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Poor People's Politics in East Timor.

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Abstract

Poor people attempting to claim a share of resources in post-conflict societies seek allies internationally and nationally in attempts to empower their campaigns. In so doing, they mobilize the languages of liberalism, nationalism and local cultural tradition selectively and opportunistically to both justify stances that transgress the strictures of local culture and to cement alliances with more powerful actors. In the case of poor widows in East Timor, the languages of nationalism, ritual, and justice were intermingled in a campaign aimed at both international actors and the national state in a bid to claim a position of status in the post-conflict order.

Keywords

Justice, poor people's politics, peacebuilding.

The critical strand of the local turn in peacebuilding focuses on the practices, beliefs and attitudes of 'subaltern' actors at local level as a potential site of agency and resistance to a perceived violent imposition of homogeneity by liberal peacebuilders.[1] For such critics, the "liberal peace" represents an ideologically driven attempt to regulate and thereby disempower a Global South regarded as dangerous and unruly. An emancipatory alternative to the liberal peace would thus involve a radical shift in peacebuilding practice, in which indigenous practices are not merely coopted to a liberal peacebuilding agenda but given the scope to construct that agenda themselves. While critics continue to debate the nature of the liberal peace, my concern here is to examine the construction of the "local" as the antithesis of the liberal peace – the idea of "local" as a culturally authentic sphere of humble agency in which alternatives and correctives to the structural and physical violence of the liberal (anti-)peace may usefully be sought.[2]

This raises the question of what exactly is meant by "indigeneity" or "the local" and who is entitled to speak for it. For critics of the liberal peace such as Richmond and Mac Ginty, the local is defined as both a relational term and as a realm of alternatives rooted in a variety of indigenous practices. Thus the concept of the local operates both to distinguish the "subaltern" from dominant

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and oppressive social forces and to designate a collection of possibilities that are separate from the liberal peace and which inform strategies of resistance with the effect of resisting or modifying and thus hybridizing peace interventions. According to Mac Ginty, the local is thus "culturally intuitive";[3] indigenous practices "may be able to connect more intuitively with the cultural expectations of communities and thus attain a sustainability and legitimacy that more technocratic interventions cannot."[4] As such, they are better able to operate as a vehicle for individual agency at local level.

However, as Mac Ginty also acknowledges,[5] the cultural repertoires available to local actors are themselves hybrid products of long-standing engagement between local and external actors. "Indigeneity" is itself constructed, and therefore subject to operations of power. This suggests that contestation of one sort or another is inevitably ongoing within local communities over the nature of "cultural authenticity" itself. Thus we should expect that, in any local situation, actors are engaged in political manoeuvring both internally, over the nature of "culture" and externally, over the practices and meanings of intervention. Problematizing the local in this way suggests that some local actors may regard international intervention not as essentially oppressive, but as potentially the source of allies that can assist in local struggles. It cannot be assumed that the local will unite in resistance – whether active or passive – to liberal intervention, and the empirical record from the colonial era onwards in fact shows many instances of efforts by different groups of actors to forge alliances with international intervenors to assist them in local struggles. The thesis put forward here is that understanding how this plays out is highly contingent upon a whole of range of factors of which "culture" is just a part. Outcomes are better understood as emerging from the intersection between, on the one hand, a *politics* of culture in a post-conflict context, couched as a claim to power and status advanced against "outsiders" and interlopers; and on the other, the business of constructing new economic, political and social orders and making claims for their authority – a project in which local actors are significantly engaged.

The danger of a cultural-based approach is that it can convey local actors as unrealistically egalitarian and unified. The idea that culture is "intuitive" may lead to the presumption that indigenous practices are also legitimate in equal measure to all members of a given society, rather than vehicles for the exercise of power, possibly oppressively. Contemporary cultural theory has rejected this approach to culture as a functioning and unquestioned system of meaning. Culture is regarded less as a set of practices that bind a community together, as it was understood the days of colonial anthropology, and more as an open-ended series of contested interactions between meaning

and power. Major figures in social theory have discussed the nature of these actions differently – Foucault, for example, sees meaning as a product of micro-technologies of power that construct knowledge itself.[6] For James Scott, by contrast, meaning is between dominant and subaltern classes who use resources of power to promote diametrically opposed "transcripts." Although hidden, the transcript of the subaltern is a rich, vibrant and evolving narrative, which parodies, punctures and critiques the ideologies of the powerful.[7] A third pole is provided by a Gramscian approach, in which power is transformed into hegemonic meaning via civil society, but always in an incomplete way, with the significant possibility of rupture and crisis.[8]

This article adopts a Gramscian perspective, locating struggles over culture and power in the framework of political economy. This implies three connected analytical claims about local level responses to intervention. First, the status of culture is understood to be a product of conflictual power relations at local level, which in virtually every imaginable case in the contemporary world have been significantly affected already by a whole variety of transnational and international influences, stretching back in time. In contexts of crisis, such as war and intervention, this status may be significantly challenged. Thus, political outcomes of liberal interventions in post-conflict communities cannot be predicted from an advance audit of pre-existing cultural practice. Rather, interventions must be understood as intervening in ongoing local struggles, over power and resources as well as over meaning.

Second, power relations at local level are understood through the lens of political economy. This means that economic structures have an effect of social stratification, not only between the international and the local but within local societies, producing oppressive power relations of exploitation and conflicts of interest that give rise to contestation. Economic realities impose different kinds of material constraints upon the agency of different actors, locally and internationally, such that the poor contest local politics from a disadvantaged position. Furthermore, in a period of rapid change following war and intervention, the basis for distribution of economic resources transforms, via the emergence of new modes of production, new institutions for distribution and the emergence of a new political economy of entitlement. Class relations within post-conflict communities are unsettled and turbulent but also often highly unequal.

