Provoking Peace

Grassroots Peacebuilding by Ambonese Youth

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Untuk menghormati

"Kenangan yang disuling dari perjumpaan-perjumpaan

Di sebuah negeri di ujung dunia"

(Dari puisi oleh Weslly Johannes)

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Chapter 1. Research Questions and Theoretical Framework

§1.1 Introduction

From February 2012 until early April 2012, I visited the Maluku island Ambon to do research on young people's peacebuilding initiatives after the 1999-2002 civil war between Christians and Muslims. During my stay on Ambon, I was invited by a local NGO-employee to visit what he called a 'Reconciliation High School'. At this provincial government set-up Reconciliation School, the best young Christian and Muslim students were selected to learn and live together in a boarding school. Although it was not yet clear to me what made this school a Reconciliation School, I was curious about the invitation and decided to accept the invitation. When I arrived at the school, one of the teachers explained that by living together, the students had the opportunity to get to know one another and 'learn the values of plurality, so that later, when they are the leaders of Maluku, they can promote peace in Maluku'.

After talking to the principal, I was introduced to a group of about fifteen students. We discussed their lives, the school and the situation on Ambon.[1] During the conversation, many students stressed that Muslims and Christians at the school have a good relationship with each other and that they feel it is important to learn to respect other religions. However, from their remarks it becomes clear that they are aware that relations between Muslims and Christians outside their school are not always as positive. When I asked the group why unlike the students at the school, the majority of Christians and Muslims live in separate villages and neighborhoods, one of the boys told me the following:

> '*It is because of a small issue, it* [the issue] *could become bigger easily if people live in the same community*'.

When asked what kind of issues he was talking about, several students explained that a small 'issue' – which could be a rumor, disagreement or provocation – can easily cause bigger troubles because of remaining tensions between religious communities and a lack of

[1] The group consisted of female and male students, Muslims and Christian students, aged between 15-19 years.

transparency about the past. Another student gave an example of such an 'issue'. Recently, a Muslim motorcycle taxi driver had died in a Christian neighborhood. While some thought the Muslim died because of an accident, it was rumored that he had been killed by Christians.

When I asked the students what their personal feelings regarding such stories, the atmosphere in the classroom suddenly became a bit tense. The students started to whisper to each other and discuss my question in Ambonese Malay, which made it difficult for me to understand what they were talking about. After a long silence the still present NGO employee commented that my question was 'a difficult one to answer'. But after the students discussed some more among each other, some students tried to answer. First, a girl explained that teachers usually calm down the students when rumors spread. Because of this there usually are no worries among students in the Reconciliation School. Another student forwarded that everyone should check whether a rumor is true or not before believing anything. The answer of a third student was especially interesting, as she did not only speak for herself, but also in the name of the other students of the Reconciliation High School:

> *"We just don't believe the issues. Because people make problems because of issues all the time, and it is difficult to repair the problems."*

And a bit later, another student added:

> *"I was going to* [another school, not a mixed one] *as a kid. I have learned now that I was easily provoked to* [believe in rumors]. *There* [at the other school] *they teach you to love your own religion, but you don't learn about other religions. All of us are committed here not to believe the issues."*

When the discussion continued more students forwarded the same view and told me that the students in the Reconciliation school had agreed with each other not to believe any rumors. After this, every time when a student gave an example of a rumor the student made sure to explicitly stress that she or he does not believe the rumors are true.

While the young students at Reconciliation School have agreed not to believe the rumors, there is some ambivalence to this decision. First of all, the fact that they agree not to believe in a rumor suggests that at least some of the students are tempted to believe rumors if the agreement between the students was not there, otherwise there would not be the need to make an agreement on the matter. This is confirmed by the remark made by one of the girls that before she moved to the Reconciliation School, she usually believed rumors. Furthermore, some youth could personally feel that there is some truth to the rumors that are being told. That makes one wonder why the students are determined never to believe in any rumor as there may be some truth to them. These ambivalences raise the question whether rumors could also lead to disagreements among the mixed population of the Reconciliation School. The possibility of disagreements between the students at the Reconciliation School may explain the uneasy situation when I asked the students about their personal feelings about rumors, and also their agreement not to believe in any rumors.

This thesis addresses the various ways young people deal with questions and themes like those that were addressed during the conversation I had with the young students at the Reconciliation School. It investigates how young people relate to and reflect on Ambon's history of violent conflict and the current situation in which Muslim and Christian communities live mostly separated. This thesis also focuses on how Ambonese youth creatively search for ways to improve social relations between Muslim and Christian communities. This focus on the contribution of young people to Ambon's peace process is important, as young people's involvement in peacebuilding is often underestimated by scholars governments and NGOs that work on peacebuilding.[2]

[2] Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, 'Youth as Social and Political Agents: Issues in Post-Settlement Peace Building', *Kroc Institute Occasional Papers*, 21: OP2 (2001) 2-3. *and* Celina del Felice and Andria Wisler, 'The Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth as Peacebuilders', *Journal of Peace Conflict & Development,* 11 (2007) 1-2.

