only to a new generation of chiefs but being closer in their age to the youths forming the majority of the Sierra Leonean population. This new generation of chiefs associates different responsibilities and privileges with being a chief, changing the institution from the inside.

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<sup>64</sup> Chauveau & Richards (2008).

### ***Human Rights as a Strategy for Intergenerational Negotiation***

A separate issue from the content of youth's demands, presented in Chapter 6, above, is the question of where ideas of more inclusive and egalitarian modes of governance originate. Exposing another important arena of contestation and negotiation, an interesting phenomenon in post-conflict Sierra Leone in this regard is an emergent human rights discourse. Posing as a rhetorical tool of contestation between elders and youth, the normative language of rights has had a number of behavioural effects on youth, thus, shaping communal dynamics.<sup>65</sup>

Youth's demands are often explained by the fact that they now *'have the awareness'* or *'they know their rights.'* Respondents located the source of this *'awareness'* in internal as well as external factors, namely the rejection of pre-war marginalisation as well as sensitisation and pressure from donors and NGOs in the post-conflict phase.<sup>66</sup>

*'The youth are seeking more for their rights than before. They were used before and now they do question that.'*<sup>67</sup>

*'After the war, the realisation came that the youth suffered a lot and far, far too long they were left out ... so they are now taking their right position with their new understanding of them being youth.'*<sup>68</sup>

*'... the youth now participate more in governance than before. The youth policy now makes it mandatory to include the youths in all chieftom committees. ... These were the lacking things that led to the civil war. These are also changes recommended by the NGOs. They made these conditions a prerequisite for their assistance.'*<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> As this theme only emerged during the data analysis process, it was not systematically explored during fieldwork and the arguments made can only be tentative.

<sup>66</sup> Considering that many of those who fall into the youth category today were at most 15 when the war started, it is likely that the post-conflict youth discourse has significantly fostered 'youth awareness'.

<sup>67</sup> SV22\_A, Kailahun.

<sup>68</sup> INT28, Vice Chairlady, Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

<sup>69</sup> INT17, Paramount Chief, Tankoro Chieftom, Koidu.

*‘These changes have occurred as a result of the many seminars, workshops where youths have been schooled a lot about their rights, role and the laws of the country.’<sup>70</sup>*

In the above quotes elder as well as youth respondents then situate the rights discourse within the root causes of the war as well as post-conflict international influence. Complementing these insights, several researchers have found evidence of processes and events which took place during the war affecting the views Sierra Leoneans hold on individualism and participatory governance structures. Triangulating multiple sources, Archibald and Richards point to a lively debate centring on notions of individual rights and participation across gender and different age groups in rural, central Sierra Leone. Speaking of an *‘invention of human rights “from below”*’,<sup>71</sup> the authors claim that, first, fighters across all factions drew on a rights-based language to defend their opposition to the prevailing exclusionary patrimonial system.<sup>72</sup> Second, and more interestingly, they trace evidence of more participatory governance structures during the conflict. In particular, the youthful fighters of the CDF took on governance responsibilities when the chieftaincy system was weakened in the time of the war. Moreover, many ‘commoners’ had to fend for themselves throughout much of the war. Drawing on these experiences, Archibald and Richards show how youth and women challenged elders in the immediate post-war setting insisting on the equitable distribution of humanitarian aid according to a *‘human needs approach’*.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Peters reports that former CDF fighters make claims, *‘based on their role as defenders of the community during the wartime, to better rights and a fairer treatment by the older generation ...’*<sup>74</sup> Moreover, Vincent found during fieldwork conducted in the rural provinces of Sierra Leone that *‘the need to*

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<sup>70</sup> INT72, Youth Leader, Pujehun.

<sup>71</sup> Archibald & Richards (2002), p. 340.

<sup>72</sup> Archibald & Richards (2002), p. 349/350.

<sup>73</sup> Archibald & Richards (2002), p. 345/346.

<sup>74</sup> Peters (2006), p. 139.

*involve those who were instrumental to the survival of their communities [during the war] now dictated a more inclusive approach.* He observes *'an interactive approach'* to community problems that has led to *'committee[s] comprising youths, women, men and elders [... looking] into such matters like palavers, women's palavers, protection of the rights of women and children and the like.'*<sup>75</sup> Interesting in this respect are also the conclusions Bellows and Miguel draw from a nationally representative data set.<sup>76</sup> The researchers find that

*'[i]ndividuals whose households directly experienced more intense war violence are robustly more likely to attend community meetings, more likely to join local political and community groups, more likely to vote, more likely to contribute to local public goods, and are more aware of local politics.'*<sup>77</sup>

Their data suggests that the war's primary impact was on individual preferences rather than on institutions or local social norms. This social and political activism on an individual level, in turn, has led to especially strong informal networks and local institutions in those parts of the country that were hardest hit by the war.<sup>78</sup> All these different sources, then, suggest that experiences during the war have deeply affected the preferences of many Sierra Leoneans regarding such vital issues as political and social activism, responsibility for communal affairs as well as participatory and egalitarian modes of governance.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Vincent (2012), p. 14.

<sup>76</sup> Bellows & Miguel (2006); (2008); (2009).

<sup>77</sup> Bellows & Miguel (2008), p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Humphreys & Weinstein (2005); (2007) find the reverse for perpetrators of violence. The most notable result of their survey conducted among more than a thousand former combatants is the strong connection between past experiences of violence and integration success: past participation in an abusive military faction is statistically the strongest predictor of difficulty in achieving *social* reintegration.

<sup>79</sup> For a comparative analysis on the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level during civil war, see Wood (2008).

Importantly, these local insights and processes align with the international human rights agenda.<sup>80</sup> However, as the above has shown, the human rights discourse in Sierra Leone reflects not only the agency with which local groups capitalise on external interventions but also the way in which the war has triggered a local shift in ideas and norms empowering and emancipating sections of the rural population. The main insight put forth here is that the rights discourse has not only impacted on the language of intergenerational negotiation and contestation but, more importantly, also led to changes in behaviour and ultimately practices in local governance. Thus, the potency of the local human rights discourse lies not only in the financial and organisational support from donors propagating a *'liberal peace'*<sup>81</sup> but more so in a genuinely local ambition for change based on lived experience. Even though the gerontocratic order and patrimonial hierarchies were quick to re-establish themselves after the war, such new norms, structures and institutions are difficult to completely ignore or dismantle. Foremost, 'rights talk' has given youth, women and children a rhetorical tool for resistance and empowerment. Thus, many youths now couch their resistance to chiefly privileges and power in terms of defending their human rights (as will be discussed in more detail below). Verbally challenging elders is progress in itself, in a society in which speaking up against elders was long unheard of. Beyond this, actual shifts in intergenerational relations have taken place. For instance, exploitation such as forced labour has declined and awareness of child abuse and domestic violence has increased. Moreover, activism for women's rights

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<sup>80</sup> Following the cruelties of the civil war, international actors introduced an agenda of human, child and women's rights. UN Women and UNICEF, for instance, have coordinated many projects on women and child rights together with international and local NGOs. Several other large donors have provided funds to smaller NGOs for similar projects, see DfID (2011); Concord Times (2012b). On legislation regarding human, women and child rights, see IRIN (2007a); Child Rights Act (2007). Implementation of these rights has been slow and uneven, see US Department of State (2011); Amnesty International (2012); Human Rights Watch (2011).

<sup>81</sup> Peters (2006), p. 139-142.

<sup>81</sup> Duffield (2001).

has brought (limited) changes in customary law in regards to divorce rights and alimony payments.<sup>82</sup>

In this study the prevalence and effectiveness of the rights discourse was mostly reflected in the vehemence with which chiefs and elders complained about it. At the same time this *'complaint discourse'*<sup>83</sup> reveals how youth, women and children are fighting for a change of norms and values guiding intergenerational relations on several fronts. Adults and elders denounced the rights discourse as a strategic misuse of the human rights concept, claiming that youth *'take everything to be human rights.'*<sup>84</sup> *'They [children] listen to the advice of their parents. This is how it operates in good homes but the Child Rights Act 2007 has been misinterpreted by most youth who now violate the instructions and advice of their parents.'*<sup>85</sup> First, then, adult and elder respondents complained that youth and children *'... don't respect their parents. They rely much on human rights in disobeying their parents and elders'*<sup>86</sup> in the home. Some of these children and youth even report physical abuse to the police and Family Support Units (FSU).<sup>87</sup> Similarly, teachers and headmasters criticised that students reported physical punishment to the police, jeopardising the *'maintenance of authority of [parents], chiefs and ... schools.'*<sup>88</sup>

*Q. So how do you discipline them?*

*'... Even my own children [I can not beat]. This undermines discipline. These human rights. The people say Sierra Leone is not right for child rights, human rights. You need a certain level of development for that.'*

*Q. What do you think?*

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<sup>82</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun; IRIN (2007a). Women in Sierra Leone still face considerable legal discrimination especially in traditional courts. Moreover, the emancipation of women is challenged by high rates of socially accepted domestic violence (INT49, Rugiatu Turay, Freetown).

<sup>83</sup> Reynolds Whyte, Alber & Van der Geest (2008), p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>85</sup> INT53, Court Chairman, Koidu.

<sup>86</sup> SV3\_A, Kailahun.

<sup>87</sup> INT20, FSU, Kailahun.

<sup>88</sup> INT27, Elder, Kailahun.

*Half-half. Children are individuals now. They used to be community owned. Everybody controlled, monitored, punished them. Now they turn their eyes. Because parents will ask, why did you beat my child.*<sup>89</sup>

Lastly, chiefs bemoaned that youth ‘do not respect the authority of chiefs.’<sup>90</sup> Chiefs saw this as critical as ‘[t]he chiefs really need the community work to be effective. This really is the disadvantage of human rights’ awareness. They do not participate in community work because of these rights.’<sup>91</sup> A community elder passionately claimed, ‘[The youth should] provide security, do the road and take any instructions from the chiefs and elders but human rights has stopped all these ... the youth these days are disobedient, drug abusers and thieves.’<sup>92</sup> The local rights discourse, then, questions not only the authority of chiefs but also propagates the need for a shift in schooling techniques and methods of parenting as authoritarian styles of disciplining, educating and bringing up youngsters are challenged.<sup>93</sup>

This dissertation claims that the rights discourse would have the potential to provide a far greater challenge to gerontocratic and patrimonial power than the organisational strategies pursued by youth. As has been shown above, youth seek to be integrated into exiting governance structures and for the most part do not challenge the logic of patrimonialism. Core ideas behind the logic of human rights, however, are, for instance, truly equitable rights, which are impossible to integrate into the existing hierarchical and asymmetrical framework of rural and national

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<sup>89</sup> INT29, Principal, Kailahun.

<sup>90</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>91</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>92</sup> SV200\_A, Makeni.

<sup>93</sup> In the context of these local struggles It is interesting to point out that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child has a separate article on the ‘Responsibilities of the Child’ (Article 31). These include ‘responsibilities towards ... family and society’ and ‘... the duty; (a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his [the child’s] parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need; (b) to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service; ... (d) to preserve and strengthen African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society ...’ (African Union (1999)).

patrimonialism. Moreover, human rights are thought from an individual's standpoint. Individualism, in turn, posits a fundamental challenge to the centrality of the community in the more rural parts of Sierra Leone as well as communal dependence and responsibility structures. Achieving equitable rights and a more individualistic society, therefore, require a transformation of central norms, values and behaviour at the core of communal as well as intergenerational communication, learning and relations. Such social upheavals can only be realised incrementally and in the long-term.<sup>94</sup>

The following will show the human rights discourse at work in Sierra Leone. Analysing how governance reform and youth empowerment are reducing chiefs' powers, human rights surface in several ways as a potential marker of change in social power relations. At the same time, the work at hand questions how deeply committed youth is to a human rights approach. What emerges from the field data is an ambivalent stance of youth. Youth draw on the rights discourse for protection from and resistance to chiefs and traditional authorities, fundamentally challenging local authority structures. However, the language of rights is at times used in an opportunistic way to merely avoid communal responsibilities, particularly communal labour, and rebel against social control through their families and community elders.

### ***Limiting the Power of Chiefly Courts***

Chiefly courts were at the centre of pre-war criticism and resentment against traditional leaders.<sup>95</sup> Allegations focused on the arbitrariness of rulings and measures of punishment, which had little to do with justice or law but rather aimed at

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<sup>94</sup> See also Labonte (2011), p. 110.