Third, a political economy perspective allows for the possibility that economic interests and cultural norms may come into conflict in times of rapid change, prompting local actors to view international intervention not as a cultural threat but as an economic opportunity, which may in turn

3

be converted into cultural capital in a new cultural order. Disjunctures between a local politics of cultural authenticity asserting local unity and solidarity and local experience of hierarchy, inequality and exclusion open up possibilities for local actors to be reflective and critical of local cultural repertoires. The likely residual power of local systems of social control means that such possibilities are not always evident to local actors, but fleeting, changeable and partially glimpsed. Consequently we should expect that the poor, in any local situation, will have an ambivalent relationship with local culture – partially accepting of received views of the "tradition" but partially rejecting it as the social order changes. This gives the poor in any particular local context critical opportunities to reject or modify aspects, not only of the liberal peace, but also of the dominant version of "local culture", even while using both of these as bases for building both idealist and opportunistic alliances with more powerful actors, local and international, with significant implications for the success or failure of international peacebuilding schemes.

Within this framework, three potentially significant characteristics of the poor in post-conflict setting can thus be hypothesized. First, their activism is constrained by material hardship and by partial acceptance of ideological agendas promoted by *both* local elites and liberal peacebuilders. These constraints are dynamic, evolving over time and taking different forms in different contexts. Second, the response of the poor to these efforts is not pre-determined, but similarly dynamic. For the poor, opportunities to engage in peacebuilding will certainly be culturally inflected, but this does not imply a fixed repertoire of culturally mandated responses that peace builders can be trained to identify. Rather, the responses of the poor to opportunities offered by peace building or international development programming will be highly contingent upon a complex interplay of rational calculation, material constraint and cultural resources. The latter may not necessarily be very traditional, but may have been significantly affected by the various transformations of social institutions produced by migrations, militarisations and destructions associated with contemporary warfare. Third, and as a result, "the local" should not be regarded by peacebuilders as providing the grounding for some kind of procedural legitimacy as an underpinning for peace. Peace, in my argument, is achieved when the poor are relatively successful in pressing their claims through struggles with both local and international actors. It does not rest on dubious and often politicized claims of cultural authenticity, but arguably upon whether some measure of distributional justice is achieved through material struggle.

This paper examines a women's campaign for justice in Timor-Leste, using this conceptual framework. The argument put forward suggests that the perspectives of the women involved were

4

partially defined by culturally mandated norms, but were also concerned to deploy culturally meaningful claims strategically and self-consciously in the struggle for a place in the post-war social, political and cultural order. The experience of independence caused a deep cultural crisis in East Timor in which the status of widows of independence heroes with respect to gender roles, citizenship entitlements and claims to justice became highly politicized and heavily contested. For the women involved in the campaign, this contestation took the form of efforts to knit together a range of strategic alliances, half-glimpsed opportunities and multiple frames of reference into strategies to enhance their status and their claims in different contexts simultaneously. This represents a multi-faceted engagement, exhibiting both the extraordinary creativity of the poor, but also the limits to their potential to act on their own account as an influential and organised political force, in a system that is stacked heavily against them.

The poor in peace and development.

The local turn in peacebuilding has had a profound impact on the thinking of international agencies involved in peacekeeping operations. However, appreciation of the significance of 'the local' is not new in international intervention. The local turn in the peacebuilding literature intersects with interest within the development industry more broadly since the 1990s in the "micro-level" of economic activity. Since the 1980s, the (neo-) liberal development agenda has focused on the significance of the local level as a focus for "bottom-up" development policy and practice.[9] Micro-credit, for example, appeared on international policy agendas at this time, following the establishment of the Grameen Bank in 1982 by Mohammad Yunus. Initially considered an "alternative" approach to development, monopolized by NGOs, from the early 1990s, micro-credit began to enter the mainstream of development discourse and policy, receiving increasing attention as a means of prompting entrepreneurship and kick-starting private sector growth in contexts that had been impoverished by debt crisis, commodity price crashes, structural adjustment and austerity measures. At this time, the transformation of NGO-based micro-finance initiatives based upon external subsidy into financially sustainable commercial enterprises began to be a key goal of the movement.[10] The position of microcredit in the mainstream of development was confirmed in 2005, which the UN designated as the International Year of Microcredit. Similarly, the literature on how small enterprises contribute to development dates back to the late 1970s when the World Bank began lending to small firms as a means to promote employment and raise productivity.[11] A series of programmes through the late 1980s and the 1990s were based upon the principle that small and informal enterprises were highly significant to economic growth in poor countries, giving rise, in

the context of an era of faith in private sector development, to an array of donor strategies organised around them.[12] A wave of interest in social capital in the mid-1990s gave rise to a series of studies by the World Bank regarding the potential impact of social and cultural networks underpinning the economic activity of the poor on poverty reduction.[13] Furthermore, the shift to participatory development was entrenched in the mainstream of development programming by the end of the 1990s, on the basis that local knowledge and prioritisation of needs was superior to central planning, and local monitoring of development funding was likely to be more effective than central oversight.[14]

The specific role for the poor within neo-liberal development theorising has been described as an agenda of 'market citizenship', the primary aim of which is to enrol the poor into the economy as micro-producers and customers, rather than into a political community as decision-makers.[15] The key to this approach has been to focus on local level actors - the poor, small enterprises, communities - who are regarded as repositories of knowledge, initiative, power and productive capacity. The failure of the poor to thrive is attributed, within the market citizenship approach, to the failure of higher level systems and actors – excessively formal banks, corrupt officials, inaccessible court systems - and intervention is therefore aimed at enrolling local actors into a broader horizon of opportunity by linking them to improved resources of information, credit, dispute resolution and other kinds of services.

