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'What is the benefit of this project?' Representation and participation in research on conflict-affected youth

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ABSTRACT

This article deploys the language, narratives and proposed solutions of research participants to conceptualise peace research as a representational and relational process of recognition. To do so, it draws from a multi-year research project on the economic livelihood and social integration strategies of conflict-affected youth in Liberia's commercial motorcycling sector. Its starting point is reflexive engagement with participants' own frequent question: *'What is the benefit of this project?'* It advocates for participatory approaches to the time-spaces that ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth actually inhabit (rather than those scripted or desired for them by more traditional forms of peace research). It applies critical peace-building insights about time to contribute to conceptualisations of post-conflict 'reintegration trajectories' that question ideas about who builds peace, and how. It argues that participatory research brings issues of social stigma, objectification and marginalisation to the fore. And, it explores the methodological implications of participatory research, identifying the ways in which sited ethnography, relational interviewing and narrative approaches can centre research-as-recognition. Participatory approaches make peace researchable not just to collect lived experiences (treating research as transactional data collection) but to implement participants' own ideas about peace-building strategies and solutions (treating peace research as relational recognition and something that is mutually beneficial).

Introduction

Peace research could – and frequently does – centre the researcher: asking questions like how to gain more and better access to participants, how to assign peace value to the words and actions of participants and how to use research questions and methodology to foreground one's own knowledge, priorities and understanding as they relate to peace. This special issue, given its critical themes of time, affect and pluralism, approaches researchability open-endedly. Facilitating collective understandings about peace requires attention to methodological fit, to issues of translation about the meanings of peace in encounters with participants and to generating and sustaining ethical encounters with the individuals who have more proximate experiences with conflict and peace than ourselves.

Yet, if peace is what needs enhanced researchability, *for whom* should peace be more researchable? This question, and the distance it can imply between researcher and researched, is the focus of this article. I see the goal of making peace researchable less as accuracy and replicability and more as correspondence with the lived experience of passing from conflict to peace, and as correspondence with participants' ideas about building peace.[1] I approach 'peace researchability' not just as a laudable goal but also as a fraught concept and an unfinished challenge, and do so via the corner of peace-building research that has long interested me: the post-conflict reintegration of ex-combatants and conflict-affected youth. I have written the article for researchers and practitioners interested in the local turn in peace-building and in participatory approaches to peace research.

In this article, I argue that centring recognition and benefit through ethnographic and participatory action research (PAR) methods is a useful way to capture critical peace-building insights about time. Participatory approaches make clear that youth peace-building is about young people's own ideas about social recognition – and their lived experience of having their peace contributions go un-recognised or mis-recognised. I approach the utility and necessity of PAR through reflexive engagement with young Liberians' own questions and ideas about the benefits of research participation. This special issue is, for me, a valuable opportunity to change dominant scripts about youth peace-building, and reflect on how script changes implicate the methodologies and modalities of peace research.

Privileging young Liberians' self-knowledge as peace-builders necessarily entails critical engagement with insights about time within critical peace research. This article analyses insights derived from these concepts, and applies these to research participants' own conceputalisations of the potential benefits, and extractive dangers, of research engagement. Participants' articulation of these insights underscores how making peace researchable must extend beyond *ontological* aspirations to produce research that reflects lived experience (i.e. that making peace researchable is about developing more *accurate* insights about peace) and towards *reflexive* ones that also insist that research be *beneficial* to research participants.

I discuss PAR and sited ethnography to link complex ideas about benefit to critical insights about time. If research satisfies a 'need to know' the other,[2] the solution is not to eliminate fraught research encounters but to reduce the distortions and acknowledge the power imbalances that inhere in these encounters. I am not arguing that PAR and sited ethnography are the only, or the best, ways to address dilemmas of representation in peace research, but that they offer unique advantages to produce accounts that recognise participants as peace-builders. PAR methods also help to situate participants not just as subjects with experiences worth collating and reporting, but with ideas and solutions worth supporting and implementing in collaboration. I also pair insights about time in peace research to a critical discussion of two forms of research recognition: naming and compensation.

The article proceeds as follows. First, I introduce my analytical framework about approaching peace research through recognition and anchor that framework to my multi-year research project about youth peace-building in the motorcycle taxi sector in Liberia. Then, I elaborate on the data collection and analysis techniques that have animated the project, including a brief discussion on how PAR methods have led to

pilot testing young Liberians' own ideas about how to build peace. From there, in three sub-sections (on chrono-normative peace-building, on methodologies that facilitate peace research and on notions of research benefit), I seek to build non-normative peace-building accounts that centre the peace-building identities, narratives and experiences of ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth. Through each sub-section, I also draw from encounters with project participants to explore how the notion of benefit informs, even haunts, peace research.

Analytical framework: recognisable peace, recognising peace-builders

From 2018–2022, I have interviewed about 200 young motorcycle taxi drivers in Liberia, most of whom are either ex-combatant or conflict-affected youth (and often both).[3] I call the project 'Motorcycling as Peacebuilding' because cyclist participants frequently returned to the idea that motorcycling has done much more for peace in Liberia than have formal, externally-designed and -implemented peace-building projects, such as the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes that the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) implemented between 2003 and 2009. Motorcycle taxi work gave ex-combatants and conflict-affeced youth a way to earn a living after the war, when other opportunities were and continue to be scarce. Laurence S. Kromah (known as Kabila, his riding name or nickname),[4] said to me, 'If it was not for motorbike, I swear to God in heaven, while we are still discussing you couldn't stand here with me. You would be in the midst of fire and bullet sound'.

So, motorcycling 'is' peace-building in part because cyclists see it that way and are eager to narrate it accordingly.[5] Their eagerness stems from related problems of non-recognition and mis-recognition that they face. That is because ordinary Liberians, politicians and international actors rarely recognise, and actively mis-recognise, cyclists' contributions to peace. Emmanuel Sarty is a former combatant and cyclist and a long-time union leader for cyclists. I have interviewed him a dozen times over several weeks in 2018, 2021 and 2022, and he has acted as participant, facilitator and research assistant across project work with cyclists in his home area of Gompa City in northern Liberia. He frequently iterates the double binds that entrap cyclists in the security logics of the state and police and that reproduce stigmatisation of motorcyclist youth. In 2018, during an interview outside the home he had just constructed using money made on the cycling field, he said,

> Sometimes, crimes take place, people say we are the ones [who commit the crimes]. There are criminals in this country who can't afford to even buy a car. And it is motorcycle that they can buy. Some use their own money, they buy motorcycle, they go to work and commit crimes. When those crimes have been traced by CID to know who committed them, if community people heard that is was a motorcycle sound that night when the crime was being committed, [they think], 'So, that's the cyclists'.

