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Temporalities of victimhood: time in the study of post-conflict societies

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Abstract

Researchers in peace and conflict studies have rarely explicitly engaged with time and temporality. This article develops a temporal analysis of victimhood in a mature post-transition society, drawing on qualitative research with victims/survivors of gross human rights violations in South Africa. Two decades after the democratic transition, there is a prevalent understanding that it is finally time for victims to 'move on'. In contrast to the supposed linear temporality of peace processes however, the consequences of past violence continue to impact on interviewees' lives and are exacerbated by contemporary experiences of victimisation. I identify several areas of temporal conflicts that characterise post-conflict societies: victimhood as temporary/ victimhood as continuous; the pace of national reconciliation/ the time(s) of individual healing; and the speed of a neoliberal economy/ the pace of social transformation. I examine temporal hierarchies that reflect broader socio-economic marginalisation, such as being made to wait for compensation and social pressures of overcoming the past. This temporal analysis of victimhood thus not only highlights the mismatch between victims' needs and political and cultural expectations of closure, but it also draws attention to the temporality of transitional processes and programmes at different social and institutional levels.

Keywords

victimhood, temporality, time, post-conflict, South Africa, violence

Introduction

One of the challenges for post-conflict societies lies in establishing fast-paced liberal economic regimes that must at the same time gradually deal with long-term issues such as redistribution and reconciliation.[1] There are temporal conflicts between the demands of 'acceleration societies' (Rosa 2003) and the patience and long time horizon that is required, both individually and collectively, for victims' processes of healing and for sustainable social transformation that addresses the root causes of violent conflict and promotes peace. With this profound tension in mind between the ongoing needs of victims and societal requirements for closure, this article examines how people's past and present experiences of violence impact on their being in time in a post-conflict democratic order. It contributes a time-sensitive perspective to the scholarship on victimhood by examining what I call *temporalities of victimhood*. This temporal analysis of victimhood not only underscores how victims' perceptions and needs are at odds with wider society and how ongoing experiences of violence and inequality have the potential to bring back traumatic memories from the past, but it also draws attention to the temporality of transitional processes and programmes at different social and institutional levels.

Analysing qualitative interviews with victims/survivors of human rights violations and field observations, the paper uses South Africa as a case study. Twenty years after the end of apartheid, there is a dominant understanding amongst many South Africans that it is time for victims of apartheid-era human rights violations to 'move on'. Indeed, perhaps more than any other post-conflict setting, South Africa is regularly portrayed as an example of a

[1] The term 'post-conflict society' refers to a society where a transition from mass violence to no mass violence has taken place. This is sometimes also referred to as 'post-violence society' in the literature. There are issues with both terms – most significantly that violence and conflict are rarely completely eliminated in the new democratic dispensation – but the more commonly used phrase of 'post-conflict' has been chosen here (also see footnote 2 below for the distinction between political and social peace).

society that has successfully managed past human rights violations. At the same time, experiences of apartheid-era victimisation continue to impact on survivors' lives in a range of ways, for example economically, psychologically, emotionally and physically. What is more, continuing structural violence in the democratic present can rekindle memories of the past and disrupt the supposed linear temporality of the peace process.[2] While this dominant linear temporality of peace processes and transitional justice sees victimhood as temporary and healing as taking place progressively, understandings of victimhood and senses of time appear much more cyclical in the narratives that are examined in this article.

The paper proceeds in seven stages. The first part reviews relevant literature on time in order to develop the concepts of temporalities of victimhood and temporal conflicts. The second section discusses the notion of victimhood as it relates to post-conflict societies, provides necessary background on the nature of victimhood under apartheid and outlines the policies that were adopted to assist victims in the early post-conflict era. Next, methodological issues are addressed. Section four begins the discussion of interview data, demonstrating that interviewees read the past through contemporary experiences of victimisation and inequality. The next section expands on this finding of a collapsing of past and present. It contrasts interviewees' constructions of victimhood and senses of time as continuous, for example in relation to continued segregation, with the dominant conception of victimhood as temporary. Part six moves from participants' temporal experiences to exploring the larger social context within which these experiences take place. The marginalisation of victims and victimhood in policy and the public sphere is charted, which, it is argued, may account for why many participants reported a social pressure or obligation

[2] The use of the term 'peace process' throughout this paper refers to social peace processes as opposed to political peace processes. According to Brewer (2010), social peace processes are concerned with societal healing and relationship building after conflict, and therefore include not only transitional justice strategies but also policies of social redistribution.

to forget the past and 'move on'. There is then a disparity between victims' experiences and the expectations others – new and old political and social elites, but also the young born-free generation – place on them. Section seven analyses this disparity in terms of a temporal conflict between individuals' own pace of healing and the demands of national reconciliation, drawing on examples such as the pardons policy and reparations. In concluding, attention is drawn to the temporal conflict between the demands of acceleration societies, and the patience that is required to achieve sustainable peace through redress and reconstruction.

1. Time in the study of post-conflict societies

Within the study of time, contemporary theorists have, to name only a few areas, examined the acceleration of time, how time is used and imagined, and how different notions of time inform and construct social meaning (see for example Zerubavel 1981; Adam 2004; Rosa 2003). Recent scholarship in the sociology of time also includes work on temporal domination and socio-temporal marginalisation (Auyero 2010; Reid 2013). In accounts of post-conflict societies, time is sometimes implicitly considered. Against the common assumption that the passing of time can overcome any harm, memory and trauma studies have shown that memory representations can become fuel for time bombs in new waves of conflict (De Brito, Gonzales-Enriquez et al. 2001; Edkins 2003). In relation to memories of a violent past, Volkan (2004) describes a 'time collapse' where ideas and feelings connected with a group's 'chosen trauma' of the past are folded in with those of a current conflict, with old and new events condensed into one. A shared image of the past provides an illusion of timelessness that is crucial for the creation of collective identities (Halbwachs & Coser 1992).