This approach emerged in the 1990s as a conjunction of two influences. First, as indicated above, free market fundamentalism and structural adjustment in the 1980s and early 1990s focused upon rolling back the state and crowding in the private sector. Grand designs and large monopolistic organisations (including the state itself) were out of fashion and small, pragmatic, flexible local solutions were in as macroeconomic modelling gave way to the theory of the firm. This prompted a somewhat counterintuitive convergence between the development policies of multilateral organisations and alternative development practitioners, such as Grameen Bank, who had been focused on communities of the poorest, marginalised groups and informal income generation since the 1970s. More recently, focus on the 'bottom billion'[16] and the interest on linking poor and remote producers into global value chains through programmes such as the multi-donor Making Markets Work for the Poor initiative[17] reflect a similar approach to linking concern for the poorest with a theory of market failure that can be rectified by donor intervention. Interest in the ways in which new portable technologies (such as mobile phones), non-state flows of money such as remittances, and crowd-sourced financing via websites like Kiva.org can be harnessed to development policy

reflect a continuing emphasis on the local, the individual and the spontaneous as the driver of poverty reduction as opposed to either state- or donor-led, planned and top-down.

Peacekeeping and statebuilding initiatives have, as many of the contributors to this volume point out, generally focused far more on central state agencies built to back up political settlements forged by elite actors in international negotiations. However, their deployments have invariably been accompanied by an influx of aid agencies undertaking projects and programmes, often at local level, frequently aimed at providing skills, training, and support for the entrepreneurship of the poor. The combination of development projects that are very focused on local level activity and peacekeeping and peace building projects that are focused on central systems of government has sometimes worked conveniently well, and sometimes caused significant problems. In Timor-Leste, the World Bank's community oriented perspective during the period of UN administration from 1999-2002 has been endorsed enthusiastically in comparison to the UN's top-down, elitist, and exclusionary approach to statebuilding, with which it came, at times, into direct conflict.[18] However, evaluations of the project commissioned by the Bank itself noted significant problems in the project, particularly related to the difficulty in getting the poor to repay their loans.[19] In countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia, where stability has been harder to achieve, we see the emergence of civil-military cooperation in the implementation of 'quick impact projects' designed not only to save lives but create economic opportunities and thereby enhance the legitimacy of often controversial international operations at local level.[20] Similarly, increasing interest in the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as "gacaca" in Rwanda or the "loya jirga" in Afghanistan in a context of post-conflict peacebuilding is designed to promote the legitimacy of the postwar political order. In Gramscian terms, this reflects the co-optation of familiar forms of civil society to the task of manufacturing consent rather than the embedding of peace in local cultural norms. Within the liberal peace project, the role awarded to local level actors has been a specifically neo-liberal one.

A large and critical literature examines the ways in which donors' aid interventions use power to promote specifically market-oriented social, political and economic orders in recipient developing countries.[21] From the perspective of this literature, the 'new poverty agenda' proclaimed by the World Bank and other donors is 'neoliberalism reconstituted in a populist mode'[22] – a critique which can similarly be levelled at the use of reinvented traditions of dispute resolution in post-conflict contexts.[23] New aid delivery mechanisms and local peacebuilding initiatives - stressing recipient country ownership, partnership and participatory processes of engagement with civil

society actors as a way to ensure that local knowledge and priorities are paramount - are viewed by this critical literature as simply attempts to re-legitimise market-building agendas.[24]

In the context of the liberal local turn, then, development and peace are portrayed as public goods, of equal benefit of all on the receiving end of them. Yet this belies the reality of rapidly increasing inequality and accompanying social crisis across the Global South. If development has made the poor less poor it has also disrupted valued ways of life, destroyed natural resources and landscapes, and perpetuated systems of disempowerment and marginalization. This is a project which has had significantly different impacts on elites and poor people within target societies. Elites have frequently benefited and often facilitated the process, whereas the poor have fared less well and frequently struggle against this. Consequently, development should be seen less as a teleological process of mutual gains than a highly contingent and contested struggle over changing distributions of resources. If the liberal peace has provided stability, it has also contributed to the oppression of the poor by embedding particular hierarchies within political settlements, and by closing off particular kinds of opportunity.

For poor people in situations of crisis, however, contestation is unlikely to be ideologically driven or programmatic. Neoliberal economic transformation does not reveal itself in its entirety on the ground, but appears rather as a set of particular activities in particular times and places, many of which may be implemented by local rather than international actors. Classic and contemporary studies of poor people's political movements suggest that these tend to be ad hoc, reactive and disruptive, through either active or passive means, rather than proactive and transformative.[25] Regarding peace and development as interlinked at the local level highlights the ways in which the poor act, in post-conflict contexts, to contest the inequalities and oppressions emerging in new political and economic orders. These are inextricably connected: material constraints restrict political aspirations, just as political constraints affect economic opportunities. For the poor, political allies and economic prospects go hand-in-hand. Consequently, although lack of resources may make the local level the most likely level for the poor to act, the poor themselves may grasp opportunities to escape the local when these present themselves. As the case study below suggests, the agency of the poor in particular post-conflict struggles may become focused on attempting to attract support and attention from national or international actors, to deliver them from an unpromising local situation. In some circumstances (although not all) the local level is a level at which solutions cannot be found.

The case study presented below, which documents the efforts of widows in Liquiça in Timor-Leste between 1999 and 2005 to claim justice with respect to a massacre that took place in 1999, reflects many of these propositions. It is presented here because it illustrates the complexity of the motivations and aspirations of the poor, who are unable to dominate or direct post-conflict agendas, but must seize opportunities where they arise to advance their position in a changing order. It suggests the limits to the material capacities of the poor to organise politically and economically in a post-conflict setting. It also suggests the way that differences within poor people's movements further undermine the prospects for organized resistance. Finally, it suggests the flexibility of the poor in adapting cultural or economic concerns to a variety of local, national and international agendas, in an attempt to forge alliances with actors who are not disposed to compromise and unused to listening particularly carefully to what the poor have to say. The case study confirms the critique of the liberal peace as not particularly effective in serving the poor. However, the story of justice in Timor-Leste also shows how international intervention is, from the perspective of the poor, a sideshow. The real concern for the poor is how better-placed actors, particularly national level elites, are proving more adept at harnessing international resources to cement their own position in the new social, economic, political and cultural order, and what this might mean for the ability of the poor to carve out a sustainable niche for themselves in the post-war state.