The hearsay of peace, where a sound in the night determines how young people are positioned after conflict. Researching peace, then, implicates recognition: which activities and outcomes gain recognition as peace, and who gets recognised as building it? To make peace researchable in the Liberian context requires building knowledge in collaboration with actors engaged every day in the difficult labour of building peace. Consequently, it

implies letting go of outsider accounts (including those of researchers) and designing and implementing more actor-centred ones. In my own sub-field of reintegration studies, this necessitates movement away from the analytical lens of 'DDR' and towards accounts of post-war reintegration as narrated and lived by former combatants. Given the centrality of motorcycling to post-war youth employment in Liberia, that means research about motorcycling, and research *with* motorcyclists.[6]

At the same time, ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth matter to peace-building regardless of whether or how researchers codify, conceptualise or acknowledge their relevance. Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, emphasises how youth recognition is important to social movements that resist marginalisation:

> The current movements of rebellion, especially those of youth [. . .] manifest in their essence this preoccupation with people as beings in the world – preoccupation with what and how they are 'being'.[7]

That cyclists contribute to peace is not contingent on whether or not passengers, Liberian elites, international aid actors or researchers perceive their contributions. Their own perception of being 'always-already interpellated individuals as subjects'[8] (including as subjects *of peace*) is nuanced, already theorised and conceptualised before any researcher (myself included) begins an interview. But if this 'plain reality' is 'accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all'[9] then the problem-solvers of liberal peace-building regimes did not get the memo. Indeed, the 'local turn' in peace research has been, and continues to be, necessary precisely because of how frequently lived experience of peace-building is glossed over or denied as a form of situated knowledge about peace, and a form of knowledge that ought to have privileged status as knowledge in peace-building accounts.[10] For these reasons, peace research should not, yet often does, fall into self-referential traps that aspire to 'amplify the voices' and 'empower' research participants.[11]

Issues of recognition do not exist solely in a socio-political practice world outside of the research process itself. Problems of non-recogition and mis-recognition instead are generated by, articulated within and transformed through research encounters and research processes. At the end of my initial interview with all cyclists, I ask them if they have any questions for me. The most common question is a simple and important one, which recalls this article's central concern about who researchable peace is for: 'What is the benefit of this project?' As a white researcher from a background that is economically privileged relative to cyclist research participants, I initially mistook this question as one about compensation. It was in part about compensation, and I believe that fair compensation for participation in research can be an effective form of recognition (I discuss this issue more below). But, as I learned to engage with participants in extended conversations about this question (rather than treating it as merely an ethical one about transparently explaining research project objectives or an administrative one about compensating participation) I came to see it as fundamental to thinking about peace researchability *as* recognition.

Why does recognition matter to making peace researchable? To recognise cycling as peace-building, and not just a livelihood modality, helps to guard against vulnerability discourses that tend to deny youth actors agency and fix their lack of power and capacity within structures of precarity. Peace research as recognition implies movement from accurate accounts to beneficial ones, and ones that research participants also perceive and

Table 1. Reading and seeing peace and reintegration *otherwise* through time.

Critical conceptual interventions	Normative peace-building	Critical, activist potential to make peace researchable	Methodologies that facilitate peace researchability	Notions of research benefit
Time	Short-term DDR Ex-combatants as threat to peace Youth as spoilers Motorcycling as peace-negating Data as knowledge extraction	Long-term reintegration trajectories Ex-combatants and conflict-affected youth as peace-builders Motorcycling as peace-building Embodiment The everyday	Participatory action research (PAR) Sited ethnography	Benefit as return & continuous engagement Benefit as recognition (including through naming and compensation)

experience as beneficial. Recognition and benefit are therefore concepts that have potential for peace research that is alternative to self-referential concepts about voice and empowerment.

Table 1, above, maps my proposed analytical framework in this article, where my methodological contribution is to generate insights about the concepts of time and then link these 1) to motorcyclists' own discussion of research benefits, and 2) to the ethnographic and participatory action research methods I have adopted in continuous interactions with them from 2018–2022. Throughout, I have been inspired by a call to narrate and think peace-building *otherwise*,[12] to move reintegration studies away from the normalising gaze of DDR programming and towards critical, activist and participatory approaches that arise from participants' own conceptualisations about how motorcycling is peace-building.

Motorcycling as peace-building: project contours

Before moving to a fuller explication of Table 1, I first want to briefly sketch the 'Motorcycling as Peace-building' project contours, and summarise my data collection, data analysis and knowledge dissemination practices. I set out to displace short-term evaluations of ex-combatant reintegration organised around formal DDR programming and instead collate experiences of lived, and long-term, reintegration, by asking: *Where does reintegration actually happen, and how?* I assumed that youth actors were engaged, and suspended, in contradictory and complex (inter-) actions that they experience as peace-promoting, but that nevertheless are frequently unrecognised, or mis-reognised, as peace-negating. And, I aspired to ground these (inter-)actions within the structures of precarity, exploitation and inequality in which young people find themselves after war.

I knew that motorcycling should be the site for these research enquiries in Liberia because I had seen, through prior engagement in evaluating formal UN DDR efforts there, how the cycling sector was un- and mis-recognised as a site of peace. I had seen during previous research visits to Liberia how important motorcycling was to youth employment and how ex-combatants had been involved in establishing the sector after the 1989–2003 conflicts. And, I was familiar with how discourses about motorcycling

have previously securitised, criminalised and stigmatised post-war youth in diverse contexts.[13]

Encounters with the 200 cyclists interviewed for the project also include focus group discussions, participant observation and repeat interviews with 14 key informant cyclists in Monrovia, Weala (Margibi county), Gompa City (Nimba county), and Tubmanburg (Bomi county). Project partners at Platform for Dialogue and Peace, a national peace-building and research NGO in Liberia, carried out additional interviews with several of these 14 participants in 2019, 2020 and 2021.[14] P4DP and I recruited participants first by approaching cyclist parking station managers to engage them in shaping research objectives and the question schedule, and then by interviewing all cyclists at parking stations who wanted to participate.

Initial interviews collected cyclists' ideas about the opportunities and challenges of the motorcycling sector, and asked them to narrate the work they do to improve life in the sector. Solutions coalesced around four themes: professionalism (through unionisation and business skills training); educational attainment (through scholarships from external patrons); preventing police brutality and improving cyclist-police relations (through workshop, dialogue and facilitated mediation); and, counter-stigma efforts (with cyclists advocating for radio programmes and bumper stickers to disseminate counter-stigma messaging). Thanks to follow-up funding from the Scottish Funding Council and Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden's government agency for peace, security and development, P4DP and I worked with cyclists to fund, implement and pilot test the effectiveness of all of these solutions. In keeping with the aims of the special issue, this article reflects on how these participatory efforts enhance peace research through diverse approaches to recognition of cycling as peace-building, showing that peace research is inevitably a representational practice. Forthcoming research will detail the evaluation and impact of these participatory projects.