However, rarely do conflict and peace scholars explicitly engage with time and temporality. Hinton's (2013) analysis of the Cambodia Tribunal demonstrates that

transitional justice (TJ) mechanisms are based on the idea of a linear temporality, constructing concepts of past and present that are highly normative and rendering the present liminal. This 'dichotomous transitional justice time' serves to erase historical complexities by seeking to move the victim that is 'frozen in time' and then liberated by TJ practioners into an active, progressive citizen in a democratic state (Hinton 2013: 92). In his ethnographic work on the everyday lives of survivors in Mozambique, Igreja (2012: 408) likewise critiques TJ time as 'mechanistically […] suggesting a past of violence and a present for justice and closure' and instead proposes to recognise multiple temporalities in order to understand how people's conceptions of justice and healing change. These accounts – by in turn focusing on memory and trauma, the temporal modes of TJ institutions and people's lived time – indicate that temporal analyses might provide important insights into the social and political dynamics of peace processes.

In applying such a temporal analysis specifically to the issue of victimhood after mass violence, I develop the concept of temporal conflicts in post-conflict societies. I understand temporal conflicts as differences in experiences, constructions and uses of time amongst people, groups, societies or institutions that can give rise to or legitimate power relations. The term emphasises that, while we are always caught in different speeds or times which can help us to understand lived experiences, there exist dominant forms of time and temporal hierarchies, which allow the marginalisation of particular groups, their temporalities and their lived experiences. Temporal conflicts in relation to the analysis in this article include several interrelated dimensions: dominant understandings of victimhood as temporary vis-à-vis experiences of victimhood as continuous and cyclical (this is particularly examined in sections 4 and 5), and the pace of national reconciliation vis-à-vis the pace of individual healing (section 7). Moreover, there is a broader temporal conflict between the (fast) speed of a neoliberal globalised economy and the (slow) pace of social transformation and redress.

Scholars of time have demonstrated a range of ways in which time becomes the object of social control and temporal power relations are shaped, for example in relation to gender (including work time, household labour, family schedules and singlehood; see Bryson 2007, Lahad 2012), sexuality and sexual difference (Halberstam 2005), employment and illness (Charmaz 1997) and how social events reflect particular dominant temporal expectations (Zerubavel 1981). There are inequalities in how time is used and whose time is valued: of particular interest in this article is waiting, which is stratified, mirrors unequal power relations (Schwartz 1975) and modifies the behaviours of those who are waiting (Bourdieu 2000). An emerging body of literature on the politics of waiting highlights making (subordinate) people wait as a strategy of temporal domination by the state, which can have disastrous effects on the emotional and material well-being of people and can exacerbate social inequalities, affecting those without resources disproportionally more severely (Auyero 2012; Reid 2013). Drawing on this literature on time and power – particularly in relation to societal expectations on victims to move on and victims' long wait for change – allows me to theorise their ongoing experience of victimhood in terms of a failure to conform to dominant transitional justice time. First however, some background on concepts of victimhood and how South Africa dealt with the victims of apartheid violence is necessary.

2. Forms of victimhood and ways of dealing with the legacies of the past

Whereas time has been largely ignored in studies of transitional and post-conflict societies, there is a rich literature on victimhood. The question of who is considered a victim (or survivor), who speaks for victims, and how victimhood is deployed is central to all peace processes. Cultures and discourses of victimhood are distinct from the experiences and actions of actual victims (Breen-Smyth 2007). Victimhood can be politicised and manipulated, such as when hierarchies of victimhood and suffering are established, when

victim groups become associated with movements or parties, or when notions of victimhood are deployed in order to legitimise further violence (Brewer 2010; Breen-Smyth 2007). Indeed, the very categorisation of victims and of perpetrators can be highly contested and TJ scholarship has increasingly questioned what might be called the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, arguing instead for more complex constructions of victimhood (Bouris 2007). In this study too, some interviewees were victims and perpetrators. Nonetheless, an ideal of the victim as innocent, morally superior and lacking responsibility continues to dominate, and it is this ideal that gives rise to hierarchies of victimhood and might lead to the exclusion of particular groups or to narrowly conceived victim policies (Bouris 2007; also see Borer 2003 and Fullard 2004 on South Africa).

South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 were preceded by fifty years of legislated racial oppression under National Party rule, with race determining individuals' access to political rights, opportunity, education, employment and health.[3] All 'Blacks', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds', to use the apartheid-era classification terms, were victims of the regime, although it did not affect the three 'non-white' groups evenly. To give two examples for apartheid legislation, the Bantu Education Act (1953) enforced separate education, designed to equip the black population only with the skills necessary for the lowest ranks of the labour market. The Bantu Authorities Act (1951) led to a programme of forced removals of three and a half million black people into ten supposedly distinct ethnic homelands or 'Bantustans': arid lands with no industries or infrastructure, which only made up 13 % of the South African territory. Huge shantytowns also emerged that provided white areas with cheap labour. Spatial segregation continues to characterise present day South Africa; indeed, the lack of educational and residential integration were amongst the main issues interviewees

[3] However, apartheid built on the foundations laid by previous segregationist regimes such as British colonialism.

cited as apartheid's lasting legacy on their lives. Those who were opposed to the regime were subjected to violent repression. The liberation struggle became militarised from the 1960s onwards, but many of the activist participants in this study were involved in the broad-based non-violent resistance movement, the United Democratic Front. 21,000 people were killed as a result of political violence.

Victim support policies after 1994 were intertwined with the workings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which famously provided conditional amnesty in exchange for the disclosure of knowledge of human rights violations. The commission set out to investigate gross human rights violations between 1960 and 1994, defined as 'killing, abduction, torture or severe ill-treatment […] carried out or planned by any person acting with a political motive' (TRC 1998: vol. 5: 10). Crucially, this definition therefore excluded victimisation experiences that resulted from the structural violence of apartheid.[4] From 20,000 submissions, the TRC classified 29,000 victims and documented 47,000 gross violations of human rights. The commission was also charged with developing a reparation and rehabilitation policy, which resulted in recommendations for a reparations grant, symbolic reparation, community rehabilitation programmes and institutional reform measures (ibid.). While individual grants were paid out (albeit late and at a reduced sum) and some symbolic reparation was undertaken, government has to date not implemented other aspects of the TRC's reparations policy. At the time of writing, over twenty years after the end of apartheid, there are regular protests by victims campaigning for a full implementation of the TRC's recommendations and a re-opening of the registration process. It has recently emerged

[4] As the TRC report put it, 'the Commission's focus was […] a restricted one, representing what were perhaps some of the worst acts committed against the people of this country and region in the post-1960 period, but providing a picture that is by no means complete […] millions of South Africans, and more particularly those who were not white, were subjected to racial and ethnic oppression and discrimination on a daily basis' (TRC, 1998: vol. 1: 29).

that the President's Reparations Fund currently holds over R1.1 billion (about £60 million). Due to interest, this is more than it did before paying out individual compensation for victims in 2003 (Gontsana 2013).