Searching for justice in Timor-Leste

Indonesia's 24-year occupation of Timor-Leste is well known for its brutality. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, more than 180,000 civilians - or more than a third of the pre-war population - died in the early years of the occupation as starvation was used as a weapon of war against the Timorese population by the Indonesian army. More than 18,000 Timorese were unlawfully killed, and torture and rape were used by the Indonesian security forces to terrorise the population. When the population finally had a chance to vote for independence, the Indonesian army encouraged a network of Timorese militia groups to engage in a violent campaign of intimidation, that included several massacres. After the referendum results were announced, both the withdrawing Indonesian army and its Timorese militias went on a rampage, burning buildings, looting, and firing weapons indiscriminately. It is estimated that around 1500 people were killed in the referendum period alone.[26]

Liquiça, a district town west of Dili on Timor's north coast, was the scene of a massacre on 6 April 1999, in which an estimated 60 people were murdered by Indonesian security forces and

Timorese militias, as they sheltered in the town's Catholic church. Up to 2000 people took refuge in the Church in response to a deteriorating security situation in the town, due to the activities of a militia group which had abducted several pro-resistance men in previous days. The Indonesian security forces arrived at the church on 6 April, and began firing weapons; this gave the signal for militia groups to invade the church and begin killing people inside. After the massacre, the bodies were taken away, making it difficult to identify exactly how many had been killed.[27] The leader of the militia group responsible, Eurico Guterres, left for Indonesia after the referendum. Guterres later became the sole person ever jailed by Indonesia for crimes against humanity in East Timor. He was indicted by an Indonesian ad hoc tribunal set up to try human rights cases relating to East Timor in 2002, and sentenced to ten years' jail after being found guilty of crimes against humanity, relating to a later massacre in Dili that took place a few days after the Liquiça Church massacre.[28] However, he was acquitted and released by the Indonesian Supreme Court in 2008.[29]

In 2000, a group of widows and relatives of individuals killed in the Liquiça Church massacre established a campaign group, called *Ratelauk*, to campaign for the perpetrators of the massacre to be brought to justice.[30] The group came into being through the collaboration of local widows with a national level women's NGO called Fokupers. At the time, East Timor was under the administration of the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor: independence was restored to East Timor two years later in 2002. This was also a time when the question of justice - and an international tribunal in particular - was high on the political agenda and much discussed in East Timor and internationally.[31]

In 1999, at the height of the post-referendum violence, the United Nations Security Council had passed Resolution 1264 which authorised a peacekeeping force to stabilise the situation in East Timor in view of grave abuses of human rights ongoing there, but it refrained from calling for an international tribunal to try war crimes in East Timor. Subsequently in January 2000, a report by a team of UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights did recommend the establishment of an international tribunal. In 2000, the UN Transitional Authority established a Serious Crimes Unit, which traveled around East Timor interviewing family members of victims of murder, torture and rape and which launched a number of prosecutions in a special court established with a mixture of international and Timorese judges. However, the quality of these trials was criticised,[32] as was the expense of the investigation unit, which spent huge amounts of money on international salaries.[33] The Serious Crimes Unit failed to bring to justice any leaders of militias or any senior members of the Indonesian security forces, partly as a result of the unwillingness of the East

Timorese government, following independence, to risk its fragile relationship with Indonesia over the issue of justice.[34] The Serious Crimes Unit closed when the United Nations finally withdrew from East Timor in 2005. Between 2001 and 2005, a Commission of Reception, Truth and Reconciliation was established by the Timorese government which conducted more than 8000 interviews in East Timor, collecting testimony about crimes committed during the occupation, and facilitating local reconciliation for less serious crimes such as thefts and arson. Indonesia established an Ad Hoc Tribunal for Crimes in East Timor in 2000, however, this court convicted only one of the 18 people it indicted – namely Guterres. In this context, the widows in Liquiça formed their organization.

The stated purpose of the organization was to campaign for an international tribunal to try perpetrators of the Liquiça massacre, while promoting small-scale income generating activities for its members. As such it reflected the significant impact of the liberal peace on the re-emergence of civil society in East Timor following the Indonesian withdrawal,[35] combining a liberal internationalist concern for international justice with a neo-liberal approach to income generation. However, as explained below, both these liberal ambitions failed, due to structural factors that were far beyond the control of the women themselves. Yet the organization remains significant, since it demonstrates that beneath the liberal agenda were a variety of motives and concerns, which reflect the constraints imposed upon the poor by their geographical location and socio-economic status and by the contested nature of elite-mass relations within post-conflict societies and the cultural terms in which these are framed. The agenda also illustrates the way that international intervenors offer opportunities for (re)negotiating these relationships, although those opportunities are themselves contested and constrained and appeared differently to different members of the organization. In interviews discussing the purposes of the organization, the opportunities it offered, and the nature of the justice desired, it became clear that the organization represented a site of contestation over issues of poverty and gender, justice and citizenship, international power and local cultural practice. Within this site, as much of the contestation was directed at local actors, at national level, within Liquiça, even within the organization itself, as at international actors representing the liberal peace, or even the Indonesian military who were the ostensible target of the organisation's campaign.

Poverty and gender
The impetus for the establishment of the organization emerged from the distribution of financial support to families of those killed in the massacre by a national women's NGO, Fokupers, in 1999. Each family received $75 of humanitarian assistance, which was intended as seed money for some

kind of business that could "change and develop their life."[36] However, the Fokupers activist in charge of the scheme commented, "some people didn't know how to develop themselves - all the money was used and finished."[37] Consequently, Fokupers assisted the women to form the organisation and apply for funding for a joint project, initially from the Finnish embassy. The money from the Finnish embassy was spent on two motorcycles, which were used both to transport members to meetings being organised to discuss the question of justice, and in a business venture to set up a catering cooperative, that could provide the women with an income. Further money was secured from USAID, again with help from Fokupers, to refurbish a building that could be used as the organisation's centre and shop.