§1.2 Research Questions

Maluku, a group of Islands in Eastern Indonesia, was originally renowned for its religious harmony.[3] However, this reputation drastically changed when large scale violence broke out between Christian and Muslim communities on the capital island of Central Maluku, Ambon. In January 1999, the violence was initiated in the Maluku capital Ambon City, when an incident took place between a Christian bus driver and Muslim passengers. This fight quickly escalated into riots, which in turn triggered large scale communal violence on multiple Maluku islands that eventually left an estimated 9 000-10 000 people dead and 400 000-700 000 homeless.[4]

After government-initiated negotiations between Muslim and Christian representatives led to signing the Malino II agreement on the 13th of February 2002, large scale violence on Maluku gradually started to decline, with the last larger outbreak of violence happening in 2004.[5] However, there are indications that tensions between Christian and Muslim communities persist. Muslim and Christian communities still live largely separated, and in September 2011, rumors about a Muslim motorcycle taxi driver being murdered by Christians led to a new outbreak of violence.[6] Although the number of casualties was low when compared to the earlier outbreaks of violence, incidents like these show that inter-communal tensions are not yet fully resolved.[7] In this thesis, we will see that young people have differing views on the current situation and the September 2011 violence. Because of this, the nature and sometimes even the existence of inter-communal tensions are contested.

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[3] One Muslim religious leader even told me that he was invited for a conference to speak about religious harmony in Maluku a few weeks before violence broke out on Ambon in January of 1999. See also: Birgit Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War. Religion, Identity and Internet in the Moluccan Conflict', *Indonesia*, 75 (2003) 123-151, there 124. *And* Ati Nurbaiti, 'Media Coverage of the Maluku Conflict in Indonesia. Have Lessons been Learned?', in: Shyam Tekwani, *Media and Conflict in Asia*, (Singapore 2008) 36-49, there 36.

[4] Kirsten E. Schulze, 'Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon', *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 9 (1) (2002) 57-69, there 57. *and* Patricia Spyer, 'Fire without Smoke and other Phantoms of Ambon's violence: Media effects, Agency, and the Work of Imagination', *Indonesia*, 74 (2002) 21-36, there 24.

[5] International Crisis Group, 'Indonesia: Violence Erupts Once Again in Ambon', (2004).

[6] Asia Times Online, 'Religious Powder Keg Sizzles in Indonesia', (2011).

[7] Birgit Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture and Tradition for Peace', in: Idem ed., *Reconciling Indonesia, Grassroots Agency for Peace*, (Oxon and New York 2009) 97-118, there 98.

Because of the ongoing inter-communal tensions on Ambon, several NGOs try to build peace between Christian and Muslim communities.[8] Besides these more formal groups, also young people have organized themselves in small informal groups that organize activities to improve relationships between different religious communities. During my research I mainly focused on one of these informal groups, a group named 'Badati', an Ambonese word for getting together. The group is a small scale initiative without official organizational status that was set up spontaneously by a group of friends from both Christian and Muslim communities during a recent outbreak of violence in September 2011. The youth told me that during the September 2011 violence, they realized that they needed to do something to improve the situation and build peace. While this thesis focuses on the thoughts and activities from Badati, I also interviewed several young peacebuilders from other small scale youth initiatives.

There are three reasons why this thesis focuses on informal peacebuilding initiatives by youth. First, as I am still young myself, I hoped (and later also experienced) that it would be relatively easy to get in touch with and relate to fellow youth, which would facilitate the data collection process. Second, most traditional peacebuilding theories focus on the work of more formal, large-scale actors such as governments and NGOs, and tend to ignore the role of grassroots initiatives that strive to attain peace.[9] Third, studies that do focus on grassroots initiatives often concentrate on the role of more senior actors in society, such as local cultural and religious leaders, and only occasionally on the agency of youth.[10] Despite the as yet marginal scholarly attention for youth in peacebuilding theories, it can be argued that young people often play crucial roles in both conflict and post-conflict situations. Not only are youth relatively vulnerable and commonly involved in the fighting that takes place during conflicts, they also face the burden of rebuilding their lives and communities afterwards.[11] Because of

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[8] Birgit Bräuchler, 'Cultural Solutions to Religious Conflicts? The Revival of Tradition in the Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia', *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 37 (2009) 872-891, there 876-877.

[9] Birgit Bräuchler, 'Introduction: Reconciling Indonesia', in: Idem ed., *Reconciling Indonesia, Grassroots Agency for Peace*, (Oxon and New York 2009) 3-33, there 3-5.

[10] See for example the case studies that are presented in Birgit Bräuchler (ed.), *Reconciling Indonesia, Grassroots Agency for Peace*, (Oxon and New York 2009). *and* Judy Kuriansky (ed.), *Beyond Bullets & Bombs* (Westport e.a. 2007).

[11] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God. The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (3rd print; Berkeley 2003) 194-195. *and* Eric F. Dubow e.a., 'Exposure to Political Conflict and Violence and Posttraumatic Stress in Middle East Youth: Protective Factors', Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology 41 (4) (2012) 402–416. *and*

this, I argue that the views, experiences and activities of youth should be taken into account in any attempt to build sustainable peace. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of the roles young people can play in building peace in post-conflict situations. In this way, I hope that this thesis will provide a valuable contribution to existing peacebuilding theories.