<sup>95</sup> Richards (2005); Chauveau & Richards (2008).

solidifying chiefs' positions and the gerontocratic order more generally.<sup>96</sup> It is worrying then, that Jackson writes that *'[i]t is one of the frequently reported features of the revitalised chiefdom system that [the] system of arbitrary fines is returning to the countryside.'*<sup>97</sup> A second major criticism against chiefly courts was their being used for personal enrichment, especially since the level of the fines lies completely in the hands of chiefs.<sup>98</sup>

Chiefs interviewed for this study argued that they do not receive a salary for their work and, thus, fines are the *'suit of the office.'*<sup>99</sup> A Town Chief in Kailahun claimed to adjust fines depending on *'... the circumstances of the offense and if the person is a student or has wealth.'*<sup>100</sup> Moreover, he showed awareness of the connection between high fines and popular grievances by stating that as chief he should *'... not demand huge amounts from anybody because that was what they say started the war. If [... the fines] are too high they prefer to go out [leave town]. If somebody comes to me, begs polite, says he will never do this again, then I return the money.'* Two thirds of the chiefs interviewed for this study claimed to not request charges for their advice and arbitration. This is a good sign especially as many presented this as a *'new method'*<sup>101</sup> used after the war with some specifically mentioning the adverse affects of high fines. These results have to be treated with some caution, however, as the sample at hand contained a disproportionate number of Paramount Chiefs and Speakers. These high-ranking chiefs rarely deal with day-to-day small-scale disputes and are more likely to come from wealthy families. The majority of Section Chiefs and Town Chiefs

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<sup>96</sup> In an interesting study, Mokuwa et al. (2011) tie chiefly court rulings to the seasonal demand for agricultural labour.

<sup>97</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 54.

<sup>98</sup> Peters (2011), p. 45.

<sup>99</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>100</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>101</sup> INT66, Speaker, Pujehun.

interviewed in the South and East did levy fines and these were seen as part of the income of the chief. In the northern fieldsites, Makeni and Magburaka, most chiefs stated that they did not levy fines but contended that they expected to be brought kola nuts, a valuable stimulant, from persons seeking their advice. Nevertheless, of those who claimed to take charges as payment, several listed an occupation, such as farmer, trader, businessman, which provided their main income.

*'During the old times there were no human rights. The people used to work for the chief, they were taken by force. They had obligations. They paid fines to the chief. They brought tributes, rice, meat, palm oil. I have to buy meat. If you do not work today as a chief you cannot eat meat.'*<sup>102</sup>

While a few respondents pointed out that *'[it] no longer happens [that] chiefs ... ask exorbitant fines'*,<sup>103</sup> especially in Pujehun and Kailahun many more displayed disapproval of the continued levying of fines. Adult respondents were very vocal in their criticism remarking that *'[chiefs] charge plenty money for minor cases'* or *'as punishment'*<sup>104</sup> and *'do not give right to those who deserve it.'*<sup>105</sup>

*'Chief are now engaged in collecting plenty money from people.'*<sup>106</sup>

*'I take too much care of myself not to have any business with the chief because I don't have money.'*<sup>107</sup>

*'I don't have money so I don't go to the chief and I don't allow people to take me there as well. You only go to the chief when you have money.'*<sup>108</sup>

*'We only have domestic violence but even this is at a minimal scale. ... [T]he main reason why we don't have much violence and disputes is that the chiefs levy fines. So people don't dispute for fear of fines.'*<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>103</sup> SV191\_A, Magburaka.

<sup>104</sup> SV19\_A, Kailahun; SV21\_A, Kailahun; SV172\_Y, Makeni.

<sup>105</sup> SV6\_A, Kailahun; SV5\_A, Kailahun; SV90\_A, Pujehun.

<sup>106</sup> SV20\_A, Kailahun.

<sup>107</sup> SV113\_S, Pujehun.

<sup>108</sup> SV127\_A, Pujehun.

<sup>109</sup> SV93\_Y, Pujehun.

Researching chiefly courts, Richards has focused much of his work on cases of ‘woman damage’ – the payment of (often substantial) fines from a person who has been accused of sleeping with another person’s spouse.<sup>110</sup> He claims that this was a specific grievance of pre-war youth as elders strategically monopolised the marriage market to control the labour and resources of young males who would become indebted to them through such cases.<sup>111</sup> Indeed a youth respondent from Pujehun stated,

*‘We have women palaver as a common area for dispute. We have old men marrying a lot of young ladies but they are not strong enough to sex their wives and these women go after the youths.’*

*Q. Who solves them?*

*‘The chiefs are in charge of solving these disputes and they levy heavy fines on the youths.’<sup>112</sup>*

Moreover, ‘women/man palava’ was listed most frequently in the survey question on community disputes (see Figure 11, below). While no in-depth and systematic analysis of the topic of woman damage is possible with the data collected, a number of surveys and interviews reflect changes regarding the practice. First, multiple respondents pointed out that excessive polygamy in the form of Paramount Chiefs with fifty wives (!) has ended, although modest forms of polygamy persist.<sup>113</sup>

*Q. Are there still cases of women damage?*

*‘If you have an affair and you are found guilty, we fine you and the money is given to the married person. It is not many, just few. Fewer than before the war.’*

*Q. Are there less affairs or just less cases?*

*‘Less people have affairs. Before, one chief would have five women. He would spend three nights with each wife, so once he moved to another wife the others would get bored and go to have an affair. If he asked them where they were, they would just say, “At the farm, there is a lot of work to do.” There was no way of tracking. But if he put pressure on her, she would say, “I was with Bockarie,” and then Bockarie was in trouble. He would have to pay something*

<sup>110</sup> Richards (2005); Chauveau & Richards (2008); Mokuwa et al. (2011).

<sup>111</sup> For a critique of this thesis, see Fanthorpe (2005).

<sup>112</sup> SV121\_Y, Pujehun.

<sup>113</sup> INT25, Elder, Kailahun; INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun; CV30, Elder, Kailahun.

*like 300.000 Le [approx. \$100] in woman damage. Today the chiefs have less wives. I have only one. The Paramount Chief has two. The Section Chiefs mostly one. The Speaker two.*<sup>114</sup>

Post-conflict Sierra Leone is ridden by poverty. The war also took its toll on the wealth and income of ruling families. Thus, it is not fully clear whether the changes in regard to polygamy are mostly due to economic factors, that is, chiefs simply cannot afford more wives, or whether it also reflects a change in social norms. This is an interesting question in light of the ubiquity of extra-marital affairs, which many respondents referred to as quite normal. Thus, it could be the case, for example, that, while chiefs have fewer ‘formal wives’ they have more temporary affairs or informal arrangements with ‘girlfriends’. This would be in line with research conducted by Hardin and Ferme already before the civil war.<sup>115</sup> Both reveal a highly complex and multifaceted situation regarding marriage and point to the volatile nature of relationships and marriages in regards to economic hardship and income fluctuations.

Respondents further reported that marriage disputes more generally, while still very common, had changed in character. *‘Many women quarrel over men. But men also over women’*,<sup>116</sup> thus, marriage cases include claims for ‘woman damage’ as well as ‘man damage.’<sup>117</sup> Moreover, often cases are between people of similar ages, that is, among youth.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>115</sup> Hardin (1993); Ferme (2001).

<sup>116</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>117</sup> CV30, Elder, Kailahun; INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun; INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun This is also reflected in the fact that divorce cases are increasingly initiated by the wife who now has a right to parts of her husband’s property after the divorce (INT23, Court Chairman, Kailahun; INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun; IRIN (2007a)).

<sup>118</sup> CV30, Elder, Kailahun.

In connection to the above-mentioned human rights agenda, important developments limiting the power of chiefly courts can be observed. Sierra Leone's (slow) progress towards a functioning rule of law incorporating human and civil rights has included a broad process of institutional decentralisation in the realm of law and order with an increased police presence in rural areas as well as more magistrate courts dealing with civil and criminal cases. This ultimately encroaches on chiefs' powers, as they and local courts are increasingly more restricted in the *type* of cases they are allowed to handle. A Speaker in Kailahun contends that they only settle '*minor, minor cases, [such as] swamp palaver, bush, boundaries. [Whereas] stealing, wounding, rape are all sent to the police.*'<sup>119</sup> Another chief adds that specialised police units now operate, '*[b]efore chiefs could interfere with all cases. Now there is the FSU [Family Support Unit] and Social Welfare and they take care of much. Chiefs are not allowed to act on such cases as rape anymore.*'<sup>120</sup> Moreover, as argued above, the awareness for rights, which youth display today limits the access chiefs have to potential criminals and the way they can treat them,

*'[Chiefs] were the custodians almost of the lives of the people. ...In your villages the chief would have the authority. ...The power was fairly strong and not everything had to go to the magistrate court and the police. ...The people obeyed them because there were local sanctions. For example, they could say that this person would not farm this year. ... So crimes were not too much. People had some amount of fear. ... Today, they would just take the chief to the human rights office, the police, the court. Young men who now commit a crime walk with their hands in their pockets. If the chief takes them in and punishes them, they will take him to the police or court. He will be in trouble. So next time that young man does a crime, what will the chief do?'*<sup>121</sup>

The above-quoted elder points out the decreased ability of chiefs to effectively establish law and order in their community, which surely is a respectable concern.

The flipside of this, however, is the overall limitation of power-concentration in

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<sup>119</sup> INT35, Speaker, Kailahun.

<sup>120</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

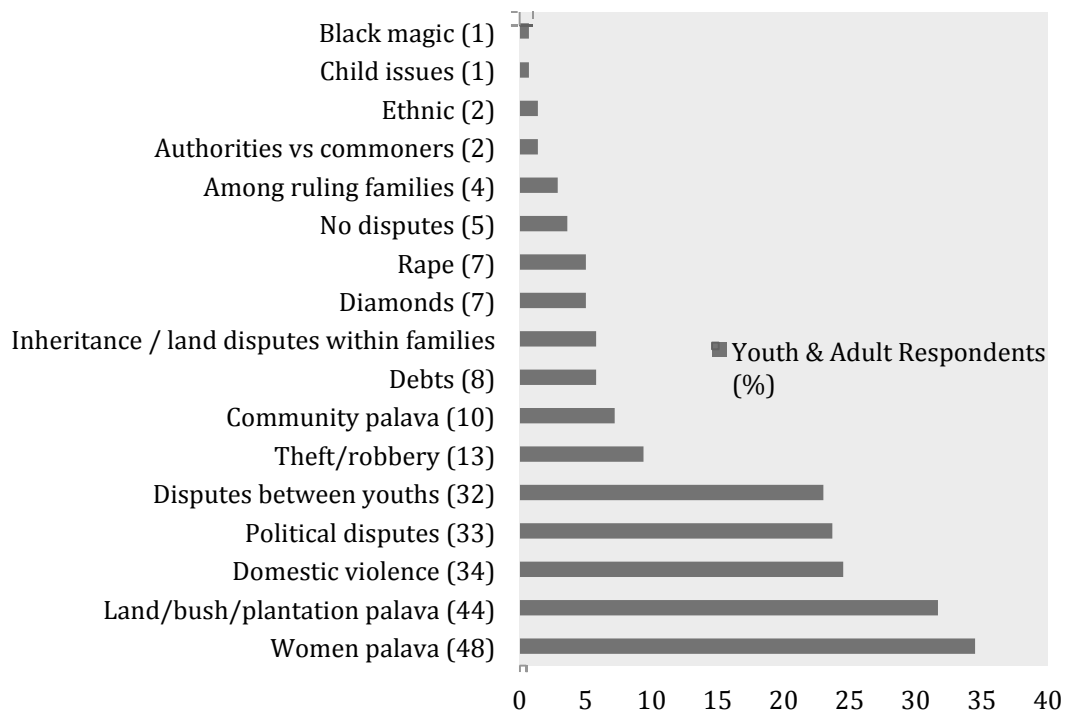
<sup>121</sup> INT26, Elder, Kailahun.

elders' hands and, ideally, the transfer of power to a neutral arbiter in dispute and crime cases, the police and magistrate courts. This is especially important in cases involving child and women's rights, and any cases brought against youths, in which traditional dispute resolution features an institutionalised bias against these groups. However, these developments are slow to take hold. The state does not have enough resources to fund permanent police stations and courts throughout the rural areas leaving the population with little choice but to consult chiefly courts. Indeed, seventy-two per cent of adults and youth surveyed observed that it was chiefs and elders who resolve disputes in the community (see Figure 11 & Figure 12, below).