Positivist explanatory approaches focus on *whether* youth strategies contribute to reintegration, based on control variables and success definitions formed prior to research engagement. In contrast, this project adopts qualitative and participatory action methods *alongside* participants to highlight not just *whether* young people's ideas matter – which discursively discounts them before research begins – but on *how* and *why* youth participation facilitates reintegration. PAR methods have engaged youth participants in all phases of research design and implementation, including design of project objectives, scoping, and evaluative frameworks.

The project advances a youth-centred theory of change: that external funding support and participatory research methods (tailored to youth priorities and solutions) will contribute to reintegration, sustainable livelihood and social cohesion. This theory counters ongoing and deeply entrenched marginalisation of conflict-affected youth in the motorcycling sector, who are often seen only as threats to safety and societal cohesion in their reckless pursuit of 'fast cash'.[15] The project's approach builds on key DDR research insights about how ex-combatant participation is critical for reconciliation and conflict prevention and how measurement of reintegration outcomes must move beyond assessment of formal DDR to include ex-combatants' experience of it.[16]

Continuous involvement across both traditional research activities (like interviewing, focus groups and participation observation) and experimental project work and participatory pilot testing and evaluation of cyclists' own ideas about change means that

participants' notions of benefit are dynamic and complex, articulated in response to different participatory forms of engagement.[17]

Time as a critical conceptual intervention in peace research

In this section, I think alongside critical accounts of time and temporality in peace research to contribute to conceptualisations of post-conflict 'reintegration trajectories' that question ideas about who builds peace, and how.

Youth are simultaneously securitised and stigmatised after war.[18] My published research on ex-combatants argues that international actors often misunderstand how former fighters threaten post-conflict states, failing to identify the multiple and over-lapping ways in which they both threaten and are themselves threatened after war. These misunderstandings securitise reintegration by designing programmes around beliefs about ex-combatants as threats that fix and reproduce their social marginalisation.[19] Such approaches preclude conceptualising the multiple roles that young ex-combatants play after war,[20] contribute to their further marginalisation from society[21] and exclude youth from decision-making that affects them.[22] The DDR gaze reifies uniquely strange, contradictory stories, where reintegration back into the poverty and marginalisation that caused conflict in the first place gets rewritten and narrated as successful and desirable.[23] Elsewhere, I have summarised the prevailing *misrecognition* of the binary DDR gaze, where discursive construction of youth after war is 'less interested in *what youth do* than in binary assessment of *whether youth threaten*', and where 'ex-combatants are to be "dealt with" rather than listened to or recognised as peace-building actors'.[24]

Incidentally, these insights about how the securitisation of youth produces discrepancies between seeing/conceptualising DDR and making peace researchable are closely related to this special issue's adjacent insights about affect and pluralism, both of which also prioritise aligning peace research with participants' notions of social recognition and agency. For example, Lauren Berlant's work on affect asks that the political be seen as differentially privileging the claims and practices of some over others who are minoritised through discourses of the political, such that conflict-affected and ex-combatant youth come to matter less in peace-building accounts.[25] In post-war reintegration terms, the optimism of cyclist youth for a better life is 'cruelly' securitised in two senses: firstly, their aspirations and actions, even when enacting 'peace-building', get interpreted and policed as if always peace-negating.

Secondly, their post-war relational aspirations are narratively looped as an expression of ongoing, war-time ex-combatanthood, a refrain of war's resonance rather than post-war possibility or the ongoing structural impediments that preclude post-war possibility. During my interview with him at the 12th Street parking station in Monrovia, Moses[26] was a rider open to discussing his experiences as a former small soldier with the LURD forces, one of two principal rebel groups fighting against Charles Taylor during the 1999–2003 civil war. He joined the LURD at age 14 after his father was killed, to seek revenge. 'These wars', he said, meaning his involvement in them, 'were because of the influence of my father's death, that's what made me to join the LURD forces'. He now regretted his decision to join the LURD, saying, '[A]fter I realised my mistake, I came back to myself, and now I'm doing everything well for myself. And I harm nobody, nobody harms me'. He said,

[M]ost people see us as ex-combatants that are riding the motorbike, no! We got BSc holders that are among us that are riding bikes. We got responsible people, we got married people. Because nothing doing so people are riding motorbike. But Liberian people [. . .] classified us to be ex-combatants but we are not ex-combatants. Not everybody is ex-combatant. Like me, I fought a war, of course, but now I behave mature.

DDR and chrono-normative peace-building as a barrier to recognition

External researchers and practitioners located outside of subjects' own lived experience assume that ex-combatants, after war, 'continue to speak in a *voice of war*',[27] and so neglect to develop narratives that position ex-combatants and conflict-affected youth as peace-builders. Paradoxically, then, research and practice communities develop theories and modalities that are based not around subjects' experiences of peace, but around their own epistemic assumptions about perpetual violence and return-to-war.[28] The DDR gaze is therefore one of externality. Even when the DDR gaze looks at *social* reintegration, it does so as a short-term process of community acceptance, and not as a studied reflection about the social relations and aspirations of ex-combatants themselves.

In seeing and situating ex-combatants as the primary threat to peace, the DDR gaze also tends to see violence as a legacy of war and so excludes from focus the several violent continuities of peace-time that impact on ex-combatants. It is common for post-war, nationalist projects to construct linear narratives of war-time trauma that are partial (they foreground some citizens' experiences of trauma and erase others) or heroic (they deny systems and structures of continuous injury and trauma, preferring accounts of the after-effects of war that pathologise and individualise).[29] For cyclists, these violent continuities differentially expose their bodies to premature death and injury, via many forms: police brutality, ritual and criminal murder, roadside accidents and vigilante violence. Their identity as ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth also exposes them to social death as a necropolitical form through modes of economic and social discrimination, marginalisation and stigma.[30]

The temporal practices of externally-designed and -implemented DDR reveal how reintegration is an assimilationist project. The DDR gaze is thus 'chrono-normative'; it sees reintegration as assimilation into the communities that encouraged, or failed to prevent, ex-combatants' recruitment into war. And, it assumes an idealised post-conflict time-space into which ex-combatants are expected to assimilate, on the terms and timescales of external patrons and civilian communities, and into memory spaces where the politics of political violence will be emptied out.[31] DDR is also conceived as a *timely* project aspiring to alter, contain and direct the trajectories of ex-combatants, usually without their input or participation, within the liberal peace habitus of state and market.[32] Motorcycling is an important site of peace-building because of how it articulates alternative and actual (as opposed to desired and imaginary) ex-combatant trajectories outside of the spatio-temporal aspirations of chrono-normative DDR. The linear time of neo-liberal peace-building is also, by design, a time of waiting and deferral: reintegration itself is conceptualised frequently as 'buying time' for the supposed deferred benefits meant to accrue to post-conflict populations via privatisation, marketisation and democratisation interventions that are ultimately ineffective, violent and exclusionary.[33]

Exceeding DDR: extending time horizons through long-term reintegration trajectories

Given these contradictions embedded in knowledge and policy production processes, making peace researchable requires subversion of the DDR gaze, to extend the timeframe of peace narration. Nikkie Wiegink, in her commitment to research and narrate stories about Mozambican ex-combatants that *exceed* DDR, has written persuasively on the need to shift temporal research frames, from the short-term DDR gaze to long-term 'reintegration trajectories'. Tracing former fighters' trajectories over a longer period of time, she argues, also politicises them as subjects, allowing for a focus away from assessments of post-war threat and onto the 'ongoing demands veterans may pose on the state and state-like institutions'.[34] Chrono-normative DDR, with its focus on avoiding war recurrence and overcoming its immediate after-effects, reifies the short-term DDR gaze and freezes analysis of ex-combatants in terms of their presumed ability or desire to take the state back to war. The reintegration trajectory focuses instead on how past, present and future create a long reintegration arc. The trajectory as an alternative temporal lens reflects how long time horizons 'shape people's lives' and reveals how the violent continuities of peace-time shape actors' responses.[35] The same action, such as riding a motorcycle taxi, can have peace-promoting and peace-negating effects, refracting how each peace-time subject is simultaneously perpetrator and victim, threat and asset to peace.