In the introduction to this chapter, I have pointed out that Ambonese youth face the challenge to deal with provoking rumors and occasional reoccurring violence. These continuing tensions continuously influence the social relations between Muslims and Christians at the grassroots level of society. The purpose in this thesis is to analyze the ways in which young peacebuilders try to find creative solutions to these challenges, and look for ways to build peace on Ambon. I will do this by answering the following main research question:

> *'In what ways can youth contribute to the post-conflict peacebuilding process at the grassroots level of Ambonese society?'*

I will divide this main question into the following sub questions: (1) 'How do young people's views on the 1999-2002 conflict and the current situation influence their peacebuilding efforts?', (2) 'How do youth creatively deal with ongoing challenges to their peacebuiling activities?', and (3) 'How can the activities and views of young peacebuilders be related to scholarly theories on peacebuilding and conflict resolution?'. To answer the first sub question, I will relate young people's views to the theories of John Paul Lederach, who argues that violence and peacebuilding are intrinsically related to the ways people view themselves and their relations to others. Through answering the second sub question, I will argue that youth can make unique contributions to Ambon's peacebuilding process. To be able to answer the third sub question, I will relate peacebuilding by young people to some more traditional peacebuilding theories that will be discussed in the next section. The answers to the second and third sub questions combined will fill an important gap in contemporary peacebuilding

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Michael Wessels, Child Soldiers, Peace Education, and Postconflict Reconstruction for Peace, *Theory into Practice* 44 (4) (2010) 363-369. *and* Kelsey Bristow, *Bosnian Youth: The Excluded Segment of the Population with the Most Potential for Transformative Peacebuilding*, (2010) 38.

theories, that often either exclude or objectify youth rather than treating them as important actors in their own right.

§1.3 Theoretical Framework

In the course of this thesis I will analyze the empirical data I have gathered by relating it to different academic theories that will be presented in this subsection. First, I will discuss several theories on the relation between religion and violence, which demonstrate that violence is often closely related to the ways people view themselves and (their relation to) others in relation to their worldviews. In the next subsection, I will discuss academic theories on the links between rumors, suspicion and violence. These theories will help us to understand and analyze the violence that has taken place during and after Ambon's 1999-2002 civil war. In the final subsection, I will position my thesis within academic theory on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and investigate how my research can contribute to the field.

Identity and Violence

In popular media, both in Indonesia and on an international level, the conflict in Maluku has often been simply described as a religious conflict, in which both Muslims and Christians were fighting for religious reasons.[12] While it is certainly true that the 'grand narrative' of a religious war played a role in the conflict dynamics on Maluku, we will see that the conflict is also influenced by many local, ethnic and political factors, and that the religious dimension of the conflict only became stronger and prominent once the conflict continued. However, because the Ambonese conflict definitely had a religious dimension, I will now discuss some theories on religious violence that will help us to understand the violence on Ambon.

In an article on the connection between religion and violence, social scientist Hans Kippenberg argues that religious violence is frequently connected to violent discourses that are often present in religious worldviews and paradigms. This however does not mean that

[12] Ati Nurbaiti, 'Media Coverage', in: Shyam Tekwani, *Media and Conflict in Asia*, (Singapore 2008) 36-49, there 39. During the conflict, many media were also partial and in this way confirmed the gap between religious communities. (See besides the article of Nurbaiti: Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War', 136-137, 147. *and* Stewart M. Hoover and Nadia Kaneva, 'Fundamental Mediations: Religion, Meaning and Identity in Global Context', in: idem eds., *Fundamentalisms and the Media* (London and New York 2009) 1-21).

followers of a certain religion necessarily act on the violent repertoires that are present in their religion, as social actors never act independently of the social context in which they are situated. Besides this, it is also possible that social actors only 'frame' a conflict in religious terms, while religion was not directly involved in causing conflict. Therefore, Kippenberg argues that whether or not actors decide to use violence on religious grounds depends on the way actors interpret certain social situations, and the roles they ascribe to themselves and others within these situations.[13]

In line with Kippenberg's argument social scientist Bruce Lincoln emphasizes that religious violence is often intrinsically linked to the ways people perceive themselves, others and the societies in which they live. In his book on contemporary religious conflicts Lincoln argues that many instances of religious violence are related to unresolved tensions between the secularizing character of the modern state and the potentially religious character of the nation.[14] Also, Lincoln sees the possibility that a country officially endorses religious pluralism, but in practice privileges a dominant religious group, which creates tensions between dominant groups and minorities.[15] Similar processes can be seen in Indonesia. While Indonesia is formally a secular nation, after the fall of Suharto, Islam became much more dominant in popular culture, public life and politics.[16] In several parts of Indonesia, religious and ethnic minorities have feared this shift towards Islam, which contributed to outbreaks of violence in Kalimantan, Aceh and East-Timor.[17] On Ambon, Christians maintained a dominant position in economics and politics since colonial times. However, tensions increased when the locally dominant position of

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[13] Hans G. Kippenberg, 'Searching for the Link between Religion and Violence: A Theory of Social Action', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010) 97-115.