**Figure 11: Disputes in the Community**

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: 'Which disputes happen in the community?'*\*

□



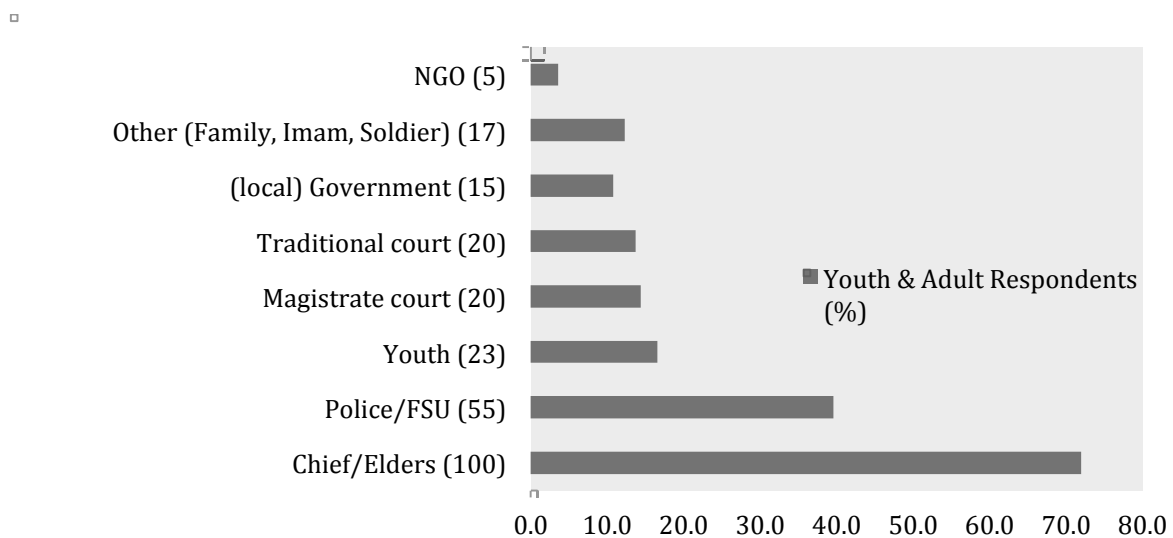
\* Number of respondents in (); answers in % of 139 youth and adult respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

This is in line with Sawyer's findings, which reveal that the informal chiefly courts are the most accessible institutions within the Sierra Leonean justice system for the

majority of the people.<sup>122</sup> Based on a randomised sample from three districts, he finds that across ages, sex and urban/rural location, Section Chiefs and headmen are considered to be one of the most effective and trusted local conflict resolution mechanisms,<sup>123</sup> especially when compared to magistrate courts.<sup>124</sup>

### Figure 12: Dispute Resolution in the Community

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: 'Who solves them [communal disputes]?'\**



\* Number of respondents in (); answers in % of 139 youth and adult respondents. Open-ended question; multiple answers were possible.

### *Contesting the Management of Community Labour*

Ambivalence towards the power and role of the chief is not only reflected in contestations around chiefly courts but even more so in the management of community labour, an area where youth empowerment and its challenges to chiefly power can be observed. Traditionally, community labour has been organised by the chiefs who call the youths for various projects and are authorised to fine those refusing to participate. The issue of labour benefitting the wider public is still hotly

<sup>122</sup> Sawyer (2008).

<sup>123</sup> Similarly, the secret societies are also perceived as legitimate institutions of rural governance and social regulation within local communities (Jackson (2006); Labonte (2011), p. 102).

<sup>124</sup> While this sounds like a positive assessment it may simply reflect even higher distrust of and sheer unfamiliarity with state institutions. I thank Henry Mbawa for this observation. This notion is also reflected well by a 2007 BBC survey, which found that Sierra Leoneans consistently trust their local leaders more than national politicians (BBC 2007).

contested. In some instances youth claim such work to be the responsibility of the government or NGOs. More commonly, however, it is not community labour per se, which is rejected, but its management solely by chiefs. Eighty per cent of male youth and sixty-eight per cent of female youth surveyed stated that they had been involved in community labour. All youth respondents (but one) expressed positive or neutral sentiments towards these tasks with seventy-two per cent of males and sixty-four per cent of females regarding communal labour as *'the role of youth in the community.'* As already discussed in Chapter 6 above, communal labour has undergone an important transformation,

*'The main thing that has changed between communal labour before the war and now is that before it was an obligation of the subjects of the chief for the chief. No compensation was given and whoever refused would be heavily fined. Today, it is not about no communal labour anymore but that the chiefs sit down with the youth and let them come up with a timetable, with activities and that, if possible, there are funds for food during this time.'*<sup>125</sup>

Unsurprisingly, consultation with youth regarding communal labour varies with the strength of local youth representation and organisation. In several places where youth participation was not encouraged, chiefs convened community labour in a predominantly top-down manner and respondents were more likely to mention work done by youths on chiefs' property rather than public spaces. In all fieldsites, chiefs fined youth if they did not participate in community labour. In the matter of communal labour organisation a clear rural-urban pattern emerged: in small villages chiefs held a dominant role, while in towns youth organisations worked closely with the district council to arrange regular public services.

These patterns are not immediately reflected in the answers to the seemingly straight-forward interview question *'Can you tell me which kinds of communal work*

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<sup>125</sup> CV39, GTZ officers, Freetown.

*take place in your community and how these tasks are organised?*' This question was posed to chiefs as well as youth leaders and revealed the contestation surrounding the coordination of youths for public services. In Kailahun and Magburaka, the two fieldsites where a large majority of youth felt represented in communal governance (see Chapter 6.3, Table 5), chief and youth respondents agreed that youth leaders played a leading role in organising the youthful population for communal labour. Coordinated and executed by youth themselves, chiefs and the district council would assist in the organisation either by calling upon the youth (leader) to suggest projects or by providing materials and tools, remuneration or food. Thus, a largely collaborative picture emerges from these two fieldsites with a significant role played by youth leaders and the youth population. In the three fieldsites of Koidu, Makeni and Pujehun youth displayed mixed to unsatisfied attitudes to youth representation. Here, a clear standoff in answers regarding communal labour emerges. In all three cases chiefs claimed to have organised the youth for communal labour, *'[communal work is ...] organised by the chiefs who summon the people in town and villages. If the people, mostly the youth, fail to comply, they are fined for neglecting community work.'*<sup>126</sup> Youth leaders, made the same claim for themselves, *'[r]oad maintenance, road construction etc. [cleaning is done on the] last Saturday of the month and when the youth are willing to do the work. They are mostly organised by the youths at their will.'*<sup>127</sup> While the majority of respondents in these fieldsites took contrasting standpoints, a few in Koidu and Pujehun also mentioned collaboratively organised communal labour. Triangulating the data from this interview question with answers to other questions as well as the survey data and observations, the following tendencies emerge. Youth groups in Makeni take a leading role in public service

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<sup>126</sup> INT60, Speaker, Koidu.

<sup>127</sup> INT61, P.R.O., Kono District Youth Coalition, Koidu.

provision strongly supported by the district council; in Pujehun chiefs remain strong in the top-down organisation of communal labour and in Koidu collaboration prevails. More interestingly, however, is the fact that the answers of most respondents seem to not necessarily reflect reality but more so the claims made for their positions. They can, thus, be read as displays of dominance vis-à-vis the other and a sign of contestation in the field of communal labour organisation between youth and elders.

As already flagged above, chiefs interviewed complained bitterly about youths' refusal to follow calls for communal work, citing the misuse of the human rights concept,

*'Because most cannot read and write, they have a misconception about what human rights is. They take everything to be human rights. In certain cases, when they are in dire need then some will turn up [for communal work]. The general case is that they do not show up. ... But there is this problem of misconception. The grassroots misuse [human rights]. For example, before the war, there was no gambling. Now many children are on the streets, they gamble. ... They stay with their parents but they cannot beat them. They will say it is our human right and go to Family Support Unit. So the parents handle them more relaxed because of the law. Even the girl child is now loose on the streets. This human rights thing scares parents from control.'*<sup>128</sup>

*'At times we have to use force. We involve the police. They say, it's their human right. ... You can sometimes see that the road is all bushy. If you ask them, they say, it's my human right, you cannot force me. ... The chiefs really need the community work to be effective. This really is the disadvantage of human rights' awareness. They do not participate in community work because of these rights.'*<sup>129</sup>

Another elder commented that human rights as such were not the problem but that *'you also need human responsibilities. If you get one and do not have the other it is*

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<sup>128</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>129</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun.

*dangerous. ... Now, people want to walk on the road but not make the road.*<sup>130</sup> While elders are surely biased, as they are defending their positions of power and influence, voices from the NGO and donor community also reflect on their responsibility in this matter,

*'The NGOs and donors have a lot of responsibility when it comes to the issue of human rights awareness. They have been preaching human rights but neglected to speak about responsibilities. For example, many youth claim that nobody can make them do communal labour anymore. But you have to show them the constitution where it says that everybody has the responsibility to work towards development in their communities. People just sit and refuse to brush their streets, claiming some NGO should do that.'*<sup>131</sup>

Chiefs claim that the refusal of youths to perform community work leads to the destruction of community buildings, roads and paths. While youths argue that developmental projects like these are the responsibility of the government, lack of governmental or NGO engagement has meant that *'... they have returned back to community labour in some villages. They waited for the government to bring development. Now they have started to organise themselves. They are better off now.'*<sup>132</sup>

In a similar vein, many communities rely on youths for (night time) protection and security. With scarce police resources loosely formed neighbourhood watch and vigilante groups provide this central public good.

The discussion then reveals two important insights. First, many chiefs clearly are uncomfortable with the changing power dynamics. Given the high participation rate of youths in community labour as revealed by the survey, chiefs display disproportionate criticism of those few youths resisting communal labour. However, it also shows a tension between the way in which youth envisions its role as

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<sup>130</sup> INT26, Elder, Kailahun.

<sup>131</sup> CV39, GTZ officers, Freetown.

<sup>132</sup> INT27, Elder, Kailahun.

communities' *'human resource man power'* <sup>133</sup> within the local social contract and a striving for more individually based rights. Given the realities of slow and limited developmental engagement by the government, however, the communal responsibilities of youth may ultimately trump their claims to human rights if they want to see changes in their communities.

Adult survey respondents were asked to evaluate the change in the role and power of chiefs. Their answers reveal several themes, which provide a nice summary of the above-analysed changes to chiefly power. First, respondents claimed that chiefs were no longer able to extract labour and goods from their subjects for their own personal use. Thus, personal enrichment by exploitation of the population has been limited. This also extends into the realm of labour used for public purposes. It can no longer be forced upon youth.

*'Chiefs are now educated; before most of them were uneducated. Chiefs do not ask for compulsory labour unlike before.'*<sup>134</sup>

*'... Another difference is before the war the chiefs used to get money and favours from us but for now the human rights do not allow the chief to take advantage of us.'*<sup>135</sup>

*'[... A]t first, before the war, the Paramount Chief used to force people to community labour but this no longer happens ... Human rights has reduced their powers and also with the introduction of council system their powers have reduced.'*<sup>136</sup>

Second, respondents report that authoritarian styles of governance have been replaced by consultation with the larger community in general and youth in particular.

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<sup>133</sup> INT68, Youth Organisation, Pujehun.

<sup>134</sup> SV33\_A, Kailahun.

<sup>135</sup> SV73\_A, Koidu.

<sup>136</sup> SV180\_A, Magburaka.

*'The chiefs before the war were totalitarian in administration but now they consult the community in programmes.'*<sup>137</sup>

*'Before the war they were semi-gods, difficult to approach. In fact it is a major cause of the war. The youths were not heard. Now we are seeing a difference; the chiefs now hold consultative meetings with youth. They can now be approached and they listen to the young people a lot.'*<sup>138</sup>

*'In those days they used to call the people their 'subjects' but this has changed a lot, the people are no longer their subjects. ... [T]he Paramount Chief no longer lords over the people and they are now partners in development. But some chiefs still remain barbarian and unprogressive.'*<sup>139</sup>

A third of respondents claimed that chiefs had lost power in comparison to the time before the war. The influence of the human rights discourse and decentralisation were held responsible for these changes.