If reintegration trajectories are long term, why do international actors resist supporting those trajectories (which would entail conceptualising ex-combatant and conflict-affected populations' needs as long term, and funding long-term programmes)? Why do they resist supporting the time-spaces that ex-combatants are mostly likely to inhabit (from motorcycling to mining), instead creating imaginary time-spaces of reintegration where everyone can become a hairdresser, mechanic or tailor after a mere six months of vocational training? Peace-building as state-building is a peace praxis and system of thought derived from 'histories and sociologies of nation-state formation in the West'.[36] The DDR gaze, with its focus on the short term, is about the timeliness of international withdrawal more than the completeness of reintegration, and so is more about absolving the international of ongoing responsibility for the welfare of ex-combatant youth. The trajectory consequently holds decolonial potential (by potential, I mean that de-colonial critique will be realised more or less well across approaches that adopt the trajectory as a lens) because it is committed to telling unfinished stories.[37] Veena Das has encouraged researchers of violence 'to think of the social in terms of unfinished stories'. Rather than 'cause and effect', thinking about the social as an unfinished story emphasises 'chains of connection through which the processes of translation and rotation [...] actualise certain regions of the past'.[38]

In addition to narrating the unfinished stories of ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth, what is entailed in an aspiration to 'take a "long view" of the transition from war to peace'?[39] My approach to the reintegration trajectory differs slightly from those who conceptualise the long-term as 'life course'. I situate the trajectory within the way the everyday is an embodied and sited practice, which draws attention to how the violent continuities of peace-time include the violences of non-recognition, stigmatisation and ongoing marginalisation of ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth. Embodiment sees peace-building work as labourious. As work, it exposes some bodies more than others to

injury, ongoing economic precarity and premature death.[40] Embodiment also draws attention to which bodies are credited with doing the work of peace-building. Misrecognition is also embodied as stigmatisation, with stigma etymologically and praxiologically linked to how marginalisation marks bodies.

The critical, activist potential of the everyday, meanwhile, has two aims. First, it generates actor-centred accounts rather than rely on external or elite accounts of what peace is, who builds it and how. Second, it shifts accounts of peace away from masculinist, securitised notions that peace is the absence of violence and towards accounts of peace-building *and/as* justice, peace-building *and/as* equitable access to livelihood opportunities, and peace-building *and/as* meaningful opportunities to participate in political processes. Quests for recognition combine these two objectives, with everyday peace interested in 'not only why and how certain people chose to act towards peace but also whether their actions are positively recognised, or not, and by whom'.[41]

Methodologies that facilitate peace research as recognition

Recognising time-spaces of peace: sited ethnography

Sited ethnography is a method that appropriately reflects the conceptual premises articulated above about embodied, everyday reintegration trajectories. Sited ethnography aims to bring into focus the 'fractured, discontinuous plane of movement and discovery among sites', which helps to illuminate the 'chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, [and] juxtapositions of locations' and thereby 'make connections through translations and tracings among distinctive discourses from site to site'.[42] As securitised subjects, youth are easily and frequently de-spatialised. Multi-sited youth ethnography aims instead to connect youth to place, since doing so suggests belonging instead of threat.[43]

Sited ethnography is also an improvisational practice.[44] Things do not always go to plan, initial plans can misread local contexts and research benefits cannot be known beforehand. Inspired by Lee Ann Fujii's exhortation to treat mistakes as gifts and organise interviews around relationality,[45] in working alongside the cyclists I have attempted to embrace an ethic of letting go, or, more appropriately, realising that the desire to control research design is an illusory and a colonial one, reflecting a will to power over research participants. An ethic of letting go also aspires to what Das calls a 'gesture of waiting', to 'allow the knowledge of the other' to mark research and researcher alike.[46]

Peace-building is a multi-sited terrain. Correspondingly, the motorcycle parking station reflects how grass-roots peace-building has no clear borderlines; it is fragmented, diffuse and frequently un-/mis-recognised. Parking stations are where cyclists pick up and drop off passengers but they are also sites of hanging out, labour organisation, articulation of peace-building contributions and complaint about economic conditions and social stigmatisation. The parking station signifies multiplicity; its ubiquity hints at the tens of thousands of cyclists in Liberia and therefore roots their importance to society spatially. It also conjures movements, flows and relations, and it draws attention to multiple other sites connected to it, to how cyclists who gather at parking stations are also on the road carrying passengers or at school, home, union meetings or police

stations bargaining for the return of extra-legally seized bikes. These connected spaces also illustrate the diverse impacts of motorcycling on society as multi-sited.

These impacts, likewise, become multi-sited through the narration of cyclist inter-viewees who draw attention to misrecognition and stigma as meaningful, everyday experiences. Chasing those narratives, therefore, has entailed travelling from parking stations and into markets, pallava peace huts and government offices to collate different non-cyclists' perspectives about cyclists and cycling. I also went into cyclists' homes. P4DP partners and the Liberian IRB board[47] raised important points about ensuring that invitations into the home were genuine and not coerced, and the IRB board was worried that research documentation of home visits could risk lurid exploitation of cyclists' home conditions. It is worth exploring why subjects narrating poverty from/of the home are considered in need of added protection than those narrating poverty from/of the street. Ultimately, the IRB board agreed to inclusion of multiple sites, including cyclists' homes, because they recognised that cycling impacts on more than the cyclists, especially in providing livelihood support to partners, spouses, children and extended family and that home visits would allow for the collection of narrative experiences about cycling from the family members it supports. I found that all key informants issued home invites not just willingly but emphatically, because they wanted to forge connections between sites, stories and subjectivity: to showcase the homes that cycling allowed them to build or, alternatively, to demonstrate precarious home living conditions that resulted when police extra-legally seized motorcycles or imprisoned cyclists.