General redistributive policies, such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) legislation, were also adopted. They sought to eradicate structural inequalities (and might therefore be understood as aimed at the majority of the population affected by apartheid's structural violence) but did not specifically address victims as defined by the TRC. Nonetheless, South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world with a Gini coefficient of 0.69 (National Planning Commission 2012). Over half of South African children live in poverty; 20 % of people live in extreme poverty; and just under 1 in 4 people live without formal housing. Unemployment stands at 35.6 %, with South Africans between the ages of 15 and 34 years constituting 71 % of all unemployed South Africans (Statistics SA 2012).

These inequalities are in part legacies of uneven development under colonialism and apartheid, but they are also the product of policies adopted since the democratic transition. Trade liberalisation, a shift to investment spending, export-oriented manufacturing, privatisation of state enterprises, wage control and progressive flexibility of the labour market were adopted in order to foster higher economic growth and private capital investment. These neoliberal policies of the first democratic decade yielded moderate but unequalising growth, with capital the primary beneficiary. Conversely, large numbers of organised workers were retrenched, casualised or forced into the informal economy. This background on the adoption of a neoliberal economic regime in the early post-conflict era is significant here for two reasons: one, because it led to the emergence of new inequalities with 'trickle down' economics not working for the victims of apartheid's *structural* violence; and two, because in temporal terms economic neoliberalism is fast-paced, focused on speed, immediacy, and a

short-time horizon (Jessop 2009; Hassan 2009). This stands in contrast to the considerably longer time horizon of programmes for social reconstruction, redistribution and reparation.

It is important to briefly clarify the usage of the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' in this article.[5] Only about one third of interviewees described themselves as a victim (and just under that proportion preferred the term survivor), irrespective of the fact that they met the definition put forward by the TRC. Respondents cited a number of reasons for rejecting the term victim. Many ascribed themselves an active role and associated victim status with passivity; others with an unforgiving attitude that they rejected; some compared themselves to other victims and judged the degree of their victimisation to be lesser. Other words used to describe their identity in relation to the conflict of the past were 'freedom fighter', 'victor' or 'activist-survivor'. Notably, the term victim was most commonly used by interviewees not in relation to past victimisation but to their life circumstances in the present, as in the following extract: 'I was a freedom fighter, I was an activist. I mean, I am still a victim, in this context, in Mossel Bay. Even today I am harassed by the system here.'[6] It is central to the arguments brought forward here that interviewees often discussed victimhood in relation to their present-day experiences, for instance of poverty, unemployment or violence.

3. Methodology

This study included 38 interviews with victims/survivors of apartheid-era gross human rights

[5] I acknowledge the debates around the problematic use of the term 'victim' and that there is a preference in some strands of the transitional justice literature to use the term 'survivor' (also see the literature reviewed in the beginning of this section). As I show below however, neither was universally accepted by participants in relation to the violations they had experienced in the past. I therefore use the term victim in this article to highlight that people have experienced, and often continue to experience, human rights violations but do not necessarily imply that they chose to define themselves as 'victim'.
[6] Interview with Themba (49 years, male), 22 November 2011, Mossel Bay.

violations that were conducted during four months of fieldwork in 2011.[7] All interviews were conducted in the Western Cape Province, in a mixture of urban (Cape Town and Cape Flats townships; 25 interviews) and semi-urban or rural (Oudtshoorn, George, Mossel Bay; 13 interviews) settings, and in most cases at participants' homes.[8] 8 participants were female, 19 historically defined black, 18 historically defined coloured and one historically defined white. The Western Cape is unique in terms of its demographic composition, with a larger percentage of the population being historically defined coloured and white than in any other province. As with other provinces, victim experiences and the forms violence took are distinct (TRC 1998).

Participants were recruited through NGOs, personal contacts established in earlier periods of fieldwork conducted by the author, and through snowball sampling. They were provided with information about the purpose of the study and its focus areas in advance, with an interpreter being available to assist where necessary.[9] Interviews were semi-structured, addressing themes such as victim identity, compensation, justice, reconciliation, present socio-economic conditions and hopes for the future.[10] Mindful of concerns around the 'production of victims' (Madlingozi 2010), participants were not directly asked to recount

[7] All interviewees had experienced gross human rights violations as outlined by the TRC (see above for the definition), as well as experiencing the structural, legislated-for, violence of apartheid.

[8] Participants were given first-name synonyms. Ages, where indicated, were correct at the time of interview.

[9] Consent was obtained prior to interviewing, but at various points of the interview participants were asked again to confirm that they were happy to continue.

[10] Using interviews as a primary method produces particular outcomes that are related to one's own positioning (Coffey 1999). In this study, this is amplified by the positionality of the author as a white European researcher that, bar one exception, interviewed historically defined black and coloured South Africans about their experiences. Although the perspective of a well-informed outsider can afford important insights, participants might adapt their behaviours or utterances in particular ways. I hope that carrying out interviews, follow-up conversations and analysis in a reflexive and sensitive manner, drawing on many years of research experience in South Africa, and supplementing interview data with observational methods goes some way towards actively addressing this key methodological concern.

their victimisation experiences, although the vast majority chose to speak in detail about them. The forms of victimisation that study participants had experienced included: the killing of relatives, torture, detention without trial, rape and other sexual violence, shootings by police or other apartheid state organisations, maiming, forced removal, lack of access to education, healthcare, employment and political rights. Some used their accounts to construct narratives of their active contribution to the liberation struggle.

A further 11 interviews with human rights campaigners and victim group activists were conducted in Johannesburg and Cape Town, incorporating themes such as victim support policies and funding for support groups. These interviews served to contextualise data from the interviews with victims and provided insights into their organisations' programmes, the structural issues surrounding victim support, changes in policy and funding environments and the current socio-economic and developmental challenges in South Africa.