[14] Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors. Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago and London 2003) 63-64.

[15] Lincoln, 'Holy Terrors', 77-92.

[16] See: Sonja van Wichelen, *Embodied Contestations. Muslim Politics and Democratization in Indonesia through the Prism of Gender* (unpublished dissertation, 2007).

[17] Jacques Bertrand, 'Legacies of the Authoritarian Past: Religious Violence in Indonesia's Moluccas Islands', *Pacific Affairs,* 75 (1) (2002) 57-85, there 58. *and* Van Wichelen, *Embodied Contestations*, 47. *and* Tjitske Lingsma, *Het Verdriet van Ambon, een Geschiedenis van de Molukken* (Amsterdam 2008) 222. *and* John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad. Religious Violence in Indonesia*, (Ithaca and London 2006) 2. *and* William Case, 'Political Mistrust in Southeast Asia', in: Mattei Dogan (ed.), *Political Mistrust and the Discrediting of Politicians* (Leiden and Boston 2005) 81-100, there 85.

Christians was increasingly challenged by national developments in which Islam was increasingly prominent.[18]

According to psychologist Catarina Kinvall, exceptional events, such as the developments in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto's New Order, can lead to an increase of ontological and existential insecurity among people.[19] An important way in which social actors deal with such insecurity is by creating a stable identity, that is contrasted and demarcated by fixed 'others'. Hatred and fear for these 'others' often play an important role in establishing people's own sense of identity. Kinvall argues that religious and nationalistic identities are especially suited to provide stable identities, as they are embedded within existing and familiar worldviews and truth-claims.[20]

Kinvall's argument can be related to the ideas of social scientist Mark Juergensmeyer, who argues that religiously motivated violence is often related to the image of a cosmic war between good and evil.[21] According to Juergensmeyer, this image is not only attractive because it can legitimize violence, but also because it is closely related to a worldview. Within this worldview a religious group has a clear identity that is related to a history, cosmology, eschatology and the feeling that the own group can exert power. Participating in a cosmic battle therefore gives participants 'symbolic empowerment', a feeling of security, dignity and purpose.[22] In this way, participating in religious violence can provide a solution to the insecurity people experience in uncertain times.

The above arguments on religious violence have in common that they all emphasize that (religious) violence is closely related to the ways people conceive themselves and their relation to others. These arguments implicitly show that for any sustainable peace to be build, actors at different levels of society need to look for ways to envision themselves and their relations to others in a way that does not encourage hate, fear or violence between different groups. These ideas are supported by social scientist and peacebuilding theorist John Paul Lederach. In his

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[18] Gerry van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars: Bringing Society Back In', *Indonesia*, 71 (2001) 1-26, there 18.

[19] See: Catarina Kinnvall, Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security, *Political Security*, 25(5), (2004) 741-767.

[20] Kinnvall, 'Globalization and Religious Nationalism', 742. See also: Jeffrey R. Seul, "Ours is the Way of God': Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict', *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (5) (1999) 553-569, there 556-563.

[21] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 148-166.

[22] Idem, 191.

book 'Moral Imagination, the Art and Soul of Peace Building', Lederach argues that peace can be build by the capacity to generate, mobilize and build a kind of moral imagination that transcends violence. According to Lederach, people can rise above violence when four disciplines and capacities are taken together:

> *"Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative art; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence."* [23]

From Lederach's point of view, peacebuilding is not only about political, economic, social or legal realities, but foremost about creating new ways in which people can imagine themselves and their relations others. Also, Lederach considers peacebuilding to be intrinsically related to taking risks, as trying to build peace implies trusting that others also want to achieve peace. To build peace is to share social life with former enemies, without knowing beforehand how things are going to work out.[24] Finally, Lederach gives special attention to the creative abilities and curiosity that humans have. According to Lederach, art, creativity and imagination are powerful and nonviolent tools that can help people to transform a community and construct new ways to think about oneself and others.[25]

Rumors, Suspicion and Violence

In their book on the relations between witchcraft, sorcery, rumor and gossip, anthropologists Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern argue that communal violence is often related to patterns of competition and suspicion, which are amplified by the spread of rumors and

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[23] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford 2005) 5.

[24] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination,* 164-165.

[25] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination,* 151-162. Also see: Ananda Breed, 'Performing Reconciliation in Rwanda', *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 18 (4) (2006), 507-513.

gossip.[26] Therefore, this subsection will focus on theories about trust, suspicion and rumors that can help us to explain how tensions within communities arise and can lead to violence. According to sociologist Francis Fukuyama, good social relations within a community or neighborhood are characterized by trust. Fukuyama defines trust as 'the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community'.[27] Fukuyama's definition of trust implies that trust at least partly depends on shared interests, otherwise members of a community would have no reason to cooperate. This view is supported by sociologist Russell Hardin, who argues that trust can be seen as 'encapsulated interest'. According to this idea, people have an interest in taking another people's interests seriously, as they value and benefit from the continuation of good relationships between people.[28]

From the view that trust depends on shared interests, it also becomes clear that the level of trust that is possible and realistic to have among people in a specific community is restrained by conflicting interests and competition. If interests of people within a society diverge too much, it may not be beneficial for people to cooperate with one another, making it better for people to pursue their own interests instead of cooperating. Therefore, when tensions and conflicting interests within communities rise, trust may lack or even shift into suspicion.