For example, in interviews, Kabila frequently reminded me that he is the 'father of eight living children', and wanted me to meet them, not just to listen to stories about what motorcycling was able to do for him and his family but to witness these stories with my own eyes. As I followed him through the winding, vertical alleyways of Peace Island to his home, he said,

> Yeah, I'll show you some of my children and I'm willing [for you] to see them. You come. This is my wife […] And this is my daughter, this is my granddaughter, and this is my daughter, too. You see her face, you see my face. And they all live by my Mike Bravo ['MB', or motorbike].

This same embodied performance of what he was able, through motorcycling, to accomplish for himself, for his family and for peace in his country occurred again when Kennedy and I tracked him down north of Monrovia in Bong County in January 2022. He had since left the sector through a series of misfortunes and a messy divorce but had recently found a new job as an immigration officer. He arrived on his motorcycle in street clothes dusty from the long ride from his immigration outpost to Gbarnga, the provincial capital. He said, 'I told you next time you saw me you would see a man who made something of himself'. It was not enough for him to tell us about his new life, and how motorcycling had led him to his new vocation. Before he would sit for the interview, he insisted on changing into his immigration officer's uniform. He excused himself to a shack, accompanied by my research assistant and cinematographer, Florian Reichelt. Florian filmed Kabila take 15 minutes to get dressed, meticulously rolling his sleeves, buttoning each button, placing his beret just so and finishing off the uniformed look with a pair of mirrored sunglasses.

In contrast to the DDR gaze, which prefers not to locate ex-combatants where they are but to imagine them elsewhere, sited ethnography requires following ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth around, and locating them in the spaces where they actually end up and hang out. This means acknowledging the peace-building potential of ex-combatants and conflict-affected youth as private security guards, miners and motorcyclists, and not the hairdressers, mechanics and electricians who populate the spatial imaginaries of DDR vocational training.[48]

The time-spaces of reintegration are also symbolic, relational and conceptual. Ex-combatant and conflict-affected participants return, narratively and experientially, to sites and scenes of stigma and misrecognition. And, they use the research encounter to return to their own ideas about the importance and contours of counter-stigma strategies that centre peace-building as recognition. They also articulate the meaning of youth agency in terms of grass-roots actors' everyday situatedness[49] and their equal status to experts and elites when it comes to interpreting knowledge claims and contributions.[50] Since *everyday* peace is narrated by and through youth,[51] research into post-war youth livelihood and activities needs to be situated in the everyday spaces where young people gather, work and socialise.[52]

From data extraction to collaboration: participatory action research

PAR envisages research participants as individuals with knowledge and experience of the key themes and topics related to the research. It is designed so that participants 'become active agents in analysing and redressing the effects of oppression and violence within the community' and within research practices.[53] PAR aspires to co-create knowledge as ongoing praxis instead of data extraction.[54] There is a rich antecedent literature on PAR that emanates from diverse cultural contexts and aspires to build accounts of knowledge as ongoing, collaborative praxis rather than as data extraction.[55] Understanding research as praxis 'troubles an understanding of writing as *external* and *linear*—something done only *after* leaving [the field]'.[56]

With respect to youth and peace-building, the question of *who* assesses *whom* and *how* is also of critical importance given historical erasure of youth perspectives in external policy and research practice. Subject's own narratives augment knowledge of human security processes[57] since youth vernaculars contextualise young people's own strategies for sustainable livelihood.[58] PAR privileges young peoples' own accounts of 'themselves as non-violent, peace provokers'.[59]

My own approach to PAR has been to design its contours alongside project participants and project partners at P4DP, who have been applying PAR methods in all of their work since its founding in 2006. The organisation conceptualises PAR with the following:

> [PAR is based] on the idea that solutions to the challenges faced by post-conflict societies need to be developed and owned by the societies themselves in order to bring effective remedy. The methodology facilitates the development of inclusive solutions by the societies and creates a culture of dialogue that helps to improve the relations among – sometimes antagonistic – groups through repeated meetings, joint analysis of the challenges and design of solutions. The approach is also based on the assumption that such a process equips participants with listening and dialogue skills that will contribute to the peaceful management of conflicts in other conflicting contexts.[60]

P4DP's PAR statement builds on PAR literature that emphasises the importance of building participatory spaces and dialogue, going beyond the *collection* of perspectives to active efforts that *incorporate* perspectives in design and that *act on* collected perspectives in dissemination and impact generation activities. In doing so, PAR regards participants as experts.[61]

The project centres active involvement of participants across all aspects of research design and implementation, structured across three phases. Phase one is pre-interview and pre-project scoping, which asks parking station managers, ordinary cyclists and relevant civil society stakeholders to revise our own project objectives and to help co-design recruitment procedures, question schedules and other parameters of participation (such as the goal that interviews with key participants will be in-depth and multi-sited to incorporate as much of the cyclists' social, political and economic worlds as possible).

Scoping also involves efforts to design all contours of pilot testing of cyclists' own ideas across a number of impact-generating activities. Impact generation entails fundraising for, and pilot testing and participant-centred articulation of, cyclist-originated ideas for improvements to safety and security (through mediated police-cyclist dialogue sessions), livelihood (through scholarships and business skills training) and social inclusion (through a series of counter-stigma efforts such as radio broadcasts and cyclist-designed bumper stickers for motorcycles).

Phase two is the implementation of these impact generation projects, with frequent monitoring of participants and concurrent focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews. Phase three is post-project evaluation, with participants involved in structuring evaluation design. Importantly, phase three evaluation also occurs across other phases, because PAR evaluation 'is not an exercise done at the end of the project, but periodically during it'.[62] Through PAR, the motorcycling project aims to establish participation as mutual and not extractive benefit.

Although I advocate using PAR to move beyond the DDR gaze in imagining encounters with ex-combatants and conflict-affected youth, I am also aware that this movement is difficult to achieve in research and practice work. In my research practices with cyclists, a first difficult move has been away from targeting only ex-combatant cyclists and towards interviewing a broad cross-section of different cyclists from different backgrounds. In 2018 encounters, because my focus was fixed on finding and interviewing ex-combatant cyclists, I tended to see parking station managers as gatekeepers and facilitators rather than also as participants. A sense of indebtedness to the ongoing, dogged contributions of two of those managers, Trokon G. Gray (whose cycling name is 'Yellow Machine') and Alexander T. Devine ('Master P'), changed my approach. P4DP partners and I engaged them as facilitators to help design PAR methods for the radio, scholarships, business skills and police-dialogue projects, and their work led us to select them as scholarship recipients and engage them as key participants. Research encounters and participation in pilot tests and impact generation activities also affect participants. Trokon said that his engagement in these projects led him to change his major from business to social work, grounding his future within the sector as an activist leader rather than plotting his escape from the sector to do something else.