*'There is now human rights so the role of the chief fall within the purview of human rights so this has changed the role of the chief considerably.'*<sup>140</sup>

*'Before the war the chiefs [... were] very autocratic, but in post-war they are limited by other institutions like the local councils and local courts.'*<sup>141</sup>

Chiefs and elders were well aware that times are changing for them. This is not least the case because post-conflict Sierra Leone is a country ridden by poverty and scarred by destruction. This was, for instance, plain to see in the town of Kailahun, where the residence of a former Paramount Chief, a three-story house built in colonial style featuring stucco decorations, now stands empty, walls riddled by bullet holes and windows smashed. Commanding large coffee and cocoa plantations, the extensive compounds of Kailahun's ruling families used to dominate the

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<sup>137</sup> SV69\_A, Koidu.

<sup>138</sup> SV76\_A, Koidu.

<sup>139</sup> SV95\_A, Pujehun.

<sup>140</sup> SV192\_A, Magburaka.

<sup>141</sup> SV195\_A, Magburaka.

townscape.<sup>142</sup> This prosperity, accumulated over generations, was made possible by the relative prosperity of the chiefs' 'subjects'. Thus, one elder, in his late seventies recounts,

*'Before the war it was nice to be a chief. There were a lot of advantages to being a chief. After the war it is no longer nice to be chief. We used to enjoy it but things have changed in the twelve years after we returned. The reason for this is that there is no money. It is not worth ruling over people who have no money. Things are not good for us as chiefs. For you as a chief, if all are coming from war you cannot request things in cash and kind from them.'*<sup>143</sup>

Importantly, as Peters observes, poverty also affects the social control chiefs have over their subjects.

*'The war ... eroded the financial power of elders over the youth. ... Where poverty used to marginalise some youth, it is now so general and pervasive that it sets an entire rural generation free of control by elders, who simply lack the resources to renew themselves as patrons.'*<sup>144</sup>

Reactions to these developments varied in Kailahun, ranging from clear dissatisfaction by elder chiefs<sup>145</sup> to the younger chiefs nostalgically recounting memories about the privileges their fathers had enjoyed.<sup>146</sup> These younger chiefs are another sign of change when it comes to chiefly power.

### ***A Change of the Old Guard: Generational Change among Chiefs***

In Allentown, a suburb in eastern Freetown, Chief Almami Sankoh was elected into office in 2005 at the mere age of twenty-one. His candidacy and eventual election was specifically supported by the youthful population of Allentown who demanded a chief from their generation. In return, the Town Chief is *'purely putting attention to youth'*, working on training and employment opportunities for youth as well as the

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<sup>142</sup> INT25, Elder, Kailahun; INT26, Elder, Kailahun; INT27, Elder, Kailahun.

<sup>143</sup> INT27, Elder, Kailahun.

<sup>144</sup> Peters (2006), p. 139.

<sup>145</sup> INT25, Elder, Kailahun; INT26, Elder, Kailahun; INT27, Elder, Kailahun.

<sup>146</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun; INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

reintegration of ex-combatants.<sup>147</sup> The youth chairman of a neighbouring section appreciated the youthful chief, *[t]he young [chief] tries to back us, the older chiefs are always annoyed with us. ... It is easier to communicate with the younger chief. His doors are always open for us.*<sup>148</sup>

In Kailahun, one of the Section Chiefs interviewed was only thirty-eight years old. His colleague, the Town Chief, was in his mid thirties. He clearly saw himself as part of a new and changed generation of chiefs,

*'... I was the first chief to be elected this young. They said, "He is too young. He does not have too much experience." But I wrote a proposal, got money. I prefer that to sitting down and getting fines. Today as a chief you have to contribute. Go to workshops, on the role of the chief, the responsibility of the chief.<sup>149</sup> You have to defend who you are there, you have to talk. For this you have to be educated. Speak English. If you do not speak Krio or English and are uneducated you will not be able to disseminate the message. The people there, they write on the flipchart, give you the pen and [if you can not write] you just sit with an open mouth. Chiefs are different now. If you are uneducated, the Paramount Chief will not send you to a meeting.<sup>150</sup>*

Nearly half of all Paramount Chiefs currently in power were elected after the war bringing into office candidates with higher levels of education. Many of these chiefs have also travelled or studied abroad; others have worked in development.<sup>151</sup> In the study at hand, younger chiefs were more likely to comment positively on youth empowerment and showed a positive attitude to youth leadership.

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<sup>147</sup> INT43, Town Chief, Freetown.

<sup>148</sup> INT42, Youth Chairman, Freetown.

<sup>149</sup> This line shows a quite amazing influence of international interventions in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

<sup>150</sup> INT14, Town Chief, Kailahun. This quote is also quite astonishing in the way it reflects the power of NGOs and donors to educate chiefs in their 'role and responsibilities'.

<sup>151</sup> Dfid (2004), p. 23.

Jackson reports, however, that this new generation has only been greeted with cautious optimism.<sup>152</sup> On the one hand, people hope that these chiefs will use their education and networks to mobilise resources and investors for developmental projects, protect chiefdoms against exploitative business ventures and to build constructive relationships with local councils. In DfID consultations, the Paramount Chief of Small Bo Chiefdom was presented as an example of a candidate who has taken steps to improve governance and development processes within his chiefdoms by directing aid funds to development projects and cleaning up the previously corrupt chiefdom's finances.<sup>153</sup> On the other hand, based on previous bad experiences with more educated Paramount Chiefs, citizens are also sceptical as to whether these candidates will use their capabilities for the greater good rather than personal enrichment, as many, for instance, have gotten used to western life-styles and prefer living in Freetown. The later accusation was brought against Paramount Chiefs from respondents in Pujehun, Kailahun and Koidu, surely not coincidentally those districts furthest away from urban centres and the capital Freetown. *'The ... Paramount Chief is not discharging the above outlined duties. As I speak to you, our Paramount Chief is in Freetown with his wife. We elected him to be with us but he is not doing this. And he is not advocating for us.'*<sup>154</sup>

DfID also reports fears that in communities with high levels of illiteracy, educated Paramount Chiefs would have a monopoly of knowledge in administration and development and that this could result in them being arrogant and dictatorial. Indeed, adult respondents proved to be more critical of younger chiefs, claiming that they were not mature enough and had too little experience for the post. In Allentown,

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<sup>152</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 109.

<sup>153</sup> DfID (2004), p. 24.

<sup>154</sup> SV87\_A, Pujehun.

elders from other ruling families who felt passed over by the election of the young chief started a campaign of black magic against the incumbent.<sup>155</sup>

As Jackson writes, *[t]here is a lot to be gained by using the energy and ideas of the new generation of chiefs, but the danger is allowing them to grow into a system where the old, more corrupt practices are encouraged.*<sup>156</sup> While rural relations, especially in provincial towns such as Kailahun Town, are changing, limiting chiefly powers and empowering youths, women and the wider populace, it is the entanglement of traditional power and political patronage, which shows much continuity with past vices.

#### **7.4 Continuities: Patronage, Corruption and Marginalisation**

Due to the abolishment of local government by President Stevens in 1972 and the increasing centralisation of power in Freetown, chiefdom governance was the focal point of authority and bureaucracy in the provinces over the past 30 years. With the 2004 Local Government Act and subsequent local-level elections in 2004 and 2008 the state is now devolving powers to the rural areas, empowering the newly created district councils with many tasks chiefs used to be responsible for. However, the Local Government Act fails to clarify the exact division of labour and responsibilities between the councils and the chiefs in such key areas as development funding, ward and chiefdom committees, local taxes and responsibilities regarding land and

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<sup>155</sup> INT43, Town Chief, Freetown. The chiefs of surrounding sections, however, respected the legitimacy of Chief Almami Sankoh and reported that they were actively guiding and educating him on matters of customary law and chiefly responsibility (INT45, Section Chief, Freetown; INT46, Section Chief, Freetown).

<sup>156</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 109.

resources, harbouring enormous potential for tensions and conflict.<sup>157</sup> Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal claim that such reforms make local governance an arena of zero-sum competition between traditional and newly elected officials.<sup>158</sup> While chiefs have mobilised quickly

*'... and have played a major role in the choice of candidates [for the District Councils], ... [d]ecentralisation is generally perceived ... as a threat to the extensive powers enjoyed by the chiefs in many regions, including levying fines, mobilising 'voluntary' labour and raising taxes, as well as controlling land (and diamonds).'*<sup>159</sup>

Importantly, however, chiefs and (local) politicians are also mutually dependent, thus, competition for power has to result in negotiations to mutually assure each other's survival. These links continue to consolidate chiefly power.

A major obstacle to efficient and equitable chieftaincy governance are patronage politics. These trigger a mutual dependence of elected government officials and chiefs, while the maintenance of patronage networks combined with very limited resources often encourages corruption.<sup>160</sup> In all of Sierra Leone there is a lack of accountability measures and oversight regarding such practices. Ultimately, this is to the detriment of the poor and disenfranchised parts of the population as money earmarked for developmental purposes gets misused and social advancement through education, jobs and political posts is confined to limited social networks.

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<sup>157</sup> Albrecht (2005), p. 17/18; Jackson (2006), p. 104; Labonte (2011), p. 102. For a useful tabular overview of the differences between the chieftaincy system and local councils, see Labonte (2011), p. 100/101. The government adopted the National Decentralization Policy in February 2011 as well as the Chieftaincy Traditional Administration Policy in August 2012. Their aims are to clarify implementation guidelines for decentralisation and address some of the short-comings found in the 2004 Local Government Act, such as institutional conflicts between the Chieftaincy and the Local Councils, representation in Local Councils, devolution time frames, and human resource management (Awareness Times (2011); Sierra Media Express (2012c)).

<sup>158</sup> Ray & Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1996), p. 26/27.

<sup>159</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 53.

<sup>160</sup> INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown; CV39, GTZ officials, Freetown; see also Ray & Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1996); Labonte (2011).

Patronage and clientelism are deeply entrenched within the chieftaincy system in Sierra Leone. With fierce competition for the Paramount Chieftaincy, it is common practice for ruling houses to seek the moral and political support of local citizens to win elections.<sup>161</sup> In the aftermath of elections, the Paramount Chief's key supporters exert pressure for rewards and opportunities. These can include favouritism in the handling of disputes, appointment to key positions of authority and economic rewards such as land.<sup>162</sup> Many smaller favours such as the payment of school fees, support with finding a job, payment for transport to Freetown, etc. are extended by chiefs and others in more privileged positions in return for loyalty and eventual electoral support.<sup>163</sup>

In the post-independence era, traditional patronage systems have been greatly reinforced by patronage networks surrounding political parties and the state. While officially Paramount Chiefs should be loyal to the government of the day and not implicated in party politics, their influence on local populations makes them critical figures in the struggle for electoral support on the national and, more recently, district level. Writing during the Steven's era, Milikin commented that the majority of the Sierra Leonean population only exercises '*indirect political participation*' mediated by chiefs.<sup>164</sup> As has been shown in Chapter 2.2 the practice of party interference in the nomination, election and even replacement of Paramount Chiefs took hold from independence onwards. In this respect, national politicians benefitted from manipulating local disputes among rival ruling families to their advantage.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Barrows (1976); Tangri (1978), p. 165; 167; Jackson (2005); Labonte (2011), p. 99.

<sup>162</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 101; DfID (2004), p. 13.

<sup>163</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun; CV9, GTZ official, Kailahun; INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown; CV39, GTZ officials, Freetown.

<sup>164</sup> Milikin (1973), p. 135.

<sup>165</sup> Milikin (1973), p. 132.

While post-conflict Sierra Leone has not seen any spectacular or systematic cases of politically motivated removals of Paramount Chiefs, as practiced during pre-war times, the manipulation of local politics by national actors is still common in the political game.<sup>166</sup> In this vein the current APC-government, for instance, selected a PMDC-member<sup>167</sup> as chairmen for Kailahun's Court Barrie, the chiefdom court. This effectively ended the influence of the SLPP-supporting Paramount Chief and other chiefs over the court.<sup>168</sup> Conscious of this danger, (paramount) chiefs are staunch party members who try to secure their position through the support of certain politicians.