Moreover, I conducted six additional interviews with former Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) staff, asking participants to reflect on their experiences of South Africa's TJ mechanisms from the vantage point of a relatively mature post-conflict society. Data from these interviews gave important insights into their perceptions of limitations and benefits of the truth commission but also highlighted their understandings of the finite and linear temporality of the transitional justice process, some characterising it as 'having had its time', happening a long time ago or 'done and dusted'.[11] The usually vastly more privileged perspective and different structural location of civil society organisers and former TRC staff may account for differences and contradictions between their understandings of the ongoing needs of victims at this stage of South Africa's democracy and the experiences of the

[11] Direct quotes from interviews with former TRC staff, 18 February 2011, Cape Town and with former TRC staff, 12 November 2011, Johannesburg.

interviewed victims/ survivors themselves.[12]

My analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was informed by a constructivist grounded theory approach, which emphasises the reflexive meaning-making and meaning-interpretation of research participants and researchers and the subjective experiences and narratives of participants (Charmaz 2006). Qualitative data analysis software (NVivo) was used to manage the relatively large amount of data that were gathered, and to develop and refine a cross-sectional coding index through open coding. This involved a series of reflexive readings to identify codes, initially following relatively closely topics that had been included in the interview schedule (such as victim identity, justice, compromise and current life circumstances), and then to further develop additional themes that emerged, such as continuity, change, structural violence, waiting, struggle, loss, recognition, regret, sacrifice, the next generation, exclusion, memorialisation. In addition to cross-sectional coding, I also used more free-form styles of analysis, for example focusing more holistically on individual participants' narratives and biographies, and examining transcripts for significant terms and metaphors (such as 'still struggling', 'being left behind', 'moving on'). Concepts such as the dimensions of temporal conflicts were developed from memos and from further focused coding (Charmaz 2006).

4. Memories and present-day victimisation

Memories can have an important role in victims' positioning in the post-conflict dispensation. Some participants are able to construct their past victimisation as essentially empowering, confirming their place in, and contribution to, a democratic South Africa. I asked Mike, a

[12] Having noted these differences in structural location and the mostly linear understandings of the peace processes amongst non-victim participants, it is important to state that all non-victim participants were nonetheless deeply sympathetic to the suffering of others and frequently acknowledged that victims felt 'forgotten about' (*passim*).

municipal government worker, how past violence – in his case, severe ill-treatment and several periods of detention without trial for his political activism – affects him today:

> In such a small community, when you walk around, people tell their kids: look, that guy here, he is one of the struggle heroes, one of the people that assisted us in becoming free […] From my side personally, when I am with my friends and activists of the past and we are socialising, we discuss what happened in the past. And that is actually nice now.[13]

For Mike, this was facilitated by having received counselling after his release at the request of the African National Congress (ANC). Other interviewees with similar perceptions about the past linked their ability to cope with their own memory work or, more commonly, with their religious practice.

However, this was not a typical response amongst the study participants. Memories from the apartheid-era continued to negatively impact the majority of interviewees. Luisa from Khayelitsha was forcibly removed as a child. Later, as the wife of an imprisoned political activist, she was forced to raise her children on her own and was a victim of police violence. She spoke about present-day violence in her Cape Flats community, which includes frequent murders, crime and violent drug gangs:

> What is happening now, it makes me think back to apartheid time. And then sometimes I don't feel right because maybe I think of the things I saw in apartheid, and the people they were dying and they were fighting for their freedom. That wasn't very nice. Sometimes we had to sleep in the bushes. Because we were scared when we slept in the houses that something is going to happen. And when I think about this

[13] Interview with Mike (46 years, male), 24 November 2011, Oudtshoorn.

> time and that time, I don't see any difference.[14]

Ariz, a political activist and torture victim, similarly describes how memories of the past are evoked by contemporary experiences:

> [Traumatic memories] come from time to time, to be honest with you. Especially when you find yourself in the position, unemployed, you have a family that you need to support, and you ask yourself, what was all this effort that we put in. Not that we .... it was a principle fight, but if you look at yourself and where you are now, and the same people that fought alongside you it seems as if they have turned their backs on you.[15]

The sentiment of new elites having 'turned their backs' was voiced in a large number of interviews; others expressed it in terms of betrayed promises, having been forgotten about and being made to wait, as Martin – a pastor who suffered detention and torture for his political stance during apartheid and now lives in a container with his wife and child – does here:

> If I stay in a shack prior to '94, then here comes '94, the country has changed, we are in a democracy, my needs will be answered, and we have been promised that things will change. Housing will be there, electricity will be there, water will be there. But now you are still sitting there, still waiting, for a house, still waiting for whatever. And don't get. And that brings the bitterness.[16]

Both of these accounts epitomise the structural violence that many participants are exposed to, for example involving long-term unemployment, lack of formal housing, poverty, and lack

[14] Interview with Luisa (63 years, female), 8 November 2011, Khayelitsha.
[15] Interview with Ariz (45 years, male), 22 November 2011, Mossel Bay.
[16] Interview with Martin (52 years, male), 21 November 2011, Mossel Bay.

of access to basic services. But they also reveal participants' senses of waiting for things to change, waiting for recognition for their contributions and waiting for redistribution.

Violence in the post-conflict era is also direct in some cases. Munia witnessed the murders of two of her grandchildren and one of her daughters in recent years due to gang violence in Bonteheuwel near Cape Town where she lives. She struggles most with the impunity the perpetrators continue to enjoy, all of which are known to her. In talking about the past, she says:

> I am so lonely and I am sitting there alone in the room, and I am thinking back, how it was at that time, and how it is now. And the difference. Because at that time everything was .... how to say that, everyone was willing to do something, but now nothing is going.[17]

Other studies have linked inactivity, as Munia describes it here (or exclusion from the world of work, as in Ariz' account earlier), with victims' difficulties to cope with trauma (Igreja et al. 2009). What is more, the word 'sitting' has temporal resonances with waiting – itself often associated with immobility – and is dichotomous to constructions of time associated with change, progress and movement. In addition to this binary of waiting/ moving forward, the above narratives evoke other binaries, for example active/passive, included/excluded and individualist post-apartheid South Africa/collectivist resistance.

Part of Munia's sense of alienation arguably stems from the radically different temporal mode and temporal logic of liberal democratic South Africa. Contrary to what political and social elite discourses in South Africa might suggest though, she is not unwilling to 'move on' or to integrate into the post-conflict order. Rather, contemporary victimisation

[17] Interview with Munia (67 years, female), 5 December 2011, Bonteheuwel.

experiences play a significant role in bringing back emotions about the past in her and others' narratives reported in this section. Drawing on this evidence of violence in the contemporary era rekindling past memories, I next analyse interviewees' constructions of time and victimhood, demonstrating that they appear continuous, rather than temporary or linear as is often implied in transitional justice and also in wider society.