Even though understanding cycling as peace-building entailed acknowledgement of how the sector has moved beyond its ex-combatant roots, cyclists also matter as peace-builders *because* some of them are ex-combatants. This insight is important because the

sector gets othered as the negation of peace because of ongoing ex-combatant involvement in it. One does not have to be innocent in relation to, or untouched by, the complex and violent subjectivities that conflict structures produce in order to qualify for recognition, in order to matter to peace and to peace research. If so, no one would be left to narrate or practice peace, and yet peace-building discourses continue to replicate hierarchies of victimhood that researchers rely on and reproduce.[63] Additionally, many ex-combatant cyclists (like Moses, quoted above) feel pressure to separate out stages of life into a 'before' (conflict) and 'after' (peace), which is another way in which temporality impacts on whether and how peace becomes researchable.

A second difficult move, but one made less difficult via PAR, has been away from DDR's chrono-normative practices, by learning to see cycling not just as something that keeps ex-combatant and conflict-affected youth 'out of trouble' by putting food on their table but as a more complex peace-building modality. Attention to time, after all, is not just about transcending the binary between short- and long-term analysis and praxis.[64] Critical attentiveness to time instead means asking a different set of questions, including: Whose peace-building work is seen and centred in youth reintegration accounts? How do youth actors articulate their own work as peace-building work? What do they identify as the violent continuities of peace-time? And, how does DDR, as a set of objectives focused on formal programmes, ignore the depth and breadth of youth peace-building work, or mis-recognise it as peace-negating rather than peace-promoting? Marginalised groups have long responded to exclusionary, normative projects of state-building by forging 'counter-publics', which the state in turn tends to further stigmatise and criminalise.[65] It is no coincidence that a primary aim of orthodox DDR projects is to dismantle ex-combatant social relations and mutual support structures, rationalising the 'breaking' of ex-combatant 'chains of command' as central to their conception of peace.[66]

Researchability as benefit

Benefit as return

Repeated encounters with Kabila in 2018 and 2022 also reveal how participants' showing, knowing and narrating peace, and researchers' seeing and understanding it, are linked to participant notions about the researcher's return to the research site. Most participants conceptualised the benefit of research participation as being contingent on my own return not just to Liberia but to the multiple sites of motorcycling and what cyclists hoped my return to these sites could do for them, symbolically and materially. 'The value of long-term research', Nancy Scheper-Hughes has written, 'is the ability to engage in a history of the present'.[67] Here is how Kabila framed his own participation in 2018, in response to my asking whether he had any final words at the end of my fourth interview with him over three weeks:

> Any final words? Maybe, I would just like to tell you thank you and thank you and bravo to you because you made our day good for us. Because if I couldn't have the opportunity to speak or have the opportunity to stand with me, my day won't be good for me. But by you giving me the respect and I give you the respect, so I will tell you bravo, thank you, and I pray we should always meet again.

Simultaneously, situating benefit as the return of the external researcher can reify power imbalances, with return itself insufficient. Participatory action research methodologies are needed in addition to long-term engagement to bridge the gap between the emancipatory aspiration of critical theory and research practices that end up reproducing power imbalances, including through hierarchical knowledge regimes about basic questions like, who builds peace and how? And, whose knowledge priorities have tended to be privileged in the formulation of these questions, and answers to them?[68]

During a 2021 return visit, I organised a screening of a short documentary film that I completed in 2019 about one Monrovia parking station, *Best Man Corner*.[69] Most of the over 50 cyclists gathered at the screening framed their reactions to the film and to the research participation underlying it in terms of my return. Their framing suggests that 'knowledge dissemination' is not a separate activity that follows the co-creation of research data of participants, but part of its own unfinished trajectory. Musa Fahnbulleh, a cyclist I interviewed twice in 2018 and spent a week with again in 2022, said at the screening that some of his colleagues had warned him not to participate back in 2018. He said, 'They told me not to speak to you, that you would just take and not come back'.

In this way, time as a critical concept helps to bring the nature of research relationships into critical, and self-critical, focus, where benefit, return, research presence and motorcycling (as something multi-sited) are all interdependent ideas. When our team was invited to return to Best Man Corner in 2022, the parking chairman and cyclists arranged what they called a 'welcome ceremony'. He addressed the 25 or so cyclists who had assembled that morning, saying, 'This is Dr. Jaremey, our partner that has been involved with impacting the lives of motorcyclists'. He linked return with dynamics of recognition and the ongoing social marginalisation of cyclists, saying 'He and his team [. . .] do not see us that way. They see us as people that can make impact positively in society'. And then he turned and said to me,

> You are willing to go where others won't go. The way people treat us, the way people consider us, is different from the way you consider us. In fact, there are people that feel intimidated even coming too close to us.

To '*always* meet again', as Kabila framed things, is inevitably setting me up to fall short of expectations. Return is not always within my control: it is only thanks to successive external grants that I have been able to return as often as I have, or to pay for Kennedy to conduct follow up interviews when I could not. I would argue that return, instead, is something dialogic and unfinished rather than perpetual. In this, it relates to how early PAR advocates situated research not as data extraction designed for a particular end but 'as part of a permanent process of collective organising'.[70] To understand benefit as continuous engagement therefore works against assumptions of total knowledge, and of knowledge as extraction. It is not that cyclists are saying that for research participation to be beneficial there must be *perpetual* return but rather *collaborative* return, where continuous engagement is committed, ongoing and unfinished.

Similarly, from a research perspective, I am struck by the inescapability of how both participants and researchers centre the research encounter, but centre it differently – the former through an affective register of expectation, satisfaction and/or disappointment, the latter through writing practices that both romanticise the faraway research encounter

while also disavowing how the researcher's presence frequently overwhelms and over-determines the kind of data that can be imagined and co-created. Writing practices also subsume that data through outputs that present much less of the researched than they could have imagined.[71] I am reminded of Adrienne Rich's generative question about locatedness, where white, woman and Western collide: 'How do we actively work to build a white Western feminist consciousness that is not simply centred on itself, that resists white circumscribing?'[72] To make peace researchable, sited ethnography cannot avoid the intimacies, dilemmas and acknowledgements about how peace studies research has constructed racialised, gendered, Westernised and self-centred ideas about who peace-builders are, where they are located and what they do.

Benefit as research recognition

Cyclists said participation gave time and space to discuss issues that matter, and that sharing life experiences resulted in individual and collective opportunities to further articulate ideas about counter-stigma strategies and about the situation of cycling as a peace-building modality. Interviews, especially if sited in time-spaces that are mean-ingful to participants, can be cathartic, even exuberant.[73] A large literature across disciplines confirms that participant narration during interviews and focus groups about the challenges they face, including the challenge of stigmatisation, is perceived by them as a valuable opportunity.[74] So, whilst research entails risks and perpetuates blindspots, researchers risk infantilising young participants by seeing interviews with them only in terms of potential harm and not also as potential benefit.

An example of this reflexive recognition stands out. One day, while we were conduct-ing a follow-up interview with Kabila at the Peace Island parking station, a cyclist who also had a second job as a nurse was complaining about the harsh conditions and the social stigma that accompany life in the sector. Kabila interrupted him, and said, 'Don't be regretting it!' Then he listed the advantages that come from the motorcycle for the nurse/cyclist: 'Your family eat on it, you pay nothing to get to and from work, it's all something to be proud of'.