According to Fukuyama's theory, trust does not only have to do with people's interests, but also with people's assessments of what other people are planning to do. One is only able to trust another person if it is expected that the other is also willing to cooperate, otherwise one's own commitment will be in vain. Indeed, the fear that another person or group chooses not to cooperate may cause a person to decide not to cooperate her- or himself. The actual failure of participation of the first person can subsequently lead to a lack of trust and anger on the part of others, who may have wanted to cooperate initially. Besides this, while people may have enough shared interests and willingness to make cooperation between them fruitful, trustful relationships are also characterized by patterns of reciprocity and customs which regulate this

[26] Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip* (Cambridge 2004) 168-194.
[27] Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (London 1995) 26.
[28] Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness* (New York 2002) 1-3.

cooperation. If clear norms and customs to regulate the patterns of reciprocity are missing, it is more difficult for people to trust one another.[29]

Because every society can to a certain extent be characterized by diverging interests and a constant renegotiation about the norms on which people cooperate, trusting someone is intrinsically related to taking risks.[30] As people always have slightly different interests, there is always a possibility that another person or group chooses to pursue own or other interests instead of opting for cooperation. Therefore the risk that one's own effort at cooperating with others becomes futile is continually present. The more interests between individuals or groups diverge, the bigger the risk one takes when opting for trust and cooperation, as the option for another person to opt for his own interest or even working against others becomes more attractive.[31]

It has become clear that diverging interests, uncertainty about social relations and the need to take risks may lead to a lack of trust in a society. Besides having a lack of trust, people can also have reasons to be suspicious of one another, fearing that another person is secretly planning to benefit from them.[32] According to Stewart and Strathern, people tend to form informal networks of communication in which rumors are spread that reflect patterns of competition and suspicion. In these networks of communication, rumors can function both to confirm social norms and maintain unity within a group, to advance individual interest and increase uncertainty and conflict. Because of this, rumors can be used by people with limited power to challenge existing power structures or by the powerful to confirm their dominant position.[33]

Besides using rumors to challenge or confirm power, rumors can also be seen as a way to give meaning to events and developments that are intrinsically obscure and ambiguous.[34] This

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[29] Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear, Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* (Third Edition, London 2005) 128.

[30] Kydd Trust and Mistrust in International Relations 6-12. *and* Morton Deutsch, 'Trust and Suspicion', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2 (4) (1958) 265-279, there 266.

[31] Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton 2005) 6-12.

[32] Russell Hardin, 'Distrust: Manifestations and Management', in: Russel Hardin (ed.), *Distrust* (New York 2004) 3-33, there 3-4. *And* Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*, 60.

[33] Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*, x-xi, 30.

[34] Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, 'Rethinking Political Myth: The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9 (3) (2006) 315-336, there 318.

explains why rumors often arise when people are uncertain about other people's motivations and intentions, or fear that others will try to benefit from them. It also explains why rumors tend to flourish during periods of radical social change and surrounding events which are both important and intrinsically ambiguous.[35] As it is often difficult to be entirely sure of other people's intentions or oversee the nature and outcome of radical social change, it is by definition difficult to verify or falsify rumors.[36]

Stewart and Strathern also demonstrate how rumors often play crucial roles in the rise of communal violence.[37] As rumors reflect and amplify competition and suspicion between people, they can be used to provoke others and forward stereotypes about other groups. When rumors are being interpreted as an act of provocation, they can incite violence which in turn can provoke acts of retaliation. Furthermore, rumors about the possibility of attacks by others can encourage people to arm themselves and prepare for a possible attack, which increases the likelihood of conflict.[38] Besides this, violence against outsiders is easily generated by rumors, and rumors also often play part in intergroup conflicts along ethnic or religious lines.[39] Because of this, cycles may emerge in which provocation, rumors, riots, killings and political events follow one another.[40]

Grassroots Peacebuilding

Killing neighbors is not just destroying bodies, but also the social bonds that previously existed among them.[41] This raises the question how social relationships can be restored in a post-conflict situation. In this subsection, I will focus on academic theories on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as they may give us ideas on how social relationships can be restored. Later in this thesis, I will use the outline of conflict resolution theory that is given here to analyze and assess the work of young peacebuilders on Ambon.

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[35] Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*, 72-73.
[36] Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*, 29.
[37] Idem, 168-193.
[38] Idem, 178-179.
[39] Idem, 168.
[40] Idem, 182.
[41] Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors. Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca and London 2009) 3.