The mutual dependence of chiefs and members of parliament is especially instructive in this regard. According to the 1991 Constitution, the ultimate oversight institution of chiefdom government is parliament; this supervisory mechanism, however, has always been weak as parliamentarians depend on the chiefs to deliver the vote in their constituency and the chiefs depend on parliamentarians to provide resources for their chiefdoms.<sup>169</sup> A parliamentarian explains,

*'... how it evolved over time is that they [Paramount Chiefs] were used to influence the politics in their locality. If I want to contest, I expect not only the Paramount Chief's support but also that he influences his subjects to support me. ... Even in the last regime the Paramount Chiefs were expected to work with the party of the day. Solomon Bewera<sup>170</sup> said "I put my campaign in your hands." ... If the Paramount Chief refuses to play along, he is sacked. Even chieftaincy candidates are sabotaged if they are not aligned with the "right" party. So all this interference politicised the Paramount Chiefs. So Paramount Chiefs are not acting in their own free will. They are tools, puppets in the hands of politicians. You can see it even in parliament. They are expected to*

<sup>166</sup> INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown; CV39, GTZ officials, Freetown; see also Fanthorpe (2005), p. 42.

<sup>167</sup> The PMDC was founded by Charles Margai a former SLPP politician who lost in the elections for the nomination as presidential candidate. In the run-off for the presidency in 2007, he called on his supporters to vote for APC candidate Ernest Koroma.

<sup>168</sup> INT24, Court Chairman, Kailahun; INT25, Elder, Kailahun; INT35, Speaker, Kailahun.

<sup>169</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 101.

<sup>170</sup> The 2007 presidential candidate for the SLPP.

*take the side of [... the ruling party]. So often you will see Paramount Chiefs go out when voting is taking place. Or they will raise their hand against but very quickly pull it back.*<sup>171</sup>

Patronage systems have enormous effects on the wellbeing of the community as poorer citizens who have no elite connections are excluded from both governance processes and resources causing marginalisation and subsequently resentment against the chieftaincy system.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore the pressure of patronage obligations drives corruption and undermines transparency.<sup>173</sup> Thus, the level of effectiveness of chiefdom governance varies greatly from chiefdom to chiefdom and depends to a large part on the skills and personality of the Paramount Chief.

The lack of accountability and transparency has created ample opportunities for mismanagement and even outright misappropriation of tax and government funds.<sup>174</sup> This is especially prevalent in diamond-rich areas where many chiefs have used their share of diamond tax as a source of enrichment.<sup>175</sup> The low levels of salaries, which do not constitute a living wage, further encourage corruption, especially when one considers the patronage pressures which are put on chiefs and their staff.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown.

<sup>172</sup> DfID (2004), p. 13.

<sup>173</sup> DfID (2005), p. 9. Unpopular chiefs have been known to use an authoritarian style of rule and abuse their powers. In many chiefdoms the chiefdom committees have been appointed or nominated by the Paramount Chief, creating ties of loyalty, which makes it impossible for these institutions to perform as independent advisory and supervisory bodies. Further, chiefs and elders often appoint chiefdom councillors rather than allowing their election by taxpayers (Jackson (2006), p. 99). Moreover, chiefdom staff, for instance, are often recruited in an ad hoc manner with no consideration of budgetary ceilings, skills of the personnel or actual demand, the number of staff varying from chiefdom to chiefdom irrespective of chiefdom grade, that is, the size of the taxpaying populations. As a result, many chiefdom staff are elderly, unskilled as well as unpaid while being close allies of chiefs.

<sup>174</sup> For a detailed account of chiefdom finances, see Fanthorpe (2004). On corruption and patronage, see Labonte (2011).

<sup>175</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 100. Moreover, corruption is even easier with payments from small-scale artisanal and unofficial mining, which dominates much of the mining sector in Sierra Leone.

<sup>176</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 100; DfID (2004), p. 12.

## 7.5 The Future of Chiefly Power

All the above changes considered, chiefs and ruling families still hold a very privileged position regarding access to social and political power and economic resources in Sierra Leone. More importantly, they enjoy widespread support and legitimacy in the rural realm.<sup>177</sup> Thus, some chiefs can still live quite comfortably off tributes as one Section Chief indicated, *'[f]irst, there are farmers who still respect the tradition and support us generously with part of their harvest. Second business people give kindness to the chief. Third, educated people are generous to us.'*<sup>178</sup> Moreover, chiefs and their families continue to dominate elite positions in communities, not only the obvious chiefly positions but given that many are relatively more educated they also take on leadership roles for youth or in schools. This is in turn reflected on the national level where a disproportionate number of members from ruling families are, for instance, members of parliament or important party representatives.<sup>179</sup> Most important is probably the insight that chiefs are still highly respected or at least 'used' in their official capacities by many Sierra Leoneans. Indeed more than half of all adult and youth respondents claimed to have consulted a chief in public and private matters as diverse as marriage counselling, inheritance issues, family disputes, patronage requests, theft, debts, and educational advice (see Figure 13, below). Interestingly, male youths reported the highest consultancy rates (sixty-eight per cent). Of those who reported never having consulted a chief, the overwhelming majority stated not to have had an occasion to do so in the past, while only few

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<sup>177</sup> Leonard (2011), p. 6/7.

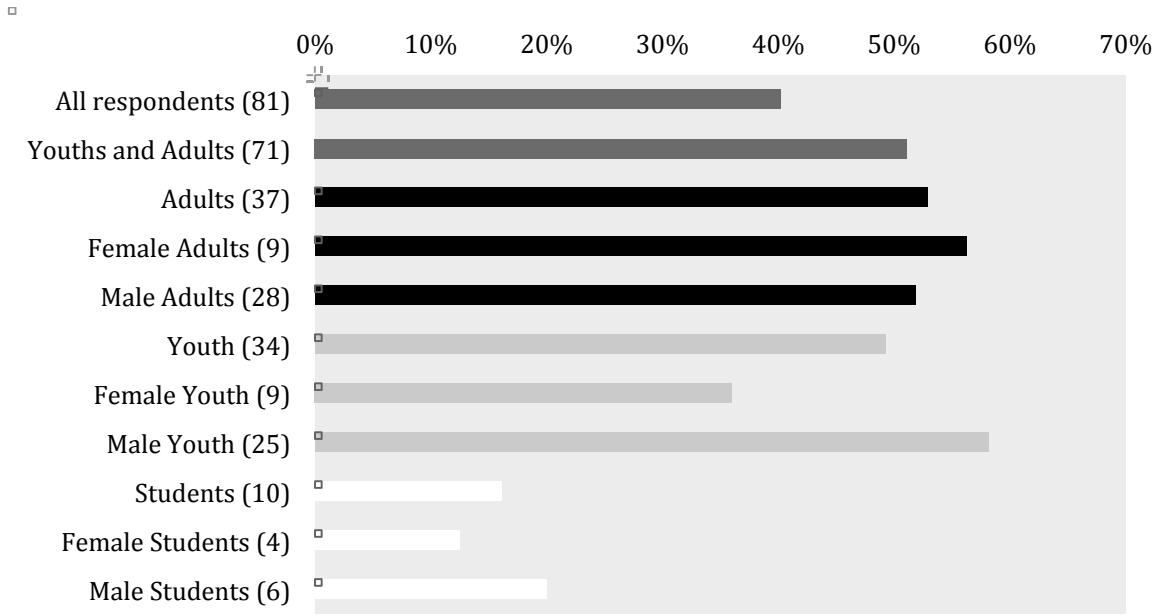
<sup>178</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>179</sup> INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown.

specifically emphasised that they did not trust chiefs or feared them (see **Figure 14**, below).

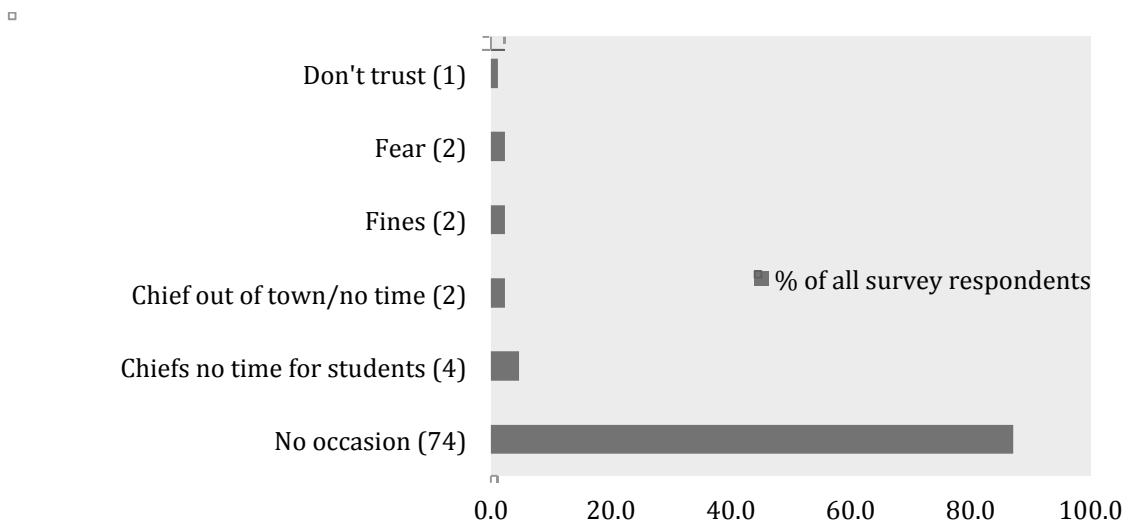
**Figure 13: Consultation of Chiefs**

*Consolidated answers to the survey question: Did you ever consult the chief?\**



\* Number of respondents who answered 'yes' in (); answers in % of sub-samples.

**Figure 14: Why haven't you consulted the Chief?\***



\* This question was not asked in Kailahun. Number of respondents who answered in (); answers in % of all survey respondents who answered 'no' to the question: 'Have you ever consulted the chief?' Open-ended question; multiple answers possible.

This is in line with Sawyer's findings from other parts of Sierra Leone. However, his data suggests higher criticism of chiefs by younger age groups with virtually no poor assessments of chiefs by adults and elders.<sup>180</sup> In the present sample students and youth gave a more neutral assessment of chiefs while a quarter of adults, made highly critical remarks. These focused on high fines, unfair judgments, too many political quarrels within the chiefly elite, as well as dishonesty and failure to bring about developmental change in the community. Given that most student respondents were barely born at the beginning of the war and youth respondents were in their childhood and teenage years, it is probable that their lack of experience with chiefs is shaping cautious assessments. Adult respondents, whose ages ranged from thirty-five to seventy-eight have clear memories of the pre-war years and more experience with chiefs and their dispute resolution. Indeed they represent the generation of pre-war disgruntled youth who supposedly revolted. Additionally, it is likely that these findings reflect another societal fault line, namely that of socio-economic status. As mentioned above, not every adult rises to the status of an elder, let alone takes on a chiefly position. Thus, unsurprisingly, tensions and conflicts also exist *within* the age group of adults.<sup>181</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear that important changes have been catalysed by the war and post-conflict interventions. A Speaker resentfully reported,

*'[w]e used to have power. Now human rights and the government interfere with local things. We used to arrest people and put them in prison. You can even call your subject and he will not come. We have no power to arrest and*

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<sup>180</sup> Sawyer (2008), p. 401.

<sup>181</sup> Similarly, youth – or for that matter any other socio-generational group – is not completely homogenous. This is certainly reflected in the many more opportunities children from chiefly families have, for instance. While the reservation of youth with regards to criticising chiefs makes sense within the research drawn on in this dissertation, I have no compelling explanation of why it differs so much from Sawyer's findings. Given the untimely death of Edward Sawyer, I have also been unable to discuss matters of methodology or content with regards to his survey with him.

*so he will not obey. ... Then there are the local courts and magistrate courts.*<sup>182</sup>

Thus, decentralisation and empowerment of youth are reigning in chiefly powers changing the way communal labour is organised and chiefly courts conducted.

However, important continuities exist especially in the realm of patronage politics. Referring to a bill being prepared in parliament, which is suppose to deal with chieftaincy (s)election and chiefly powers, a parliamentarian sceptically said,

*'I don't think the bill will change much about the present situation. We politicians have made the chieftaincy something political and now nobody wants to touch it. All are afraid that if they change something, the Paramount Chiefs will turn against them. And they need the Paramount Chiefs to get to their electoral base.'*<sup>183</sup>

Likewise chiefs are known to 'steer' local electorates in the direction of the party or candidate they expect patronage of, in many cases members of their ruling house. Jackson reports that chiefs have fined young people who pointed out that candidates for district elections have, in fact, nothing to do with the chiefs and are independent.<sup>184</sup> This jeopardises the great potential the popularly elected district councils can have in terms of representativeness.