Conceptualisation of benefit as recognition also forces a reckoning with orthodox research practices around forms of recognition, especially naming and compensation.

Naming

Being named can be an important mode of recognition.[75] Most participants have requested that their full names be used in the research, with written consent. The approved ethical consent protocol (at St Andrews and the University of Liberia) allows participants to decide how they want to be named and acknowledged in project outputs and other documentation, including the documentary short films. This practice also includes site-based, independent, pre-interview safeguarding assessments, usually included during pre-project scoping and consultation exercises and verbal discussion with participants about naming. We try not to lead this discussion, but prefer to hear from participants about what the benefits and risks of naming might be. From those discussions, those opting to be named (the vast majority) highlight diverse but over-lapping reasons. First, they note discrepancies between how elite actors perceived as

peacemakers and peace-builders (e.g. 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureates Leymah Gbowee, Tawakkol Karman and former president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) are named while those fixed as 'conflict' actors, like former combatants, tend to be anonymised in peace research. Second, they see naming as a form of witnessing their participation in Liberia's post-war history. Third, they see it as a sign of respect and acknowledgement for the time and effort required for research participation, with full names including middle initials often used in spoken and written forums in Liberia to signal respect and status. Finally, in drawing attention to how cyclists' point of view and experiences as peace-builders and entrepreneurs in post-war Liberia have been ignored and misunderstood, naming can be 'a form of recognition that works against the violence of appropriation and erasure of [. . .] knowledge and theory production' from below.[76]

Compensation

Regarding compensation, we have consistently reimbursed cyclist participants for their time as recognition for lost wages. Interviews frequently take place during some of the more productive working hours of the cyclists' day. And, cyclist interviews incur significant costs to participate in the research (usually, petrol or other transport-related costs). We distributed smaller amounts (usually $5) through parking station managers to be shared amongst cyclist participants for short interviews (less than 20 minutes), and direct payments (of $10 to $20 per day) to key informants and also to all participants taking part in focus group discussions and interviews linked to evaluating the pilot tests of cyclists' own solutions (scholarships, business skills training, police-cyclist dialogue sessions, and other counter-stigma projects like radio broadcasts and bumper stickers featuring cyclist-designed counter-stigma messages). We also compensate site-level research facilitators (from $20 to $50 per day) for the time they spend coordinating research activities and consulting on research design. 'Time is money', is the mantra of many cyclists.

These practices challenge some research taboos about fair and just compensation for research participation. PAR models rely on participants having the wherewithal to participate, where researchers work to remove obstacles to meaningful participation through careful consultation with participants at all stages of the research process. Just and fair compensation arranged in advance is a way to signal recognition of participants' 'support needs'.[77] Including participants in decisions about safeguarding processes and consent protocols that will govern naming and compensation decisions has been productively incorporated in other PAR approaches.[78]

Of course, simply making this determination does not absolve researchers from contending with ongoing ethical dilemmas, and these practices, just because they work in this particular context, might be inappropriate elsewhere. Payments must take place in a way so as not to create perceptions of favouritism and to be clear that payment is not 'for information' but is 'for time and expenses'. Having careful dialogue with all participants is key to producing practices about where, when, howand how much to distribute fair and just compensation. PAR methods also work against researchers making prior and top-down decisions about how much is 'too much' or 'just enough' and respond to the complaints of over-researched communities accustomed to being given biscuits and other small items as thanks for their time.

Conclusion

Pluralist conceptions of benefit reinforce the idea that making peace researchable might be about producing accounts of peace that are always unfinished. The best ethnographic, relational and participant-centred methods 'can only take us to resting points that are not endings but openings to new issues that require continuous working through, so characteristic of everyday life'.[79]

Meanwhile, chrono-normative peace research, when referencing youth contributions to peace-building or assessments of post-war reintegration, reproduces positivist if/then formulations that maintain the illusion that researchability is about producing accounts of peace that are final and definitive. I was recently asked as part of a high-level practitioner review of DDR to calculate the ideal spend per ex-combatant to achieve reintegration. If x were to occur, then peace challenge y would be resolved, once and for all. PAR centres participants who are too smart, too world-weary but also too creatively hopeful to fall for such reductive notions formulated outside of lived experience.

That is not to say they do not also have concrete ideas about improving their lives and the lives of their colleagues. I recently received field notes, interview transcripts and radio transcripts from cyclist federation partners at FOMTUL (Federation of Motorcyclists and Tricyclists Unions of Liberia), reporting on the radio broadcasts that project funds financed in 2020. At the close of one of the broadcasts dedicated to informing cyclists and passengers about preventing the spread of COVID-19, and informing the public about the valuable role that cyclists played during the Ebola outbreak in the 2010s, then-Secretary-General of FOMTUL, A. John F. Kenyor, said, 'We want to take this time to appreciate our partners. St Andrews University: kudos to you guys. We appreciate you ever so much, this platform that you've created, we look forward to seeing more support *beyond* this. We want training for our people'.

Lest we researchers be seduced into congratulating ourselves for any outcomes or co-created knowledge bubbling up from collaborative and participatory methods, John's final words in the broadcast suggest that participants decide which impacts to attribute to PAR methods, and which benefits to acknowledge. Consequently, the researcher's commitment to making peace researchable with participants is always unfulfilled.

Notes

1. With this conceptualisation of researchable peace as experiential peace, I'm aspiring to think alongside feminist peace scholars such as Sylvester, *War as Experience*.
2. Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 170.
3. Ex-combatant youth are those who took up arms or participated in armed movements during Liberia's successive civil conflicts from 1989 through 2003. Conflict-affected youth are those young people who lost out on educational, economic, social and political opportunities because of the war. Youth is a fluid and contested social construct in Liberia, reflecting much more than age. Youth as a category draws attention to the obstacles that prevent young people from meeting the material needs that might qualify them as adults in society. Most cyclists range in age from 18 to late 30s because of the physical demands and health threats of the sector. I agree with Angela Lederach that 'youth' is a 'dynamic cultural construct' that needs to move beyond binaries (frequently reinforced in peace research) that sees young people either as passive victims in need of protection or as troublesome agents prone to violence. See Lederach, 'Youth Provoking Peace', 199–200.