The organization from the outset thus adopted a market citizenship approach, at the behest of international funders and national level allies. This combined a characteristic approach of (neo-)liberal peacebuilding with a specifically Timorese discourse of self-development and self-reliance that was prominent in the rhetoric Timorese leaders in the UN and early post-independence period. The major party of the resistance, Fretilin, which won the first elections held in 2002, had long espoused a form of socialist developmentalism that combined nationalism with a belief in grassroots activism in pursuit of modernization. This particular form of localism, although based upon very different ideological foundations from neoliberalism, found common cause with neoliberalism's local turn precisely via such development strategies as funding cooperatives through microcredit.

Between 2000 and 2002, the business side of the organisation worked well. It rented out chairs and cooking equipment and provided catering for workshops as well as providing a restaurant at their shop in Liquiça town. In the first two years, according to the group's members, there was a lot of demand for their services, and they could earn a great deal of money. However, by 2005 this had ebbed away. Most of their customers between 2000 and 2002 were foreigners and by 2005 there were very few foreigners left in Liquiça. Local custom had not materialized: Liquiça was still in a catastrophic state. The district was heavily dependent upon the coffee industry, but the price of coffee internationally hit an all time low between 2001 and 2004. East Timor had previously sold its entire coffee crop to Indonesia, but this option was no longer available. Furthermore, the quality of coffee grown in Timor was very poor and therefore the industry virtually collapsed after the Indonesians left due to a lack of buyers. At the same time, aid money was not penetrating Timor particularly fast, despite the fact that flows of resources from the Indonesian government had obviously dried up. Demonstrating the effect to which local self-help strategies are constrained by

the material structures of the global political economy, once the peacekeeping bubble burst, the economy in Liquiça effectively collapsed and the cooperative collapsed also.

The cooperative had relied upon the women taking turns to cook and serve in the shop and restaurant, but as custom dried up the women drifted away and arguments broke out. There were insufficient returns to keep all of them occupied in any case. One interviewee commented, "We loaned out a lot of the materials from the cooperative - it nearly went bankrupt because members were borrowing and couldn't afford to pay back… If there is any support available from international agencies, I would like to receive it individually to support our family. Individually is better because something like that, we do it in a group - it's difficult, and a headache. Sometimes we made some profit from selling stuff there and sometimes some of the members didn't receive their share."[38]

Contra the received wisdom of micro-finance, and in line with a growing critical literature on the subject,[39] the difficulties of dividing insufficient profits between large numbers of members caused considerable problems in a context where some families were living on one meal a day. The situation in Liquiça reflected a more widespread condition in East Timor - a generally failing economy in which desperate hardship entailed that any money available was spent on immediate necessities rather than on investing in income generation. The co-operative that was intended to provide opportunities for the women to develop their lives, a meeting place for them to gather, and a social support network to sustain them and their campaign, ended up becoming a source of conflict and intense pressure, undermining their ability to organise rather than boosting it. The indebtedness of individuals to the group was corrosive of group solidarity, and this was evident to the women involved in the group.

Once the crisis point was reached, different views emerged within the organization as to its future direction. One interviewee suggested that an important difference in opinion emerged along class lines within the group of women themselves. A proposal to turn the cooperative into an NGO was mooted, since it would offer opportunities to access project funding for international and national donors. This was an unreliable source of income, but potentially more lucrative than the business opportunities in devastated Liquiça. This idea was rejected by many in the group on the grounds that it would require skills that many in the group, as poor women, did not have. The interviewee reported that some of the women believed an NGO would need to be run by men, rather than women:

"There is some misunderstanding amongst our members - if we want to be a foundation we will have to expand and employ men. Some women said the men will take our jobs… We would like to run some projects but it is difficult because we lack capacity. Some of the women are illiterate so it is difficult for them to work. I am not discriminating - it is a real lack of capacity - everything has to do with capacity."[40]

For the poorer members of the group, the switch from cooperative to NGO took them into alien and unfamiliar territory, in which gender roles became uncertain and where the skills presumed to be required were beyond their reach. The realm of the NGO, attracting international grants as a means to run local or national level projects, was considered distinct from a 'local' situation, and one which the women did not have the capacity to effectively navigate.

Capacity-building programmes offered by international or national NGOs and designed for local NGO start-ups did not offer an effective answer to this problem, which arose from the intersection of a structures of exclusion associated with class and gender. The same interviewee commented that she herself had attended a number of capacity building workshops but that she always saw the same participants there every time - capacity building itself, in other words, was something that some women found easy to access but from which others were excluded, through material constraints such as lack of time or transport, or from lack of confidence in their own ability to participate. International and national liberal intervention offered differential access to opportunity dependent upon the structural position and identity of the local actor – and this was evident even within this small group of women. The better educated members were confident to participate in a world of capacity building, workshop attendance and NGO formation that international intervention opened up, and saw this as a real alternative for the organization. Other members, however, regarded themselves as precluded from this potential future by their illiteracy, poverty and, particularly, their gender. They anticipated that a shift in this direction would see them marginalized within the group, their status as a widow of the massacre becoming less salient a claim to participation than "capacity" or formal qualifications, leading to their eventual replacement by a better educated man. This caused significant frustration to those of the members who did wish to move into the NGO realm.