In her book on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, social scientist Megan Shore gives an overview of theories on conflict resolution, which first started to emerge after the First World War. Shore argues that until 1989, many conflict resolution theories focused on the political and economic aspects of peacebuilding, as this was demanded by the type of conflict that characterized the Cold War.[42] Besides this, conflict resolution was mostly state-centered, being based on the principles of self-rule and territorial integrity that underlined the Westphalian system.[43] In addition, Shore shows how conflict resolution theory is often dominated by two trends, namely (1) (descriptive) political realism and (2) secular political philosophy. Political realism entails that states are key actors in international politics. It also assumes that conflict and power struggles are intrinsic to human nature, and the primary way to limit conflict is through a balance of power. Secular political philosophy rejects any governing principle that appeals to religion or culture for legitimacy. Therefore, it emphasizes a rigid separation of church and state. Accordingly, culture and religion are often narrowly understood as a private matter, irrelevant to 'advanced', 'civilized' and 'enlightened' societies. Therefore, secular philosophers argue that secular political discourse should define justice, establish juridical order and conduct international relations, while focusing mostly on political and juridical aspects of conflicts.[44] Furthermore, secular political philosophers often regard religion only as an instigator of violence.[45] Because both realism and secular political philosophy focus on power, states, politics and law, Shore argues that most traditional conflict theories fails to take into account the complex religious, cultural, psychological and geographic realities of conflict.

Since the end of the Cold War, some theorists have therefore tried to broaden up the scope of conflict resolution theory. One of these scholars is philosopher Mark Amstutz. Focusing on the concept of justice, Amstutz has called for an alternative conception of justice

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[42] Megan Shore, *Religion and Conflict Resolution. Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Ashgate 2009) 10. *and* Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson, *Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-first Century, Principles, Methods and Approaches* (Ann Arbor 2009) 6.

[43] Bercovitch and Jackson, *Conflict Resolution*, 7.

[44] Shore, *Religion and Conflict Resolution*, 25-26. *and* Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, 77-92, *and* Scott R. Appleby & D. Little, 'A Moment of Opportunity? The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict', in: H. Howard & G.S. Smith (eds.), *Religion and Peacebuilding* (Albany 2004) 1-23.

[45] Shore, *Religion and Conflict Resolution*, 1.

that does not only focus on punishing offenders, but also on restoring broken relationships. While a more traditional, retributive conception of justice mostly focuses on punishment and juridical order, Amstutz also emphasizes forgiveness and reconciliation. While retributive justice focuses only on objective wrongdoing, restorative justice also emphasizes the transformation of subjective factors, such as anger, resentment and desire for vengeance. However, restorative justice is not an attempt to bypass the rule of law. Offenders should still acknowledge their wrongdoing and be willing to accept some sort of modified or reduced punishment. Victims should in their turn refrain from vengeance and acknowledge the human dignity of offenders. As conflicts often disrupt many facets of society, Amstutz argues that any attempt to restore a just society should be multidimensional, involving not only the restoration of juridical and political stability, but also social, cultural and spiritual reconstruction.[46] The case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an example in which such a perspective on justice was operationalized, which set the example for a number of other cases in which TRCs where used, such as Rwanda, Liberia, Chile, Sierra Leone and others.[47]

In line with the above developments, political scientists Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson differentiated conflict resolution and peacebuilding. While conflict resolution is restrained to the more limited objectives of conflict management and conflict settlement, peacebuilding can be seen as the holistic aim to transform the political, economic and social structures that can lead to violent conflict.[48] Bercovitch and Jackson argue that because the theoretical focus on peacebuilding is only a recent development, peacebuilding has not yet been theorized very well and can be seen as an evolving, multidimensional, and fairly elastic notion. Therefore, a range of similar terms are frequently used as synonyms, such as: peace maintenance, conflict resolution, conflict transformation or post-conflict reconstruction. According to Bercovitch and Jackson, the current theories on peacebuilding and related terms emerged in relation to a larger, activist normative agenda that was elaborated during the 1990s by the United Nations. This concerned an increased involvement of the UN in promoting human security. The involvement of the UN in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has since evolved

[46] Mark R. Amstutz, *The Healing of Nations. The Promise and Limits of Political Forgiveness* (Lanham e.a. 2005) 106-113.

[47] Bräuchler, *Introduction*, 6-8.

[48] Bercovitch and Jackson, *Conflict Resolution*, 168.

from a more strict, state centered peacekeeping to a strategy that includes tasks such as disarmament, demobilization, resettlement of IDPs, police training and supervision, election monitoring, and transitional administration of war-torn societies.[49]

While the more recent theories on conflict resolution and peacebuilding provide a valuable contribution to earlier scholarly thought, it can be argued that some of the assumptions of Cold War conflict resolution theories remain. Although newer theories on conflict resolution and peacebuilding give attention to social, cultural, and sometimes even spiritual aspects of conflicts, they still mainly focus on large scale processes and institutionalized actors such as TRCs, NGOs and governments, instead of focusing on the agency of informal actors and social life at the grassroots level. In this sense many conflict resolution theories have remained state-centered.[50] In addition, while the concept of restorative justice can be considered to be more holistic than retributive justice, it continues to rely on some sort of 'legal process' to bring about reconciliation, as it focuses on truth-finding, and the giving of amnesty and forgiveness through some sort of legal procedure. In these procedures, both victims and perpetrators are treated more as objects than agents of reconciliation. Furthermore, a Western focus on individual justice and accountability remains.[51]