Given these shortcomings as well as chiefs' historical responsibility for marginalisation and exploitation, there has been an on-going debate in the policy and academic literature about the future of the chieftaincy spearheaded by Richards, Fanthorpe and Jackson. For Richards, who grounds the causes of the war in community failure, the reinstatement of the chieftain system represents a reconstruction of an exploitative governance system that led to conflict in the first

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<sup>182</sup> INT35, Speaker, Kailahun.

<sup>183</sup> INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown.

<sup>184</sup> Jackson (2005), p. 54.

place and, thus, institutional transformation at the grassroots is necessary for sustainable peace.<sup>185</sup> Similar concerns are raised by Hanlon in his paper titled *'Is the International Community Helping to Recreate the Pre-Conditions for War in Sierra Leone?'*<sup>186</sup> Moreover, Jay and Koroma claim that participatory and accountable governance can only emerge in Sierra Leone if people change from *'being subjects [of chiefs] to citizens with rights and responsibilities.'*<sup>187</sup> For many donors, the chiefdoms are beyond redemption and local government reforms are supported in the hope that chiefs will swiftly become no more than ceremonial figures.<sup>188</sup>

Much to his dislike, this is already a trend a Section Chief in Kailahun observes, stating that the chief's *'position is much of a nomenclature'* these days and that chiefs are merely needed as a *'traditional label'*, while their actual powers are cut and respect is vanishing.<sup>189</sup> A Member of Parliament answered the question, *'Will Paramount Chiefs eventually become mere representative figures?'* by saying,

*'[y]es, that is what I believe. They will loose more and more of their powers and eventually be only nominal authorities. Chiefs want to hold on to their powers. Currently they are contested from two sides: first, the rights discourse and awareness of the youth and, second, the decentralisation process.'*<sup>190</sup>

The District Council Chairman from Kailahun concurred by stating that chiefs will continue to play a role in Sierra Leone *'but their responsibilities will be small.'*<sup>191</sup>

Relying on data from consultations within communities funded by Dfid in 2000/01 and 2003/04, Fanthorpe and Jackson reveal a considerable ambivalence towards

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<sup>185</sup> Richards (2005).

<sup>186</sup> Hanlon (2005); for a similar assessment, see Albrecht (2005).

<sup>187</sup> Jay & Koroma (2004), quoted in Fanthorpe (2005), p. 33.

<sup>188</sup> Jackson (2006), p. 97; Fanthorpe (2005), p. 34.

<sup>189</sup> INT31, Section Chief, Kailahun.

<sup>190</sup> INT40, Parliamentarian, Freetown; CV39, GTZ officials, Freetown.

<sup>191</sup> INT23, District Council Chairman, Kailahun.

customary rule, leading to a local preference for reform rather than abolition.<sup>192</sup> In a similar fashion, Sawyer makes a case for ‘restructuring’ chieftom governance. He bases his suggestions on representative qualitative and quantitative data from three major districts, in which respondents showed strong support for their traditional leaders. Specifically, seventy-eight per cent claimed that Section Chiefs (eighty-one per cent for headmen) were successful in resolving conflict and maintaining peace and security.<sup>193</sup> These numbers are especially instructive when it is taken into account that magistrate courts and state officials command much less trust and respect.<sup>194</sup> Sawyer, thus, refuses Richards’ call to abolish chieftaincy on grounds of popular resentment of the institution.

In the wider African context, chieftaincy has proven highly flexible to adapt to socio-political and economic changes and manoeuvre their ‘encapsulation’ by successive central governments. Indeed, in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, chiefs are by no means ‘... a thing of the past ... [of interest only to] the ethnologist, if not the archaeologist or even the palaeontologist.’<sup>195</sup> Rather, they have proven flexible and adaptable to ensure their survival and continued relevance. Data from various Sub-Saharan African countries suggests that today chiefs are especially valued for their efforts and successes in conflict resolution and local justice.<sup>196</sup>

The question remains, whether chiefs’ acceptance and support is merely correlated to the widespread failure of central and local governments to provide development, security and justice. Do Sierra Leonean communities put up with an out-dated

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<sup>192</sup> Fanthorpe (2006); Jackson (2005); (2006).

<sup>193</sup> Sawyer (2008), p. 395.

<sup>194</sup> Sawyer (2008), p. 397; see also IRIN (2012).

<sup>195</sup> French colonial official (1970), quoted in Nugent (2004), p. 106.

<sup>196</sup> cf. Van Kessel & Oomen (1997); Nugent (2004); Williams (2004); Logan (2008); Sawyer (2008).

governance system merely for lack of better alternatives? Drawing on the above-presented research as well as the data collected for this dissertation, I propose that the chieftaincy in Sierra Leone continues to be essential for local governance and well being. I would argue that this is indeed predominantly a function of weak state performance as well as the exploitative tendencies the central government and its agents have historically shown. Certainly, many more chiefs have shown genuine and continued interest in and care for their ‘subjects’ than politicians for their constituencies. As long as the state in Sierra Leone remains distant to the people not adequately providing public services, justice and development, chiefs will not only be necessary for the maintenance of law and order, governance and peace but also quite legitimately command the respect and trust of the local population. Moreover, the above question may again be posed from a distinctly western standpoint that sees democratic central governance and traditional authority as incompatible. Data from the Afrobarometer shows for fifteen Sub-Saharan African countries that Africans see it as *“commonsensical” that the institutions of chieftaincy and democracy can, and should, coexist.*<sup>197</sup> Thus, different legitimacies, local powers, legal cultures and practices are seamlessly integrated into a hybrid system, much like the tolerance for the seemingly conflicting logics of democratic and patrimonial accountability (see Chapter 6.4).<sup>198</sup>

More important, however, is the insight that despite all continuities, potential seeds for lasting change have been sown. The chieftaincy in Sierra Leone is changing – yet again – in important ways to conform to ‘modern’ developments such as popular

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<sup>197</sup> Williams (2004), p. 113.

<sup>198</sup> De Sousa Santos (2006); Logan (2008).

participation, equitable justice and developmental activities.<sup>199</sup> Prominent examples, presented in this dissertation are the inclusion of youth representatives in chieftain committees and court sessions as well as the transformation of communal labour from forced labour commanded over by chiefs to the local provision of public services co-managed with youth. Generational change amongst chiefs may prove to embed these changes in a lasting way, although it will take time and continued support and nurturing.

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<sup>199</sup> cf. Williams (2004); Logan (2008).

## PART IV

### 8. Conclusion:

#### The Generational Contract in Flux

Within Sierra Leone's turbulent history the brutal, decade-long civil war marked an extreme high point in violence and destruction. While uprooting the majority of Sierra Leoneans in some way or another from their homes and lives as well as disrupting the functions of the state and economy, the war nevertheless did not bring about considerable social, political or economic transformations. By and large Sierra Leone's post-conflict state and society are characterised by continuities, many of which lay at the heart of pre-war grievances. Indeed it is the lack of social change that observers of the country have repeatedly noted over the past decades.<sup>1</sup>

In the realm of politics, elite accommodation persists albeit in a highly partisan way. With little programmatic difference, the two main political parties, APC and SLPP, play their game of capturing state posts and resources entrenching corrupt and self-serving behaviour while staying unresponsive to the needs and demands of the population.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, intra- as well as inter-party competition continues to draw youth into violence, especially during election times. Importantly, since 2007 violence

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<sup>1</sup> Allen (1968); Cartwright (1970); Luke & Riley (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Albrecht (2005), p. 13; Kandeh (2008).

has become more and more embedded in the political culture of electoral competition. As Waldock observes, violent norms have gained purchase in Sierra Leonean politics as the levels of competition within the political system and, thus, the costs associated with loosing, have risen.<sup>3</sup> Reminiscent of the Stevens' era, the police has become highly politicised under the APC government while both parties draw on regionally based militia groups for the perpetration of violence.<sup>4</sup>

Youth's availability for violent behaviour hinges on the group's precarious socio-economic standing. While it certainly also reflects opportunistic behaviour, namely the hope of gaining lasting access to the favours of a patron, for the most part un(der)employment has not only resulted in low economic but also social opportunity costs for youths. Even though the international community focused their attention on employment creation for youth early on after the war, a decade later donor's reports are filled with surprisingly open self-criticism about the piecemeal and uninformed way projects so far have been implemented.<sup>5</sup> It is vital then that future funding is invested in training relevant to the Sierra Leonean economy while making sure to strengthen a labour intensive private sector.<sup>6</sup> Public works projects will surely ease tensions on the labour market while providing much-needed infrastructure but can only be a short- to medium-term solution.

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<sup>3</sup> Waldock (2010), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Waldock (2010), p. 18; 28. In this respect, Krogstad documents the fragile state of police reform in Sierra Leone. Asking the Operational Support Division (OSD) commander to compare the Internal Security Unit (ISU) with the OSD, he replied, '*... We are not much different, we are the same. We are doing the same job, we are the same people.*' The author comments, '*If the OSD perceive themselves as doing essentially the same job as they were doing during single-party rule, only with modern weapons supplied from Britain, the status of police reform in Sierra Leone as a success story is at risk.*' (Krogstad (2012), p. 279/280).

<sup>5</sup> UN PBC SL (2010), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Labonte (2011), p. 93.

The macro-economic and national-political framework is essential for Sierra Leone's further stabilisation and development. In this respect future research is needed on several fronts, two of which are tightly connected to the findings of this dissertation. First, the political economy of Sierra Leone is likely to undergo important changes with the onset of iron-ore exploitation and export in 2012. Revenues from this sector will not only make the state an even more lucrative prize to keep or win but also make the government even more autonomous from its population, further weakening responsiveness and accountability.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, major donors are likely to lose their influence on the government as their financial transfers are dwarfed in comparison to the new revenue streams. At the same time, China is likely to play a more important role for the Sierra Leonean economy and government as it becomes not only its major import but also export nation. While the finance from iron ore could provide the opportunity for a fundamental restructuring of state-society relations in Sierra Leone, past patterns of corruption, elite accommodation and weak state responsiveness in the realm of public and social services make a further retreat of the state more likely. Second, the problematic of limited state-society relations needs to be researched further in the light of increasing political violence. While violence up to date has in many ways been limited to inter-party competition mostly affecting those taking an openly partisan stance, the question will be whether a more systematic approach to violent conduct and intimidation will take hold. In this respect the co-optation of the

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<sup>7</sup> This process would be further strengthened should offshore oil exploitation prove commercially viable. Moreover, foreign land investments by Chinese firms for rubber plantations, which have greatly benefitted the state have sparked discontent among rural communities who complain about intransparency of these deals, the lack of adequate compensation and insecure legal status regarding new and remaining land titles (IRIN 2012a).

police and other state institutions points to real danger for the security, protection as well as freedom of the wider Sierra Leonean population.<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation has chosen a micro-perspective observing intergenerational relations and dynamics at the community level and assessing the attitudes and perspectives of individuals. Elders, and chiefs in particular, continue to hold a dominant power position in local communities. It is again the weak capacity of the state as well as the system of elite accommodation that goes on to strengthen the chieftaincy in Sierra Leone. Despite all their vices and a troubled past, chiefs remain central and at this point in time necessary pillars of local governance and justice. The trust and respect individuals display for them speaks to their continued importance.<sup>9</sup>

Youth on the other side still has a muffled voice; the socio-generational group is still marked by disproportionate social, political and economic exclusion, warranting a specific focus on the cleavage of generation. However, if there are important observable changes in post-conflict Sierra Leone then they can be found in the attitude and behaviour of youth. This dissertation proposes that youth has been vital in pushing for change and even successful in achieving transformations in selected local power relations. Nascent and strongly contested, they need to be nurtured and supported to develop into lasting social change.