Although some of the participants' experiences are consistent with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD,) for example anxiety and re-experience of traumatic memories through sensory flashbacks, this paper does not engage in detail with research on PTSD because of its culturally specific assumptions, its focus on the individual and the critique that it is not well suited to exploring the effects of structural violence.[18] However, the literature on collective trauma (Bloom 2006, Mogapi 2011) or massive large-group trauma (Volkan 2004) discusses some of the issues raised in this article, such as the everyday trauma of sexual violence (Leclerk-Madlala 2009) and the intergenerational transmission of trauma (Volkan 2004). These approaches see trauma as shared and embedded in the social structure of communities, and consequently view healing as encompassing political, economic and social dimensions (Budryte et al. 2009).[19]

5. The past as the present? Constructions of victimhood as continuous

Perhaps due to ongoing victimisation experiences such as the ones described in the previous

[18] For critiques, see e.g. Burstow (2005) and Moon (2009). Igreja et al. (2006) and Kaminer et al. (2008) examine PTSD associated with human rights abuses in Southern Africa.
[19] Manifestations of collective trauma, according to Mogapi (2011) and Volkan (2004), include fixation with the traumatic experience, the fragmentation of social capital, projection, avoidance and social reenactment. Some, but not all of these, were present in communities but it goes beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate collective trauma manifestation in South Africa.

section, some participants did not (or perhaps could not) clearly distinguish between apartheid past and post-apartheid present. Interviewees typically emphasised continuities with the past by highlighting that apartheid still exists: 'I can tell you with confidence that apartheid is still rife in the Western Cape'; 'you have this depth of an apartheid reality'; 'we are coming towards the 20th anniversary [of the first democratic elections] but it is still the same.'[20]

Continued segregation, both educationally and residentially, in particular gave interviewees the impression that 'nothing has changed' (*passim*). For example, Anton, a public sector worker and former political prisoner, stressed the difficulty of overcoming the past if there is a perception that nothing changes:

> I would like to move forward. But […] my children are at a predominantly white school but their mother is teaching at a predominantly coloured school, where the access to equal amenities is not the same. Racial integration is only moving where whites predominantly are. Because you don't see white children in Coloured and African schools. It is a one-way street. And that is the same with anything else in terms of racial integration. It is looking at this kind of thing where I don't think we have reconciliation. It is more segregated than we were, just under a new name.[21]

There has indeed only been a modest desegregation of schools, largely limited to middle class schools in urban areas, and patterns of residential segregation have remained mostly unchanged since 1994. Racial and class stratification reflects one another: while inter-racial socialisation might have increased for the wealthiest South Africans, the same is not true for

20 Extracts from interviews on 2 March 2011, Kraaifontein (53 years, male); 1 December 2011, Cape Town (63 years, male); 5 December 2011, Bonteheuwel (67 years, female).

21 Interview with Anton (50 years, male), 23 November 2011, George.

poorer households. It was common for township residents in the Cape Flats to have never visited central Cape Town, less than 30 km away. Continued de facto segregation therefore serves as a very visible reminder of post-conflict continuities with the apartheid past. This is very much in contrast to the discourse of linear and teleological change and the notion of a clear break with the past that have been so strongly perpetuated in post-conflict South Africa.

There are other reasons for why past and present seemed continuous, rather than separated clearly as violent/ peaceful and democratic. For example, Sara, the widow of a political activist, shared her own experience of being raped and described sexual violence as an intergenerational pattern:

> When it [being raped] happened to my daughter who is passed away, I was so cross for this guy, I put him in jail immediately. And now my daughter is passed away, and now it happens to my granddaughter. And I tell her, is it a kind of sickness in our family that every one of my family must be going through, must be a victim? What have we done to deserve that?[22]

Women are particularly marginalised during and after conflict; forms of victimisation – and subsequent reparative needs – tend to be different than those of male victims. What is more, women frequently become the sole breadwinner during mass violence, as was the case with Sara and also with Luisa who was cited above. Their narratives clearly highlight that, in contrast to a 'transitional justice imaginary' (Hinton 2013), experiences of violence and suffering do not belong to an (increasingly distant) apartheid past but were rather part and parcel of the supposedly peaceful and democratic post-conflict state. In their study of women's experiences in post-war Mozambique, Igreja et al. (2006: 508) similarly highlight the 'continuum of suffering and burden' traumatised women experienced in post-war times,

[22] Interview with Sara (47 years, female), 6 December 2011, Mitchells Plain.

partly as a result of the traditional gender roles they continued to perform.

A continuum of past and present also became apparent on the level of language. Respondents frequently used the present tense when they were discussing events in the past. I do not believe this is due to English being a second language for many respondents, but that the violence they experienced is conceptualised as still existing in the present. There was a sense in interviewees' narratives of a continuum of violence and inequalities: 'we are still like prisoners'[23] and 'we are still oppressed'[24] were typical assessments of their lives today. The dominant understanding in transitional justice is predicated on a linear perception of time. From this perspective, healing takes place progressively, victimhood is temporary and, after an appropriate amount of time has passed, it must be 'overcome'. By contrast, understandings of victimhood and senses of time appear much more continuous in these victims' narratives, with the persistence of multiple forms of violence and inequalities disrupting the supposed linear temporality of peace processes.

Similarly, the phrase 'I am/ we are still struggling' was ubiquitous in interviews: a whole range of participants employed this temporal construct to describe their lives in post-conflict South Africa, for example in relation to domestic violence, poverty, democracy, land, rights and the transformation of the economy. In this way, they expressed perceived continuities with the violence of apartheid but arguably they also sought to evoke their successful contribution to the liberation struggle, which represents a time of political certainties, collectivism and playing an active and central role.

[23] Interview with Solomon (52 years, male), 10 March 2011, Mandalay.
[24] Interview with Andile (50 years, male), 2 December 2011, Khayelitsha.

6. Needing to 'move on': the socio-temporal marginalization of victimhood

In this part of the article, I move from victims' experiences to the broader social context, highlighting how victims and their needs have become increasingly marginalised through government policies, a general public 'apartheid fatigue', and the increasing side-lining of victim concerns in (funded) civil society. This marginalization was acutely felt by victims, whose perceptions of societal expectations to forget about the past are documented in the second part of this section.