4. All names are used with participants' consent and at their request.
5. For an extended analysis of what cyclists (and I) mean when they (we) equate motorcycling with peace-building, see McMullin, 'Hustling, Cycling, Peacebuilding'.
6. Liberia has a unique history of ex-combatant involvement in the origins of the cycling sector, but the sector has played an important part in post-conflict transition in several African states. For accounts of the centrality of motorcycling to peace-building in other contexts, see Peters, 'From Weapons to Wheels'; Carayannis and Pangburn, 'Home is Where the Heart is'; and Oldenburg, 'Dead End?'.
7. Freire, *Pedagogy*, 17 (fn.1), emphasis original.
8. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', 119.
9. Ibid.
10. For a history of the local turn and a rationale for its necessity, see Paffenholz, 'Unpacking the Local Turn'. On lived experience as privileged knowledge, see Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges'.
11. For an excellent critique of empowerment as a peace-building concept, see Cronin-Furman et al., 'Emissaries of Empowerment'. I have engaged with critiques of voice in approaching motorcycling as a peace-building modality, in 'Hustling, Cycling, Peacebuilding', 74–78.
12. On building teaching and research practices that see world politics 'otherwise', see Ayuak and Koomen, 'Learning About World Politics'.
13. Thompson, 'The Motorcycle Gangs'; Medeiros, 'The Ambivalent Treatment'; and Lauchs, 'A Global Survey'.
14. Kennedy K. Berrian is the P4DP colleague who carried out the majority of these interviews, but the project has benefited from expert collaboration and interviewing from James Suah Shilue, P4DP's Executive Director, and from P4DP colleagues Vlandy G. Freeman, Deimah K. K. McCrownsey, T. Wilson Gaye, Jackson Speare, Alfreda M. Garswah, Moses S. Sah, Charlesetta M. Collins, Bendu K. Davis, Romeo Soko and Prince Glaygbo.
15. See, e.g., Open Liberia, Inc., 'A Decade without Higher Education'.
16. Kaplan and Nussio, 'Community Counts'; Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz, 'Rebel-to-Party Transformations'; McMullin, *Ex-Combatants and the Post-Conflict State*; and Torjesen, 'Towards a Theory'.
17. Ragandang, 'What Are They Writing For?', also calls on researchers to consider ways to incorporate direct engagement with peace work to move research objectives beyond knowledge production alone.
18. Maringira, 'Militarised Minds'; McMullin, 'Integration or Separation'; and Diouf, 'Engaging Post-Colonial Cultures'.
19. McMullin, 'Hustling, Cycling, Peacebuilding'; McMullin, *Ex-Combatants and the Post-Conflict State*; McMullin, 'Integration or Separation'; and McMullin, 'Reintegrating Young Combatants'.
20. McMullin, 'Reintegration of Young Combatants'; and Utas, 'Victimcy'.
21. McMullin, *Ex-Combatants and the Post-Conflict State*; and Utas, 'Building a Future'.
22. O'Neil and Van Broeckhoven, 'No Research'; Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 'Theorising Youth'.
23. McMullin, *Ex-Combatants and the Post-Conflict State*, 7–9.
24. McMullin, 'Hustling, Cycling, Peacebuilding', 73, emphasis original.
25. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 227–228.
26. I use only his first name at his request.
27. McMullin, 'Hustling, Cycling, Peacebuilding', 76.
28. Ibid.
29. Edkins, *Trauma*, xv, 10–11.
30. Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', 21.
31. For adjacent projects exploring the hegemony, double binds and contradictions of chrono-normativity, see Rao, *Out of Time*; and Freeman, *Time Binds*.
32. See Rao, *Out of Time*, 17; on timeliness, see Hutchings, *Time and World Politics*, 154–155.

33. On neo-liberal logics of waiting and deferral, see Auyero, *Patients of the State*. On reintegration as buying time, see McMullin, *Ex-Combatants and the Post-Conflict State*, 3, 24–25.
34. Wiegink, *Former Guerrillas*, 210.
35. Söderström et al., 'Friends, Fellows, and Foes'. See also Gusic, *Contesting Peace*; Scheper-Hughes, 'Small Wars', 892; and Söderström, *Living Politics*, 7.
36. Barkawi, 'Decolonising War', 199.
37. Ibid.; and Scheper-Hughes, 'Death Squads', 297.
38. Das, *Life and Words*, 108.
39. Söderström, *Living Politics*, 7.
40. Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'.
41. Williams, *Everyday Peace*, 5. Other accounts that have influenced my approach to the everyday are Enloe, 'The Mundane Matters'; and Mac Ginty, 'Everyday Peace'.
42. Marcus, 'Ethnography in/of the World System', 100–102, cited in Cohn, 'Motives and Methods', 93.
43. See Diouf, 'Engaging Postcolonial Cultures'; and Jeffrey and Dyson, *Telling Young Lives*, 1.
44. Cerwonka and Malkki, *Improving Theory*.
45. Fujii, *Interviewing*, 48–49.
46. Das, *Life and Words*, 17.
47. I obtained ethical approval not just through the University of St Andrews for research in Liberia but also through the University of Liberia (known as UL-PIRE IRB), which requires separate application and is a requirement of all external researchers planning to do human subject research in Liberia.
48. See also Christensen, 'The Underbelly of Global Security'.
49. Honwana, 'Waithood'; and de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*.
50. Lévi-Strauss, *Savage Mind*.
51. Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 'Theorising Youth'.
52. Diouf, 'Engaging Postcolonial Cultures'.
53. Williams and Lykes, 'Bridging Theory and Practice', 287.
54. Freire, *Pedagogy*.
55. See, e.g. Riaño-Alcalá, *Dwellers of Memory*; Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*.
56. Lederach, 'Each Word', 468, emphasis original.
57. Nussio, 'How Ex-Combatants Talk'.
58. Thieme, 'The Hustle Economy'.
59. Lederach, 'Youth Provoking Peace', 210.
60. Platform for Dialogue and Peace, 'Profile'.
61. Johnson, 'Moving Beyond Voice', 105. See also Lundy, 'Voice is not Enough'; Mannion, 'After Participation'; Moynagh, 'Human Rights'; Sakue-Collins, '(Un)doing Development'; and Kemmis et al., *The Action Research Planner*.
62. Ferrie and LaChapelle, 'Evaluating', 1.
63. Krystalli, 'Narrating Victimhood'.
64. Christie and Algar-Faria, 'Timely Interventions'.
65. Datta, *The Illegal City*; Erikson, *Criminalising the Client*; Bassel and Emejulu, *Minority Women and Austerity*; and Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*.
66. I discuss 'breaking chains of command' as a DDR assumption and objective in more depth in McMullin, *Ex-Combatants and the Post-Conflict State*, 22, 33–34, 239. See also Persson, 'Demobilised or Remobilized?'.
67. Scheper-Hughes, 'Death Squads', 297.
68. See Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 177, 185–186.
69. McMullin, *Best Man Corner*.
70. Lederach, 'Each Word', 461.
71. On this issue, see Krystalli, 'Narrating Violence', 184.
72. Rich, 'Notes', 34.
73. Bloch, 'Place-Based Elicitation'.
74. Winfield, 'Vulnerable Research'; and Knapik, 'The Qualitative Research Interview'.

75. Lederach, 'Each Word', 463.
76. Lederach, 'Youth Provoking Peace', 198 (fn.1).
77. Ferrie and Lachappelle, 'Evaluating', 3.
78. See Hoover, *The River is in Us*.
79. Das et al., *Remaking a World*, 26.

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