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<sup>8</sup> The police force has regularly been criticised for its unprofessional (and lethal) handling of arms during political protests and strikes. In Spring 2012 there was a public as well as international outcry over the procurement of heavy weaponry for the police including heavy machine guns and grenade launchers just weeks after the UN lifted its weapons' embargo against Sierra Leone. While the heavier weapons have now been handed over to the army, civil society groups are worried about the police's conduct during the elections in November 2012 (The Sierra Leone Telegraph (2012); Sierra Leone Media Express (2012a ); Chicago Tribune (2012); Concord Times (2012a)).

<sup>9</sup> In contrast, a third of Sierra Leoneans do not believe that their views are represented by political parties at the centre or that these parties offer real policy choices. Moreover, levels of trust in politicians and elected officials, the legal system as well as the police are very low (BBC 2007).

In contrast to other researchers this dissertation takes a very inclusive approach to the group of youth. Guided by a numerical definition, put forth by youth respondents themselves, the term youth emerges as a positive social marker in post-conflict Sierra Leone. While denoting a highly heterogeneous group within which many marginalised individuals exist, the term has come to also reflect the self-confidence and pride the generation of war and post-war youth carries with them. This self-assurance is not only drawn from the fact that heightened international as well as national policy attention has put the group into the spotlight but more importantly stems from the increased stake youth have in their home communities. This is reflected in their management and execution of community labour, which needs to be understood as the provision of essential public services in the context of weak state capacity. In this respect, youth are active in the realm of security as well as infrastructure maintenance and construction. Moreover, self-organising as well as drawing on extensive external support youth are active in a wide range of youth organisations which communicate information of health, rights and non-violence and do their best to support youth's training and employment. While small-scale and not equipped for transformative economic development they nevertheless represent activism and engagement. Lastly, youth have pushed for representation and participation in local governance institutions. Even though large regional variations exist, youth have been successful in some Sierra Leonean communities in actively influencing local decision-making.

Counter-strategies from elders include the co-optation of successful youth leaders as well as the explicit exclusion and rejection of youth's initiatives. However, two 'elite' groups may prove to drive the youth cause further. First, as examples in this

dissertation show, 'elders among youth', youth leaders who have established themselves as patrons to youth, have displayed genuine support of projects and aims specifically targeting youth. Secondly, chiefs in their thirties and forties, questioned for this study, showed higher acceptance of youth representation and emancipation in their communities. Both of these groups deserve attention and close scrutiny in future research to track the sustainability of emergent strands of social change.

Drawing on these insights, I propose that while important changes in local power relations have taken place, youth do not strive towards a radical transformation of social hierarchies and power. I base this assertion, first, on the fact that I find a basic agreement surrounding the generational contract and, thus, roles and responsibilities of youth and elders in local communities. Youth accept their role as the main providers of community labour while respecting the experience of their elders. Secondly, youth's strategies regarding representation and participation are centred on inclusion into existing governance institutions rather than their abolishment. Youth then push for democracy in so far as they demand to be adequately represented. However, when asked about how they envision the future of the chieftaincy, none of the respondents, put forth any radical suggestions such as popular elections of chiefs or the abolishment of the chieftaincy. More importantly, the majority of respondents displayed an acceptance of democratic rules along with the patrimonial logic. Youth's claims for political and social empowerment are, therefore, deeply embedded in the existing political and social framework. This is not surprising as patronage politics are an all-encompassing environment in Sierra Leone rather than one option among others. While this may be youth's downfall as strategic and aggressive co-optation could eliminate active youth leaders pushing the youth

agenda, it may also prove more sustainable as it points to a path of reform and incremental change and adjustment likely to arouse less resistance.

The language of rights is, therefore, the most radical strategy of youth, as it not only centres on the individual in a setting highly reliant on communal cooperation but also challenges a broad range of private and public norms and values. Moreover, it is in essence incompatible with the predominant patrimonial framework. It remains to be seen, and is, thus, yet another field of necessary future research, whether children and youth continue to draw on this discourse to make more fundamental requests for social change. This dissertation questions how forcefully youths intend to pursue the debate on rights with its fundamentally transformative consequences. Its tentative conclusion from limited field data is that youth push the rights agenda only so far to resist overwhelming community and chiefly control while generally aiming at gaining access to existing governance structures.

The state and community failed Sierra Leoneans more generally and youth in particular causing economic and political collapse and a ten-year civil war. A decade after the conflict, the inflow of fresh resources is easing societal tensions and elite-society relations. The underlying problem of state unresponsiveness and limited meaningful state-society relations, however, persists. At the same time, the communal realm is the focal point for the majority of Sierra Leone's population. Tentative changes point to a slightly brighter picture here while gerontocratic dominance persists and is even necessitated by the weakness of the state.

Finally, the Sierra Leonean case is also instructive for other countries and societies in several ways. First, the analysis has shown that a generational lens can draw out the specificities of societal tensions. Given the dominance of gerontocratic rule and the persistence of ‘youth bulges’ in the context of weak economies on the African continent, the generational cleavage is of particular importance. While many studies focus primarily on youth, this dissertation shows that it is especially the dynamics between generations and the generational contract that are worth exploration and analysis.

Second, large-scale and long-term violence in itself, does not necessarily bring about change. Tilly’s findings of economic and political consolidation in Europe through war cannot be easily transferred to the African context as some authors have suggested.<sup>10</sup> While it is needless to say that war in many Sub-Saharan African countries has brought about high levels of destruction, suffering and death, the Sierra Leonean case shows foremost the continuities in social, political and economic structures and, thus, the persistence and resistance of weak states and economies, strong elites and elite-society relations marked by clientelism.

Third, change in Sierra Leone has for the most part come from the inside and from the grassroots. While actors have been happy to draw on external support and funding, the changes that hold potential for long-term transformation presented in this dissertation stem from the experiences individuals have made in the challenging

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<sup>10</sup> Tilly (1992). See also Tilly (1985) for a comment on a global analysis; for the African context, see Cramer (2006); Clapham (2000). Wood (2008) analyses the transformation of social actors, structures, norms, and practices at the local level during civil war in a comparative article including Sierra Leone. While she finds much compelling evidence that social, political and economic transformations occur during war, she concludes that the legacy of these changes are much more uncertain and ambiguous, as they are prone to reversal and/or need to be carefully monitored over a long period of time.

context of a war and post-war situation. In this respect international actors need to develop a deep understanding of the societies they intervene in more generally as well as the root causes of conflict and social cleavages in particular. Pouring finances into resource-starved environments will heavily influence the strategies of local agents. Understanding which processes and developments have genuine popular and local support is vital to coordinate and nurture lasting change.

Lastly, western ideals of democracy, the rule of law, transparency, and equity compete and co-exist in the minds of Sierra Leoneans with the respect for and trust in traditional leaders as well as expectations of patronage. As realities in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa these phenomena and institutions need to be assessed in their own right rather than held against western standards. Before dismissing them, researchers, policymakers and donors need a deeper understanding of the attractiveness these institutions hold for different groups in African societies. This may also imply openly accepting some of these structures and processes in place rather than insisting on an elusive ‘good governance’ agenda. While there is already, on the part of development agencies, much acceptance in practice, the current hypocritical approach to development assistance – based on talking rights, democracy, transparency, etc. but covertly accepting high levels of corruption and highly exclusionary governance – is a barrier to fundamentally rethinking the developmental path of Sub-Saharan African countries. Understanding the tensions and dynamics within and between African institutions and openly acknowledging them as part and parcel of African societies may make it easier to appreciate the potential benefits they can bring as well as reign in their overtly exploitative sides.

## *Appendices*

### *Listing of respondents*

In the following listing of all respondents as much information as possible is given on each individual without compromising the degree of confidentiality and anonymity as requested by the respondent her/himself.

The following acronyms are used to signify different forms of questioning:

INT: Official interview based on interview questionnaire; All interviews conducted for my MPhil thesis in 2007 are marked with an 'x' following the interview number; The overwhelming majority of interviewees were interviewed once, for those who were interviewed several times, the respective interview numbers are given in [ ].

EXP: Interviews with experts outside of Sierra Leone

CV: Notes taken during informal conversations

NT: Notes taken after observations/informal conversations

SV: Survey

### *List of Interviews*

INT8x, 07 August 2007, Freetown, Ex-RUF commander FM

INT14x, 15 August 2007, Freetown, Chairman, Youth organisation, [INT42]

INT15x, 15 August 2007, Freetown, Section chief, [INT45]

INT18x, 16 August 2007, Freetown, Chairman, Youth organisation, [INT47]

INT23x, 19 August 2007, Freetown, Chairman and auditor, Youth organisation, [INT41]

INT31x, 20 August 2007, Freetown, Ex-RUF commander GM

INT54x, 13 September 2007, Magburaka, Ex-RUF commander BM

EXP52, 04 March 2009, Telephone interview, Krijn Peters

INT6, 23 March 2009, Freetown, GTZ officer on youth employment

INT7, 23 March 2009, Freetown, GTZ officer on FGM

INT8, 24 March 2009, Freetown, GTZ officer for Kailahun

INT10, 26 March 2009, Kailahun, Volunteer to Youth Officer at District Council

INT11, 26 March 2009, Kailahun, BRA, Executive

INT14, 27 March 2009, Kailahun, Town Chief

INT15, 27 March 2009, Kailahun, local NGO 'Women in Action'

INT16, 28 March 2009, Kailahun, Jimba Ngobeh, ex-RUF minister for education

INT17, 29 March 2009, Kailahun, Bike Riders

INT19, 30 March 2009, Kailahun, Police Crime Unit

INT20, 30 March 2009, Kailahun, Police Family Support Unit

INT23, 31 March 2009, Kailahun, Tom Nyuma, District Council Chairman

- INT24, 31 March 2009, Kailahun, Court Chairman  
 INT25, 31 March 2009, Kailahun, Banya Elder (1)  
 INT26, 31 March 2009, Kailahun, Elder  
 INT27, 31 March 2009, Kailahun, Banya Elder (2)  
 INT29, 01 April 2009, Kailahun, Principal, Methodist Secondary School  
 INT31, 01 April 2009, Kailahun, Section Chief  
 INT32, 02 April 2009, Kailahun, Principal, National Secondary School  
 INT33, 02 April 2009, Kailahun, Principal, Ahmadiyya Junior Secondary School  
 INT34, 02 April 2009, Kailahun, NGO official at 'Marie Stopes'  
 INT35, 02 April 2009, Kailahun, Speaker  
 INT36, 02 April 2009, Kailahun, Social Development Officer, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs  
 INT37, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, District Youth Chairman  
 INT40, 15 April 2009, Freetown, Parliamentarian  
 INT41, 16 April 2009, Freetown, Youth Chairman [INT23x]  
 INT42, 16 April 2009, Freetown, Youth Chairman [INT14x]  
 INT43, 16 April 2009, Freetown, Almami Sankoh, Town Chief  
 INT45, 20 April 2009, Freetown, Section Chief [INT15x]  
 INT46, 20 April 2009, Freetown, Section Chief  
 INT47, 20 April 2009, Freetown, Former Youth Chairman [INT18x]  
 INT48, 21 April 2009, Freetown, GTZ officer on decentralisation  
 INT49, 21 April 2009, Freetown, Rugiatu Turay, Founder and Director of 'Amazonian Initiative Movement', Human and Women Rights Organisation, Lunsar, Sierra Leone.  
 INT50, 23 April 2009, Freetown, Professor Gbla, Forah Bay University  
 INT53, 13 September 2009, Koidu, Court Chairman  
 INT54, 13 September 2009, Koidu, Programme Officer, Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization  
 INT55, 14 September 2009, Koidu, District Youth Chairman  
 INT56, 14 September 2009, Koidu, Paramount Chief  
 INT57, 15 September 2009, Koidu, Secretary General, Kono District Youth Coalition  
 INT58, 15 September 2009, Koidu, Speaker  
 INT59, 15 September 2009, Koidu, Section Chief  
 INT60, 16 September 2009, Koidu, Speaker  
 INT61, 16 September 2009, Koidu, P.R.O., Kono District Youth Coalition  
 INT62, 17 September 2009, Koidu, BRA, Executive  
 INT63, 17 September 2009, Koidu, Vice-Chairlady, Kono District Youth Coalition  
 INT64, 02 October 2009, Pujehun, Paramount Chief  
 INT65, 03 October 2009, Pujehun, Town Chief  
 INT66, 03 October 2009, Pujehun, Speaker  
 INT67, 03 October 2009, Pujehun, Former Youth Leader  
 INT68, 04 October 2009, Pujehun, President, Wanjama Future Kings and Queens  
 INT69, 05 October 2009, Pujehun, Speaker  
 INT70, 05 October 2009, Pujehun, Town Chief  
 INT71, 05 October 2009, Pujehun, Chiefdom Youth Leader  
 INT72, 06 October 2009, Pujehun, Paramount Chief  
 INT73, 07 October 2009, Pujehun, NGO officer, Kindernetzwerk Sierra Leone/Pujehun Youths for Development (KNSL-PYD)  
 INT74, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Candidate for District Youth Chairman  
 INT75, 09 October 2009, Pujehun, District Council Vice-Chairman