Turning first to the marginalisation of victim-related issues in policy, when the TRC first issued its reparations policy in 1998, the Mbeki government insisted that no such policy would be implemented until 2003 (when the amnesty hearings were to be completed). Besides a one-off payment to some victims, officially-recognised victims were therefore forced to wait for compensation for up to seven and a half years after their testimonies. In 2005, the National Prosecution Authority's (NPA) National Prosecuting Policy was amended, supposedly in order to address the 'unfinished business' of the TRC and to contribute to national unity. It now allowed for the discretion of the NPA's director in pursuing criminal cases against persons who had been denied amnesty by the TRC. The TRC had referred more than 300 names to the NPA but only a handful of prosecutions were taken forward.[25]

Reflecting this political marginalisation of victim issues, there is a public understanding that the past has been sufficiently dealt with. For some years, apartheid victimhood has been regarded as no longer relevant to the challenges of democratic South Africa: the country as a whole has 'moved on', the 'conversation [about apartheid] is over' (*passim*), as I was told frequently in interviews with civil society practioners and in

[25] An alliance of civil society groups and the relatives of victims filed against the amendment in 2007 and it was struck down as an unconstitutional 'back door amnesty' by the Constitutional Court in 2008.

conversations with ordinary South Africans. One victim and civil society leader highlighted the gap between public perceptions of victims as caught up in the past, and victims' unmet needs:

> At the time [of the TRC], in the nation, there were popular victims. In many respects their needs were not met, and so then time passed. And then the same group of popular victims became unpopular victims, and society had moved on, but their needs had not been met. And society says, but why are people still obsessed, but actually their needs had not been addressed.[26]

It might be apt to speak of 'apartheid fatigue' in society. This term has been used in a number of contexts: the public's weariness of the ANC's tendency to blame the past for its service delivery failures[27]; a lack of interest in engagement with apartheid history by some sectors of society (Wale, 2014); and the intergenerational tensions between those that suffered and struggled and their born-free children with no first-hand memory of apartheid (about 40 % of the population). For example, a former TRC commissioner I interviewed argued that 'the debate about apartheid is over,' and that 'people get very impatient when government spokesmen refer to present day problems as being inherited from apartheid. White people get angry and say we can't go on blaming apartheid for everything. And black people are just tired of that argument. And young black people who don't remember don't

[26] Interview with Stephen (62 years, male), 1 December 2011, Cape Town.
[27] For example, South Africa's president Jacob Zuma went on record in 2010 for saying that apartheid could no longer be blamed for the problems the country was facing in relation to poverty, inequality and lack of service delivery. Many commentators in the public sphere read this as a long-overdue acknowledgement of responsibility for service delivery failure by the ANC. However, for a number of study participants, Zuma's statement conveyed a sense that they should have moved on and yet another attempt by Government to marginalise their concerns. As one interviewee put it, 'Now you don't force me to be happy. Just like Zuma has said we can't blame the apartheid, some of us feel that we will blame the apartheid until our grave' (Interview with Cynthia [61 years, female], Masiphumelele, 10 November 2011).

want to know about that.'[28]

The argument that there is a cultural pressure on victims to get over the past is further backed up by public opinion research, which shows declining support for the idea that the South African government should support victims of human rights abuse under apartheid (57.6 % overall); white South Africans are least likely to support redress measures for victims (33 %) (Wale 2014). Urbsaitis moreover contends that 'as South Africans become even more temporally distant from 1994 […] reconciliation fatigue may be causing them to forget their reconciliation responsibilities towards victims and survivors of apartheid prematurely' (2009: 59).

The assumption that the past has been sufficiently dealt with also means that there is little support accessible to those who struggle to come to terms with their past experiences. In the civil society sector, the very perception of once 'popular' victims as 'still obsessed', as in the above quote, provides a significant challenge for South Africa's few remaining victim support organisations such as Khulumani, The Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture and the Institute for the Healing of Memories. Staff at these organisations stated in interviews that, to be able to attract funding from donors, they have had to not frame their work in terms of the apartheid past: 'even with people saying that Apartheid is passé, it is true that it has moved. And even we have had it with [our organisation] we have had to update and try and exclude the apartheid kind of things.'[29] This arguably adds to the discursive marginalisation of victim issues in the public sphere (also see Urbsaitis 2009).

Notably, the claim that victims should long have moved on is most often voiced by political elites, as the following extract from an interview with the director of a victim

[28] Interview with TRC commissioner, 15 February 2011, Cape Town.
[29] Interview with civil society organisation staff, 9 November 2011, Cape Town.

support organisation indicates:

> We have a huge section of our population who have been victims of torture, and those experiences have never been dealt with. We see a number of political activists very disillusioned by the status quo, and at the same time we see people who are now in power who were political activists saying in response to these people: but it is because you haven't been able to move on. It's because you are so stuck in the 80s. Well, why are they do stuck in the 80s? Could it be because their experiences have been so traumatic, that they are not able to move on? [30]

Civil society leaders regularly highlighted a gap between the new political and social elites and those who continued to consider themselves victims: 'the conversation about apartheid is far from over. That is the problem, that's why everything is falling apart at the moment. And then you have the members of parliament who are predominantly black who then think that they can speak for everybody because they are already over it, and so why shouldn't everybody be alright.'[31] This attitude of the elites might be a product of having access to resources that has allowed them to better deal with past traumas, be it through counselling after the transition, financial resources or a clear break with the past. For instance, some political activists who became victims of gross human rights violations received counselling at the behest of the ANC (as liberation movement); others began their political careers for the ANC, now ruling party, during the struggle. Conversely, the majority of victims (or their relatives) remained poor and have had little political leverage to push forward the issue of reparations.