This initial rupture within the organization illustrated two key feature of poor people's organizations which belie both the liberal rhetoric and the culturalist critique. First, contra neo-

liberal dogma, the fate of this organization, as with so many other micro-credit programmes in Liquiça in the early post-independence years, was dependent upon structural factors which overwhelmed the agency and entrepreneurial spirit of the members. Second, the organization represented a site of contestation between members who were differently situated with respect to the intersections of class and gender in Timorese society, and consequently held different conceptions of what might be possible, not only in terms of forging international and national connections but also in terms of reimagining their own position within the local community. For some, gender and illiteracy combined to trap them in a social identity of marginalization and victimhood. For others, the liberal peace held the promise of a new social role in the newly emerging post-conflict order in which the resources of intervention and development promised to be a significant driver. Contestation over this issue caused a significant rift in the organization, raising a question mark over the appropriateness of the language of "cultural intuition" and indigeneity to explain local responses to liberal intervention.

Contestation over justice and citizenship

Equally, conceptions of justice among the group were arguably linked more firmly to the concrete experience of economic and social exclusion faced by many in Liquiça in the early post-independence years than to an indigenous tradition. In particular, although doubting their own ability to enter into a professional world of NGO projects, many members of Ratelauk, including the poorest, saw their children as entitled to access these opportunities, by virtue of the sacrifice of their parents. A key concern amongst some of the poorest members of the group was access to education for their children, something which they considered to be part of their claim for justice. For many of the group members, the sacrifices made by their husbands in the cause of independence entitled them to a role in the future of the nation through education and job opportunities for their children which had not so far been manifest in post-conflict Timor:

"Our leaders don't really recognise the deaths of our husbands, so there is no one to look after us. I would really like to assist my child to continue in education in the future. We have to work so hard to support the children and to pay for school. I want the kids to have a better education in the future, but I can't support them. For the future of independence and success of the government's programmes we need a lot of educated people, but our children have no chance to go to school."[41]

This concern over access to education reflected a concern that structural barriers to social mobility were re-emerging – perhaps even increasing – in the post-conflict context. For many of the widows, loss of a breadwinner as a sacrifice to independence translated to decreased chance of children escaping local conditions characterized by oppressive poverty and potential discrimination, and a key aspect of their campaign was an attempt to gain recognition of this as a violation of entitlements earned through participation in the struggle. This was particularly a concern for people in places like Liquiça – a district town with close transport connections to Dili, which had been severely damaged by violence but which was rebuilt only slowly. By 2005, discontent within Liquiça district over lack of attention from the central government began to focus on presumed preferential treatment for towns in the East, which had been the stronghold of military resistance during the war, and where many of Timor's post-independence leaders came from. Later this claim prompted the emergence of divisions within the army, which revolved around the alleged prioritization, within the military, of soldiers from the East over soldiers from the West, and led to a significant outbreak of violence in 2006, prompting the resignation of the prime minister. There was a further belief among many Timorese civilian activists in the early post-independence period that the rewards of independence were going mainly to returnees from the diaspora and to military veterans, rather than to veterans of the clandestine movement. Contestation over the ways in which the benefits of citizenship in the new Timor should reflect sacrifices made during the war was endless and focused on the minutiae of different types of involvement, producing divisions, denunciations and rivalries between regions, districts, villages and households.

The emerging fissures underlined the fragmented quality of local identity, and appeared along unexpected axes. For example, following the violence of 2006, much discussion emerged about the apparent re-emergence, during the fighting, of "firaku" and "kaladi" identities, broadly corresponding to the Eastern and Western districts, that had been observed in the colonial era and largely forgotten since. The re-emergence of this fissure, and the anomaly that one district, Manatuto, had apparently switched sides, was the subject of much speculation amongst international and Timorese observers alike, but may fruitfully be considered as part of the experimentation with a highly contested repertoire of "tradition" that also characterized the post-independence era in Timor.

The question of justice, in Liquiça, was partially framed in terms of the ongoing competition over recognition and special treatment unfolding in the appalling economic circumstances of post-war Timor. The Timorese government had taken what it described as a pragmatic decision to

deprioritize international justice in favour of pursuing better trade and security relations with Indonesia in the early post-war period. For families of the dead, this was regarded as reflecting a wider shift in elite attitudes away from solidarity with from poor members of the erstwhile Clandestine Movement which had supported those same elite actors during the resistance. Consequently the issue of justice became linked to the specific concern that children should be educated in order to make a contribution to the government's programmes – to be actively involved in the project of nation-building, as a paid worker but also as a political participant. Resentment at the feeling of being gradually excluded from this was strongly apparent in Liquiça in the early years of independence. One interviewee, for example, commented that if the government was not going to pursue justice, then it should offer material compensation instead. Seeing perpetrators punished was less important for some of the widows than receiving public acknowledgement of their contribution to the struggle and the entitlements they believed this conferred:

"We would like justice, but if it's not going to happen in the future, then we would like to ask the government to support us, because we have lost our husbands. Who is going to look after us? At least the government should support us. We sometimes feel angry and upset with high emotions and that leads us to feel violent towards these people. We don't really feel satisfied with independence. Because we have lost our husbands, we don't benefit from independence, other people benefit and have cars and motorcycles and good food, but we have to battle to support our families."[42]

The linking of justice to recognition of status and entitlement was not only focused on the national level, but also upon the local community itself. This was particularly acute in 2005, since the winding down of the CAVR and Serious Crimes processes had resulted in members of the militia who had perpetrated the massacre, and subsequently fled to West Timor, beginning to filter back to Liquiça. For the widows, the presence of unpunished militia members in Liquiça town represented a devastating affront to the legitimacy of the post-war order, such that violence was both likely and justified. One commented:

"I lost my first son and it is a really big preoccupation for me. On 5 April [1999], they killed my first son - he worked in the clandestine movement and so did I. The military and militia came - they came from Liquiça and from Maubara. Some have already returned to Timor but some are still in Indonesia. Some are inside Liquiça now - the police and Serious Crimes haven't arrested them. They have returned but there has been no action - this is not fair. They committed crimes and killed

people but they are free to walk around town. I am afraid someone will commit violence. We are afraid these people will come back more and more. We are the family of the victims, but the family of the militias are free to walk wherever they want She walks freely without feeling that anybody will attack her. She came back for her father's funeral - nobody threatened her."[43]