INT76, 25 October 2009, Makeni, Section Chief  
 INT77, 25 October 2009, Makeni, Section Chief  
 INT78, 27 October 2009, Makeni, Paramount Chief  
 INT79, 07 November 2009, Makeni, District Youth Chairman  
 INT80, 07 November 2009, Makeni, Secretary General to District Youth Chairman  
 INT81, 08 November 2009, Makeni, Chairman, New England Ville Youth Treaty  
 INT82, 06 December 2009, Makeni, Headman  
 INT83, 06 December 2009, Makeni, Chairman, Pro District Youth Committee  
 INT84, 05 August 2010, Makeni, Speaker  
 INT85, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Chiefdom Youth Chairman  
 INT86, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Chiefdom Youth Vice-Chairman  
 INT87, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Assistant Secretary to the Chiefdom Youth  
 Chairman  
 INT88, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Paramount Chief  
 INT89, 07 August 2010, Magburaka, Court Chairman  
 INT90, 07 August 2010, Magburaka, Section Chief  
 INT91, 07 August 2010, Magburaka, Section Chief  
 INT92, 08 August 2010, Magburaka, Ceremonial Chief  
 INT93, 09 August 2010, Magburaka, Coordinator, Education Kholifa Rowalla Youth  
 Committee  
 INT94, 09 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth Leader

### ***List of Informal Conversations and Notes Taken***

CV1, 19 March 2009, Freetown, GTZ employee (cleaner)  
 CV2, 19 March 2009, Freetown, Former child soldier and his wife  
 CV3, 19 March 2009, Freetown, Taxi driver  
 CV9, 25 March 2009, Kailahun, GTZ officer  
 CV12, 26 March 2009, Kailahun, High school teacher; Research assistant  
 CV18, 29 March 2009, Kailahun, High school teacher; Plan (NGO) officer; Research  
 assistant  
 CV30, 01 April 2009, Kailahun, Elder  
 CV39, 08 April 2009, Freetown, GTZ officers  
 CV44, 16 April 2009, Freetown, James Vincent, Independent consultant

NT28x, 19 August 2007, Freetown, Police incident at poyo hut

NT4, 23 March 2009, Freetown, GTZ, Technical Meeting  
 NT5, 19 March 2009, Freetown, GTZ, Conversation with Country Representative  
 NT13, 26 March 2009, Kailahun, Scandal surrounding District Councilor Salim  
 NT21, 30 March 2009, Kailahun, Conversation with NEC official  
 NT22, 30 March 2009, Kailahun, Bi-elections in Pujehun and Port-Loko  
 NT28, 31 March 2009, Kailahun, Conversations with cleaner of guesthouse  
 NT38, 05 April 2009, Kailahun, Performance of Secret Societies  
 NT51, March.- April.2009, Journal kept on conversations with research assistant

***List of Surveys***

SV1, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV2, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV3, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV4, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV5, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV6, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV7, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV8, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV9, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV10, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV11, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV12, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV13, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV14, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV15, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV16, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV17, 03 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV18, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV19, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV20, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV21, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV22, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV23, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV24, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV25, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV26, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV27, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV28, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV29, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV30, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV31, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV32, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV33, 06 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV34, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Adult  
SV35, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV36, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV37, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV38, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV39, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Student  
SV40, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV41, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV42, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV43, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV44, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV45, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV46, 07 April 2009, Kailahun, Youth  
SV47, 18 September 2009, Koidu, Youth  
SV48, 19 September 2009, Koidu, Youth

SV49, 19 September 2009, Koidu, Youth  
SV50, 19 September 2009, Koidu, Adult  
SV51, 21 September 2009, Koidu, Adult  
SV52, 21 September 2009, Koidu, Adult  
SV53, 21 September 2009, Koidu, Student  
SV54, 22 September 2009, Koidu, Student  
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SV67, 22 September 2009, Koidu, Student  
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SV69, 22 September 2009, Koidu, Adult  
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SV71, 22 September 2009, Koidu, Adult  
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SV86, 23 September 2009, Koidu, Youth  
SV87, 04 October 2009, Pujehun, Adult  
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SV92, 05 October 2009, Pujehun, Adult  
SV93, 05 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV94, 06 October 2009, Pujehun, Adult  
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SV106, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV107, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV108, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV109, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV110, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV111, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV112, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV113, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV114, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Student  
SV115, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV116, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV117, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV118, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV119, 08 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV120, 09 October 2009, Pujehun, Adult  
SV121, 09 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV122, 09 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV123, 09 October 2009, Pujehun, Youth  
SV124, 28 November 2009, Makeni, Youth  
SV125, 28 November 2009, Makeni, Student  
SV126, 28 November 2009, Makeni, Student  
SV127, 28 November 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV128, 29 November 2009, Makeni, Youth  
SV129, 29 November 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV130, 05 December 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV131, 05 December 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV132, 05 December 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV133, 05 December 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV134, 06 December 2009, Makeni, Youth  
SV135, 06 December 2009, Makeni, Adult  
SV136, 08 August 2010, Magburaka, Student  
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SV145, 09 August 2010, Magburaka, Student  
SV146, 09 August 2010, Magburaka, Student  
SV147, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Student  
SV148, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Student

SV149, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Student  
SV150, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Student  
SV151, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Student  
SV152, 04 August 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV153, 04 August 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV154, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV155, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV156, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV157, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV158, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV159, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV160, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV161, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV162, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV163, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV164, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV165, 09 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV166, 09 August 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV167, 26 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV168, 26 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV169, 26 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV170, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV171, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV172, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV173, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV174, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV175, 27 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV176, 28 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV177, 28 October 2010, Makeni, Youth  
SV178, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV179, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Youth  
SV180, 05 August 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV181, 06 August 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV182, 07 August 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV183, 08 August 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV184, 08 August 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV185, 28 October 2010, Makeni, Adult  
SV186, 28 October 2010, Makeni, Adult  
SV187, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV188, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV189, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
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SV196, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV197, 28 October 2010, Magburaka, Adult  
SV198, 29 October 2010, Makeni, Adult

SV199, 29 October 2010, Makeni, Adult  
SV200, 29 October 2010, Makeni, Adult  
SV201, 29 October 2010, Makeni, Adult  
SV202, 29 October 2010, Makeni, Adult



<b>War experience</b>	
	Can I ask you a few questions about your experience during the war?
	Where did you live in 1990 (before the war)?
<i>Victimisation</i>	Can you tell me what the time of the war was like for you and your family?
	Did you or anybody in your family to flee during the war? <i>If YES:</i> where to, how long?
<i>Participation</i>	Did you or somebody in your household work or fight with any of the forces during the war? <i>If YES:</i> who, with which force?
	Did you or anybody in your household receive DDR benefits?
<b>Youth</b>	
<i>Youth definition</i>	How do young people achieve adulthood? Has this always been the way to achieve adulthood?
<i>Importance of youth</i>	Can you tell me which role young people have in a community? Has this always been the role of young people?
	Can you tell me which role adults have in a community? Has this always been the role of adults?
	In which ways can young people learn from older members of the community?
	Can older persons learn from young people? In which ways?
	Do you think it is important for young people to be included in decision-making processes? <i>If YES:</i> Are any youth included in decision making processes in this community? Where? <i>If YES:</i> In which ways do you as a chief encourage youth participation? <i>If NO:</i> Why not?
	<i>(if not answered above)</i> Do you think older people are better suited for leadership positions in the community?
	How do young people usually go about finding a job? If somebody wants to get a job, is it more important for him to have good skills/a good education or to know the right people?
	Are young people organised in this community?
	Is there ever any trouble with young people in this community? <i>If YES:</i> which kind of trouble? How is this trouble normally solved? <i>If NO:</i> Why not?
<i>War changes</i>	<i>(Check with chief's age!)</i> If you look back to the time before the war, was the role of youth different then? Why do you think these changes occurred?
	What do you think is the biggest challenge for young people today? Do women and men face different challenges?
	Are there other changes, regarding youth, which you think would be important for the future?
<b>Governance</b>	
<i>Accountability mechanisms</i>	Do you think it is important that local and national leaders are elected by the people? <i>If YES:</i> Why do you think elections are important?



<b>Youth</b>	
<i>Youth definition</i>	How do you define youth?
<i>Importance of youth</i>	Can you tell me which role young people have in a community? Is there a difference in the role young women and young men play?
	Can you tell me which role adults have in a community?
	In which ways can young people learn from older members of the community?
	Can older persons learn from young people? In which ways?
	Do you think it is important for young people to be included in decision-making processes? <i>If YES:</i> Are any youth included in decision making processes in this community? Where? <i>If NO:</i> Why not? Do elders or the chief encourage youth participation?
	<i>(if not answered above)</i> Do you think older people are better suited for leadership positions in the community?
	How do young people usually go about finding a job? If somebody wants to get a job, is it more important for him to have good skills/a good education or to know the right people?
	Are young people organised in this community? Which orgs are there? What do these orgs do? Why are they important for youth? Are they different for women and men?
	Who is the youth leader? How did he/she become selected? What is the most important task of the youth leader? What makes the youth leader popular/accepted? How old is the youth leader?
<i>War changes</i>	<i>(Check youths age!)</i> If you look back to the time before the war, was the role of youth different then? Why do you think these changes occurred?
	What do you think is the biggest challenge for young people today? Do women and men face different challenges?
	Are there other changes, regarding youth, which you think would be important for the future?
<b>Governance (democracy vs. patrimonial structures)</b>	
<i>Accountability mechanisms</i>	Do you think it is important that local and national leaders are elected by the people? <i>If YES:</i> Why do you think elections are important? <i>If NO:</i> Why don't you think elections are important?
	What do you think is the most important reason for other people to vote for a certain candidate?
	Do you believe that elected parliamentarians or local councillors have responsibilities towards the people in their constituencies? <i>If YES:</i> Which responsibilities? Do you think an elected official should reward the communities, which voted for him, for example, by organising development projects there? What do you think of a government official who demands a favour or an additional payment for some service that is part of his job?

	<p>Did you vote in the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections?  <i>If YES:</i> What was your most important reason for voting for a specific presidential/parliamentary candidate? Which other reasons were important?  <i>If NO:</i> Why did you not vote?</p> <p>Did you vote in the 2008 local council elections?  <i>If YES:</i> What was your most important reason for voting for a specific local councillor candidate? Which other reasons were important?  <i>If NO:</i> Why did you not vote?</p>
<i>Chief resp.</i>	<p>What is the most important function/task of the chief?          Which other functions/tasks of the chief do you find important?          What makes the chief popular/accepted?</p>
<i>Dispute resolution</i>	<p>What kinds of disputes arise in this community?          How are disputes in the community usually solved?</p>
<i>Communal work</i>	<p>Can you tell me which kinds of communal work take place in your community and how these tasks are organised?</p>
<b><i>War experience</i></b>	
	<p>Can I ask you a few questions about your experience during the war?</p>
	<p>Where did you live in 1990 (before the war)?</p>
<i>Victimisation</i>	<p>Can you tell me what the time of the war was like for you and your family?</p>
	<p>Did you or anybody in your family flee during the war? <i>If YES:</i> where to, how long?</p>
<i>Participation</i>	<p>Did you or somebody in your household work or fight with any of the forces during the war?  <i>If YES:</i> who with which force?</p>
	<p>Did you or anybody in your household receive DDR benefits?</p>

*Note down any comments you have, anything peculiar about the interview situation, any afterthoughts you have.*







## ***Bibliography***

The Bibliography does not give a comprehensive overview of all sources drawn on in the course of my doctoral research but is limited to those works, which are referred to within this dissertation. It is divided into four sections: Academic Monographs, Journal Articles and Working Papers; Policy Reports and Government Documents; Newspaper Articles and Online Media; Websites; and Theses and Unpublished Material.

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