Because of this theorists have increasingly shifted focus to other aspects of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, which provide another additional valuable contribution to existing literature. These new approaches to peacebuilding are increasingly multidimensional and include diverse (non-governmental) actors, issues, norms and ideas.[52] Besides, peacebuilding has progressively focused on a nuanced understanding of local conditions instead of internationally developed technocratic and uniform approaches to peacebuilding.[53]

In line with these more recent developments, social scientist Birgit Bräuchler recently edited an extensive and multi-disciplinary volume on grassroots agency for peace in Indonesia. Bräuchler argues that within the context of violent conflicts in Indonesia, the internationally

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[49] Bercovitch and Jackson, *Conflict Resolution*, 7.

[50] Bercovitch and Jackson, *Conflict Resolution*, 16.

[51] Bräuchler, *Introduction*, 3-5.

[52] Bercovitch and Jackson, *Conflict Resolution*, 8-16. Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution, the Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (3rd edition; Cambridge and Malden 2011) 56.

[53] Ramsbotham, *Conflict Resolution*, 226-227.

established 'reconciliation toolkit' of truth commissions and law enforcement, justice and human rights, forgiveness and amnesty had only limited success. Besides, state initiatives and institutions that strive to achieve peace or reconciliation are often missing or malfunctioning.[54] Because of this Bräuchler e.a. try to fill two major gaps in the literature on peace and conflict studies, namely (1) the neglect of agency of people at the grassroots of society, who have taken action themselves in their search for peace,[55] and (2) the often overlooked socio-cultural dimension of reconciliation.[56]

This thesis can be understood to be in line with the work of Bräuchler e.a., as it focuses on the importance of small scale grassroots initiatives of youth and the socio-cultural aspects of peacebuilding. This thesis also strengthens Bräuchler's argument on the limitations of the well-spread idea that establishing truth-accounts and justice serve as conditions for achieving peace.[57] In addition, this thesis will add a new dimension to the work of Bräuchler e.a., as it focuses on the often ignored views, experiences and roles of youth in post-conflict situations, and the contributions they can make to peacebuilding.[58] In many theories in which the role of youth is discussed, youth are seen as passive victims of events that happen around them[59], or as weak and vulnerable and therefore in need of protection.[60] Other scholars emphasize the psychological impact conflicts can have on youth and adolescents.[61] In other instances scholars stress the need of peace education or adult guidance to make sure that young people will make

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[54] Bräuchler, *Introduction*, 10.

[55] Bräuchler, *Introduction*, 9.

[56] Bräuchler, *Introduction*, 3-5, 9.

[57] Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 6-7.

[58] Informants from Badati and other peacebuilding groups often referred to the groups they form as 'youth community groups'. In this thesis, I will consider youth to be those young people that are in the same age category as the youth in the 'youth community groups', which were young people that were between 15 and 30 years old. The average age among youth in youth community groups was about 20 years. This definition I use is slightly broader than the definition of the World Health Organization, which defines youth as aged between 10 and 24 years (see: Stephanie Schwartz, *Youth and Post-Conflict Reconstruction. Agents of Change* (Washington 2010) 4-5. It has to be noted however, that a few of my informants that were referred to as youth were even over 30 years of age, because they were leaders of students. This shows that being a 'youth' is not only determined by someone's age, but also by a person's relations to other people or life events such as getting married or getting a job. See: Schwartz, *Youth and Post-Conflict Reconstruction,* 4-6.

[59] Lidewyde H. Berckmoes, *Being and Becoming in Bujumbura. War and Peace through the Eyes of Burundian Youth*, (2008) 10.

[60] Idem, 10 *And* Del Felice, 'The Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth', 4.

[61] Eric F. Dubow e.a., 'Exposure to Political Conflict', 366.

a constructive contribution to society[62], as youth may otherwise form deviant and destructive subcultures, or will easily resort to violence again.[63] While there often is some truth in such views, the experiences and views of Ambonese youth will provide us another image, in which youth are not only victims or troublemakers, but also active agents in Ambon's peace process.

In this section, I have discussed several theories that can help us to understand young people's peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots level of society. Within the scope of this thesis, I will consider peacebuilding to be the effort to build stable, cooperative, non-violent and trustful relationships within and between communities. The theories presented above have shown that peacebuilding is closely related to a number of factors. First of all, (1) building peaceful - i.e. trustful and cooperative - relationships between people involves overcoming suspicion and fears, taking risks, and creating patterns of reciprocity and terms on which people can cooperate. Furthermore, (2) peacebuilding efforts can be challenged (but sometimes also strengthened) by rumors that arise from ambiguous situations and diverging interests. Thirdly, (3) peacebuilding also involves creating a new 'moral imagination', a new way in which people can imagine themselves and (their relation to) others.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have presented my research questions in relation to a theoretical framework. The rest of the thesis is organized as follows. In chapter two I will give insight on the methodologies I used for research and writing this thesis. The second chapter will be followed by two empirical chapters that focus on the views, opinions and activities of Ambon's young peacebuilders. In chapter three I will focus on young people's views on the 1999-2002 conflict, and relate these to scholarly views on the 1999-2002 conflict. Subsequently, chapter four will focus on youth's views on the peace process and their feelings and thoughts on Ambon's current situation. This chapter will also concentrate on young people's peacebuilding efforts and the creative solutions they have for dealing with possible obstacles. In chapter five I will

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[62] Yigal Rosen and Gavriel Salomon, 'Durability of Peace Education Efforts in the Shadow of Conflict', *Social Psychology of Education* 14 (1) (2011) 135-147. *and* Siobhán McEvoy, 'Communities and Peace: Catholic Youth in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Peace Research* 37 (1) (2000) 85-103, there 86.