Another member said that she blamed a local policeman for her son's death: the policeman had arrested her son on 5 April, and her son had subsequently disappeared. Recently, the policeman had returned to Liquiça, although he no longer worked for the police. She commented:

"Sometimes I feel not satisfied with the constitution - it says we cannot hit or hurt anyone. He has already committed crimes killing people, burning houses, stealing - why shouldn't we threaten him? We cannot act against them - if we act against them, the process will take longer and we'll end up in prison. They walk around town with a long tail and no one can do anything. They have the opportunity to set up small groups with ideologies against this country and the constitution allows them to be free."[44]

The failure of the government to act against these individuals, who were re-entering the jurisdiction of the Timorese courts, was interpreted by some of the widows as a failure of the new state institutions. In fact, the justice system in Timor in 2005 was in a state of complete disarray. This was largely because of political competition between the Portuguese-speaking returnee elites who occupied many key ministerial positions in the first post-independence government, including in the Ministry of Justice, and the Indonesian-educated middle class who dominated mid-level positions as judges and lawyers. Friction between these two key groups centred on questions of the language medium of post-independence justice, the comparative quality of Indonesian and Portuguese legal education, and the appropriate body of law to be used – all issues which would significantly affect the relative control of the government, as opposed to the judiciary and legal profession, over legal affairs.[45]

The power struggle between these two groups had brought the justice system to a virtual standstill in 2005, leaving widows in Liquiça feeling excluded, oppressed and dehumanized by the apparent lack of official national-level concern to punish the perpetrators of the massacre: "It is very hard because we have wounds in our hearts. They were killed like animals and now nobody wants to find justice for them, so they are still being treated like animals."[46] The preoccupation with violence in many interviews suggests, in Gramscian terms, the failure to achieve hegemony in early

post-independence Timor. The failure of the new regime to respond, not only to expectations nurtured during the resistance years, but even to the most basic cultural markers of humanity, led to a drastic loss of legitimacy for the newly emerging order.

International power and local culture

Although the failure of western states to provide support for the cause of independence throughout the 24 years of Indonesian occupation produced high levels of cynicism in East Timor about the motives of international intervenors, nevertheless organizations like Ratelauk looked to international allies to help them put pressure on the Timorese elite. This was in part because they saw lack of attention to the issue of justice as symptomatic of new elite-mass relations in post-war Timor. Appeals to international actors – even when these actors seemed determined to look the other way – had been a significant factor in the independence struggle. The Clandestine Movement, in particular, had focused upon taking advantage of small windows of international media attention on Timor-Leste – such as the visit of the Pope in 1989 - to hold demonstrations and protests before the eyes of the world. Consequently, this represented an obvious strategy in post-conflict Timor. Initially, the widows had received a lot of international attention for their campaign. They had received visits from UN Secretary General's Special Representative Sergio De Mello, during the period of UN Administration, and from Kofi Annan himself, as well as from the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson. The group hosted a delegation from World Vision in Korea and was instrumental in getting a memorial erected in the Liquiça churchyard using money collected from a variety of organisations.

Ultimately, these activities ground to a halt, as the Timorese government deprioritised the issue and international organizations moved on. As with the failure of the co-operative, the winding down of international interest in the widows' cause was entirely to do with international and national factors rather than local ones, and illustrated the paucity of opportunities for the widows to exercise significant agency in pursuit of their goals. However, the widows continued to press for an international tribunal, for instrumental reasons connected with the need to fulfil culturally appropriate rituals for the dead. A significant aspect of justice in this case simply could not be resolved locally because it required the exercise of power over individuals in Indonesia who were beyond Timorese jurisdiction. This was vitally important in particular because the widows believed that the Indonesian military had information about what happened to the bodies of the disappeared.

It was widely reported following the massacre that Indonesian military units had removed many bodies of the victims. Although some of these were subsequently recovered, many were not.[47] Many of the widows had not been able to provide their loved ones with appropriate burial rites, and only an international tribunal, for these families, represented an opportunity to bring Indonesian military men into the dock and force them to reveal the locations of the bodies:

"Our husbands were killed without any graves. We don't know where they buried the bodies. We decided to make the organisation so we could find the bodies, so that they can have graves in the future."[48]

Fulfilling rituals required access to international coercive power, and in the brief window of opportunity when international allies made themselves available, the widows were willing to accept the dominant discourses of the liberal peace in part as an attempt to access this power for the purpose of satisfying local cultural needs.

However, it is worth pointing out that burial rites were not simply culturally mandated, but also politically significant. The question of burial and commemoration of the dead became linked to issues of status and heroism in the new national order. Some of the families interviewed in 2005, who had recovered their loved ones' bodies, were dissatisfied that the government had not provided a special cemetery for war heroes. In fact, such a cemetery was in the process of construction at the time, with international assistance, and subsequently there has been an intense political debate over who has the right to be buried there and on what criteria. This issue was also linked to ideas about compensation. After 2006, in response primarily to the mutiny within the army and the threat to social order posed by surviving former combatants outside the armed forces, a newly elected government led by the former commander of the military resistance, Xanana Gusmao, set up a commission to examine the contributions of both military resistance fighters and members of the Clandestine Movement as a step towards determining pension entitlements. This has been a highly contested process, but it did result in the some of the members of the Clandestine Movement receiving the official designation of "martyrs for national liberation." It is significant, however, that it was highly mobilised former military men, patronised by senior government figures and capable of causing significant upheaval and violence, that prompted this, rather than lobbying by groups such as the widows in Liquiça, who remain marginalized in the process.[49]

Conclusion.