> The sense of needing have overcome the past already and being out of sync with the

[30] Interview (50 years, female), 14 March 2011, Cape Town.
[31] Interview (52 years, female), 8 March 2011, Johannesburg.

rest of society who have, was acutely felt. It was fairly typical for interviewees to report feeling a societal pressure to forget the past. For example, S'bu is a victim who subsequently became an MK[32] soldier, thus also illustrating the blurred boundaries between victim and perpetrator. Asked how his past victimisation affected him, he said:

> You still feel the outcome of it. Even today. These people today they are living just to die, waiting for their day. Given up hope. You've got the wounds, spiritual and physical wounds, that are not easy to heal, each and every day you see that wound, there is a pain that is caused by the wound. I can hear a lot of stories that you should forget the past. You can never forget. You can forget the past if it did not affect you.[33]

Similarly, Mustafa, who was targeted by security forces that bombed the youth centre he led in the 1980s, felt that there is no longer room for a victimhood identity today:

> I think I am still dealing with my victimhood. People sort of glibly talk about "you know we mustn't talk about the apartheid era, and let's forget about it". I can't forget about what I experienced, I can't forget the deaths of people that I knew […] I can't forget being teargassed every time I would go to a rally. I went to funeral after funeral after funeral, every month we were at two or three funerals of people who were killed by the state.[34]

This perception of an obligation to forget the past might be associated with participants' frustration that their stories have not adequately been told, as comes across in this extract:

> There is no opportunity for us at this moment, there is no platform for us to speak our

[32] The MK, or Umkonto we Sizwe ('The Spear of the Nation') was the military arm of the ANC, established in 1961.
[33] Interview with S'bu (63 years, male), 9 March 2011, Khayelitsha.
[34] Interview with Mustafa (47 years, male), 2 March 2011, Cape Town.

> minds, our inner feelings, how we felt at that moment when we went through that. Because people are saying today: apartheid was here, it's gone, and don't speak about apartheid, because it is gone. So you are not supposed to refer to apartheid, you are not supposed to speak about it. But […] for us to speak out, that is important to us. [35]

There was a common perception that official commemoration has only dealt with the national leaders, whose stories did not represent participants' own locally diverse and uneven experiences of violence and struggle. It was in rural areas and townships where victims felt least represented and this is also where the perception of 'being left behind' was most clearly articulated. [36]

7. Temporal conflicts between individual healing and national reconciliation: permanent liminality?

One way of thinking through the fundamental incongruence – between victims temporalities and experiences of continued violence that were documented in sections 4 and 5, and the cultural and political expectations for them to have moved on that I outlined above – is as an expression of temporal conflicts between processes and experiences of individual healing and the demands of national reconciliation. In the name of national reconciliation and drawing a line under the violence of the past, post-conflict states (through their TJ mechanisms, or otherwise) might seek closure sooner than victims, 'the state's desire to build a new post-conflict society often means […] asking survivors to engage in a premature closure before all the psychological processes around truth and recompense are fully internalized (Hamber &

[35] Interview with Bongani (53 years, male), 23 February, Cape Town.
[36] Issues of memorialisation go beyond the scope of this paper but the data clearly highlight the insufficiencies, for victims, of official memorialization even in the context of South Africa where huge memorialization efforts and symbolic reparations were pursued and where the formerly oppressed have gained political power.

Wilson 2002: 44).

The term reconciliation is of course far from uncontroversial and takes on different meanings according to the nature and extent of a given peace process, with one key question concerning the level of analysis: is it an individual, community-level or national process? In this study, the term was understood by most participants as a top-level, official process (often associated with the TRC), which they saw as contrasting with their own everyday efforts to live with the historically defined other, forgive others, or finding closure within themselves.[37] Although interviewees' detailed conceptions of reconciliation go beyond the scope of this paper, it is significant that 'real' or 'genuine' reconciliation was by the vast majority linked to achieving redistribution and social and economic justice. To cite just one example for this, I asked Nomvula, a writer and arts sector professional, whether she felt reconciled:

> I would be reconciled had the economic situation been closed a bit. Had there been only a slight gap between the rich and the poor, then maybe one would be reconciled. But when I go back to the township where I stay, even though I may have a car, a much better home, but when I look around me, when I look at the effects that the apartheid government had done on the people, then I begin to feel, no, reconciliation it might be there in my heart, but around me, it is really not there.[38]

The TRC itself, as the main transitional justice mechanism, was arguably more successful in promoting a shared understanding of the past than it was in helping individual victims: participation did not necessarily benefit victims in the long term (Stein et al., 2008). Official transitional mechanisms necessarily work on different time frames than individual

[37] For this reason, when talking about reconciliation as part of South Africa's nation-building project in the early post-apartheid period, it is referred to as 'national reconciliation' throughout this paper.
[38] Interview with Nomvula (45 years, female), 6 December 2011, Cape Town.

processes of healing and grieving. In the South African case, the temporally limited nature of any truth commission was exacerbated by operating a closed-list approach with a final date for applications. That victims still continue to campaign for a re-opening of the TRC's registration process can be read as a challenge to the dominant linear and teleological transitional justice narrative, as a way of grappling with the past through their own temporal practices.

Similarly challenging the temporality of transitional justice, a considerable number of participants in this study voiced regret at their initial refusal to submit to the TRC and often expressed their hopes for a revival of the commission.[39] As one activist put it: 'In retrospect, if the TRC was happening today, I would go. I think it is important to tell our stories. I would advise other comrades as well: let us go and tell our stories.'[40] A woman who had been shot by apartheid police and is left with pellets in her leg said: 'I wonder, would it have been better for us [to submit to the TRC], and sitting then with some money from the state or whatever reparation process they went through. They must make another truth commission.'[41]

Another example is provided by debates around the Special Dispensation for Presidential Pardons, introduced by President Mbeki in 2005 (and continued by President Zuma) to pardon political perpetrators who had not participated in the Amnesty Committee. This controversial policy was framed as beneficial for national unity, with government arguing that it would allow the country to deal with the unfinished business of the TRC and to find closure. In the meantime, victims were fighting the proposal as a backdoor amnesty.

[39] It goes beyond the scope of this paper to fully explore why many activists actively chose not to participate in the TRC at the time; reasons include refusing compensation for what they saw as their sacrifice for freedom and commitment to secrecy. Many others wished to submit but say that they were not made aware of the process or submitted too late.
[40] Interviews with Fred (46 years, male), 23 November 2011, George.
[41] Interview with Phila (72 years, female), 6 December 2011, Nyanga.