The struggles of the Liquiça widows' organisation illustrates both the constraints and the ambitions of the poor, and the various frames within which their concerns loom large. It challenges the view that the widows approach to peace was based upon an indigenous tradition or "cultural intuition", even though the various cultural symbolisms of death, burial, martyrdom, and widowhood are integral to the widows' (ongoing) campaign. Rather, this account suggests the ways in which cultural meaning is inflected by local, national and international ideas and opportunities, and the ways in which poor people in post-conflict situations engage in contestation over those ideas and opportunities on many levels and in many different vernaculars at the same time.

Thus the failure of justice mechanisms in post-war East Timor represented a violation of local conceptions of appropriateness on a number of levels. Widows felt that their husbands' dignity was violated by the failure to provide proper burials, and that their sacrifice was overlooked by a government that didn't care about them. They felt not only that their status in the local community had been challenged, but that they were increasingly excluded from the new social, political and economic order and from the specifically national, modernizing project of independence, in which they were entitled, by virtue of their sacrifice, to a role. Notable in the accounts of the women were the close relationship between their poverty, their loss and their current status. Their poverty and their gender trapped them and their dependents economically and politically in a subordinate position in the new society, even as a new social hierarchy was constructed around them. This was linked to the loss of male breadwinners in a strongly patriarchal society; to the failure of the economy more widely; and to the lack of recognition awarded them by the government.

The concern to locate and properly bury the bodies became tied to this. At a minimum, the widows demanded of the new order better treatment than animals. At best, nationally significant burial rituals that would affirm heroic status could award the widows a special position in the new nation. Pursuing these outcomes required international power, to capture and interrogate the murderers and force them to reveal the locations of the bones, so that local cultural rites could be respected, as well as national assistance to provide a suitable burial site in a proper war cemetery that would reflect the special national status and significance of the dead. Ideas about appropriate forms of commemoration were linked to contestation within the post-independence community over the comparative status of different sorts of sacrifice. The local, national and international dimensions of their situation were intertwined, and this was evident in the way the widows told their stories.

The story challenges conventional representations of the liberal peace as simply alien and potentially oppressive. Certainly, international action hadn't served these women particularly well. For some, international intervention held out the prospect of a future as an NGO professional, in the meanstream of a post-conflict liberal peace assistance industry. However, for others, starting from a different structural position, this future appeared alienating and distracted from what they perceived to be the most powerful basis of their claim to consideration – past sacrifices in the independence struggle. However, the group did not reject liberal concepts of justice out of hand, and nor did they spend much time thinking specifically about whether international norms might be co-opted or "hybridized" through interweaving with local cultural norms. Rather, they saw international concerns as a foreign and unfamiliar but potentially useful vehicle for their own immediate local and national claims, and pursued them as such, primarily as a means to contest locally emerging norms of participation, entitlement and status. The women were, arguably, neither co-opted nor alienated by international discourses: they took them as they found them and attempted to use them, seeking allies among national and international NGOs, lawyers, and human rights investigators.

The representation of the group as a campaign group calling for an international tribunal needed to be understood within the particular context of Liquiça in 2005, a place that was failing to restore itself from within and within which contestation over the emerging post-independence social, political and economic order was acute, producing a deep crisis of legitimacy for the emerging post-war order. Economic, social, cultural and political preoccupations combined in the women's stories to produce a situation in which the women repeatedly spoke of their worries, emotional anguish and thoughts of violence. Local norms and practices had broken down not only as a result of the appalling violence of the massacre and disappearance of the bodies, but as a result of contestation over how this was subsequently to be understood. For the widows, conceptions of the massacre as a contribution to national independence were precious. These were threatened by the naked struggles for power emerging in the new state, in which the women, as poor widows, were ill-equipped to participate, let alone prevail. In this situation, the women did not convert to liberalism, nor did they engage in ideologically driven acts of resistance. However they did seek allies where they could, and expended precious resources to foster relationships that held out the hope of some kind of return, although in this case the prospects of finding an effective champion for their cause seemed then and remain now extraordinarily remote.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Duffield 2001; Richmond 2005; Kühn and Turner 2012.
[2] Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty 2010.
[3] Mac Ginty 2010, 404; see also Richmond 2011, 18-19.
[4] Mac Ginty 2010, 408.
[5] Mac Ginty 2010, 397.
[6] Foucault 1976.
[7] Scott 1992.
[8] Gramsci 1971; Ortner 2006, 6.
[9] Ellis and Biggs 2001.
[10] Bateman 2010, 20.
[11] Levitsky 1986.
[12] Wolfensohn 2000.
[13] See World Bank Social Capital Initiative Working Paper Series, various dates.
[14] World Bank 2004.
[15] Jayasuriya 2006.
[16] Collier 2007.
[17] DFID 2008.
[18] See Chopra 2000.
[19] World Bank 2006.
[20] Bellamy, Williams and Griffin 2010, 282.
[21] Ferguson 1994, Gill 1995, Hout and Robison 2009, Harrison 2010.
[22] Gould 2005.
[23] See Oomen 2005.
[24] Carroll 2010; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Gould 2005; Hickey and Mohan 2008.
[25] Scott 1976; Piven and Cloward 1979; Thompson 1980; Wilson 2012.
[26] CAVR, 2006a.
[27] CAVR 2006b, 250-251.
[28] United Nations, 2005.
[29] Al Jazeera, 2008.
[30] See also Kent 2013.
[31] UN International Commission of Inquiry, 2000; Dicker, Jendrzejczyk and Weschler, 2002.
[32] JSMP 2007, 14-15.
[33] Reiger and Weirda 2006, 30.
[34] JSMP 2007.
[35] Hughes 2009.
[36] National activist, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[37] Ibid.
[38] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[39] Hulme and Mosley 1996; Dichter and Harper 2007, Bateman 2010.
[40] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[41] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[42] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[43] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[44] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[45] Hughes 2009.
[46] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[47] CAVR 2006b, para. 777.
[48] *Ratelauk* member, personal interview, Liquica, May 2005.
[49] Kent and Wallis 2014.

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