However, perhaps the clearest illustration of the temporal conflicts between individual and national requirements is that victims were forced to wait for compensation. While TRC-recognised victims had to wait for the payment of the individual reparations grant up to seven and a half years after their testimonies to the commission, perpetrators immediately benefited from the amnesty process without having to wait. Responding to criticism about the delay in payment, Mbeki said that individuals had not struggled for money. This was perceived by interviewees as insulting and hypocritical, given that today's political elites were clearly material beneficiaries of the new order. Indeed, some individuals and communities are still waiting: a recent report identifies several severely harmed communities where reparative work is still meant to be implemented (South African Coalition for Transnational Justice 2012), including exhumations and reburials, community reparations and social services provision. In late 2013, the Department of Justice announced that the money in the President's Fund should fund infrastructure projects in 18 townships, without clarifying why other TRC-designating communities were not chosen or re-evaluating survivors' needs.

The fact that waiting mirrors unequal power relations, has negative impacts on people's emotional and material well-being and can exacerbate social inequalities makes the timing of reparations a crucial issue. The delayed payments of reparations in South Africa appear as a way to exert temporal domination (cf. Reid 2013): victims – mostly poor and with little political leverage – are made to wait for compensation and their ongoing hopes for redress and redistribution are dismissed as violating the goals of the liberation struggle. Importantly, waiting can be an aspect of immobility; not knowing if and when compensation will be received has left some victims precisely unable to move on and has fixed them in waiting. Beyond the impacts of waiting, victims can also be understood as socio-temporally marginalised for contradicting 'proper' transitional justice time and defying societal expectations about the time their victimhood 'should' last. By not conforming to the linear

temporality of the transitional process, they are rendered anachronistic. This is not to deny that the marginalisation of participants is socio-economic; rather, that temporal domination – such as being made to wait for compensation or recognition and experiencing pressures to overcome the past – is a key dimension of their marginalisation, and is intrinsically linked to their multiple senses of exclusion.

Waiting can be understood as a liminal condition (Lahad 2012; Sutton, Vigneswaran et al. 2011) – an ambiguous and uncertain, but temporary, in-between stage. Victims and survivors in particular are said to inhabit liminal social spaces; they are 'part of society but removed from society' (Hamber & Wilson 2002: 38). Transitional justice institutions themselves have been described as liminal in that they are supposed to enable the passage from violence to peace time and it is where survivors seek to resolve liminality (Wilson 2001). However, the notion of permanent or fixed liminality might better capture the experiences of participants that continue to deal with their victimhood two decades on. In contrast to the earlier anthropological literature on liminality, Bauman (1992) has suggested that different parts of a post-conflict society might remain in a liminal state for a long time. From the perspective of transitional justice time, victimhood already has a temporal orientation attached to it: is a *temporary* state in the passage from a violent to a peaceful society, and only as such might it be an acceptable form of liminality within that narrative of teleological progress. When victims continue to 'be obsessed' and 'fail to move on' however, they are marginalised for not fitting into the post-conflict order and become fixed in liminality – continuous victimhood disrupts the notion of a clear break between the past and the present, which the post-conflict state cannot tolerate.

Conclusions

This paper has developed a temporal analysis of victimhood in post-conflict societies. The issue of time and temporality has not often been explicitly considered in peace and conflict studies. I have suggested here that it can provide deeper insights into the dynamics and challenges of such societies and into victims' lived experiences. Transitions are commonly imagined as linear and, in order to 'work', must involve clear breaks between violent past and peaceful present. By contrast, participants in this study did not always distinguish between past and present. The incongruence, between the continuous nature of their victimhood and the supposed linearity of peace processes, is one of several dimensions of temporal conflict in post-conflict societies that the paper made explicit by adopting a time-sensitive approach. A temporal conflict was also identified in relation to social and political expectations about the timing, duration and pace of victims' healing. Transitional justice and post-conflict time are dominant modes of time that legitimise power relations. By not 'moving on' and failing to conform to the appropriate time, victims are dismissed as anachronistic and can become fixed in permanent liminality.

In concluding, I want to draw attention to a wider temporal conflict that might characterise settings beyond South Africa. It derives from the tension between the (fast-paced) socio-temporal logic of a free market economy and that of a society that must (slowly and over a long period) deal with the legacies of a violent past; that is to say, the tension between neoliberalism and redistribution. As noted earlier, a neoliberal economic regime was quickly adopted during and after the democratic transition. Scholars of time and speed have shown that there is an asynchronicity between liberal democracy and economic neoliberalism: 'fast-paced, instrumentally oriented economic neoliberalism […] is focused far more on the short-term horizon and on doing things ever more quickly' (Hassan 2009: 6), while the former involves slow deliberative processes that are not conducive to the imperatives of high-speed societies.

I argue that, given the demands and requirements of post-conflict societies, this asynchronicity between democracy and neoliberalism is yet more pronounced. This is for two reasons. Firstly, temporal modes are not neutral: temporal hierarchies render speed privileged over slow processes; fast is synonymous with profitable efficiency, whereas slow means inefficiency and backwardness (Adam 2004). When success is equated with speed, future-orientation and progress in acceleration societies (Scheuerman 2009), this might well contribute to expectations and pressures about the pace in which victims' healing should take place. The very discourse of needing to 'move on' that was documented in this paper is one expression of this focus on speed and immediacy. Secondly, the kind of economic and social change that neoliberal policies seek to implement involves a very different temporal logic than the logic underlying victim support and redistribution policies. For example, BEE has a time horizon of more than one generation and is aimed at redressing the legacies of hundreds of years of colonial and apartheid discrimination. Consequently, there are conflicts between the demands of neoliberal acceleration societies and the patience that is required in post-conflict societies in order to achieve redistribution, redress and social reconstruction.

This research has a number of implications for the study of conflict and peace. First of all, although I have predominantly analysed issues pertaining to victimhood here, time is a relevant category for understanding different aspects of post-conflict societies such as justice, truth, reintegration and redistribution. Secondly, while victims' senses of time were examined through the South African case, such an analysis and the associated typology of temporal conflicts can be applied to other post-conflict settings. For example, theoretical approaches to the politics of waiting might be employed to better understand the impact of victim support policies in transitional and post-conflict contexts such as Northern Ireland, Nepal and Colombia. Thirdly, a temporal analysis can be particularly useful for examining the challenges that mature post-conflict societies face a relatively long time after transition and

for recognising the long-term requirements of victims. Lastly, the arguments about an asynchronicity between neoliberalism and redistribution places into sharp relief debates about what kind of economic and political system should be introduced after the end of conflict, and ultimately also whether transitional justice, both in its institutional and scholarly aspects, needs to take account of issues around economic justice that it has historically excluded.

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