[63] Schwartz, *Youth and Post-Conflict Reconstruction,* 2.

combine the insights of previous chapters to reconsider the questions and theoretical themes that were raised in chapter one.

Chapter 2. Methodology

From the 26th of February until the 5th of April 2012, I have conducted fieldwork on Ambon. According to anthropologist Roger Sanjek the validity of ethnographical research is based on three canons, being theoretical clarity, evidence from field notes, and 'the path of the ethnographer'.[64] In the previous chapter I presented my theoretical framework, and in the rest of this thesis I will use this framework to analyze my research data and reconsider theoretical positions later. In this section I want to reflect on 'the path of the ethnographer': the progression of the fieldwork, the interaction with informants, and the way I dealt with theoretical choices and questions. I will do this by discussing the following four subjects: (1) the development of research questions, (2) interviewing informants, (3) the progression of fieldwork and (4) my role and position as a researcher.

§2.1 Developing Research Questions

For this project, research questions were developed according to the cyclical research pattern described by anthropologist James Spradley.[65] According to this cycle, an ethnographer begins his research with only a social situation or a general subject in mind. From initial broad questions, observations and analysis new and more detailed questions arise, which increasingly focus the research process. This cycle continues until the researcher has gathered sufficient detailed information on a specific focus to write a report. The ethnographic research cycle gives researchers the opportunity to focus on aspects of a subject of social situations that are interesting according to earlier observations and analysis.[66] In this way they are not led or limited by hypothesis, theories or problems that are chosen in advance but are more informed by the dynamics shown by informants and social situations themselves.[67]

This however does not mean that ethnographers start their research without certain

[64] Roger Sanjek, 'On ethnographic validity', in: Idem red., *Fieldnotes, the Makings of Anthropology* (Ithaca and London 1990) 385-413, there 395-404.

[65] James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, (Singapore e.a. 1980) 28-35.

[66] Spradley, *Participant Observation*, 31.

[67] Also see: Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography, Principles in Practice* (Third press; London and New York 2007) 21.

foreshadowed problems in mind.[68] In the case of this research project, one of the aspects I planned to focus on was young people's personal lives, views and experiences. I had three reasons for doing so. First, as already noted, there is still a lack of scholarly attention for the roles youth play within (post-) conflict situations. Second, as I am still relatively young myself, I expected it would be easier to get in touch with and relate to Ambonese peers. Third, I knew that many young people have experiences as victims, internally displaced persons (IDPs) or fighters themselves, which made it also interesting to see how young people presently dealt with their own experiences during the violence.[69]

In addition I wanted to focus on the ways young people try to improve the current situation and contribute to the peacebuilding process on Ambon. In the course of my fieldwork, this focus became more central than the focus on personal experiences and views. Although I collected some useful data on the personal experiences, feelings and views of my informants, I found out that youth often tended to talk about subjects which are slightly more general. For example, when I asked about the current situation, informants would often (but not always) tell a more general story about Ambon or about the events which happened to them, instead of talking about their personal feelings or their views on what is currently happening on Ambon.[70] Because of this practical limitation I decided to focus more on young people's peacebuilding efforts and less on their personal feelings and views.

While I was doing research among the youth from Badati and other informal peacebuilding groups, I realized that many youngsters within these groups were friends who were also involved in informal youth community groups that did not directly focus on peacebuilding.

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[68] Hammersley and Atkinson, '*Ethnography*', 21-24.

[69] Also see the following documentary: Bram Janssen, *Ambon Manise: Tranen in het Paradijs* (2008).

[70] There are several possible explanations for the observation that youth more easily talked about slightly more general subjects than their personal views, feelings and experiences. First, youth may be traumatized by conflict experiences, which makes it difficult to talk about personal matters. Second, my informants often personally knew the interpreter who assisted me during the interviews, which may make it difficult for informants to share personal stories with me that they do not want to share with their friends. Third, youth may also want to be sure that their personal stories are in good hands before they share them with a researcher. Getting a good rapport with my informants was difficult because of the limited time I was on Ambon. Finally, during many of my interviews, I realized that many youth told about conflict experiences from more communal instead of personal viewpoints. This may indicate that in the Ambonese context, personal stories are considered to be less relevant than stories from a communal point of view.

Besides being active in peacebuilding, these youths were also active in photography, blogging, sports, theater, dance, music, teaching English and many more creative and leisure activities. Many youth mentioned that activities that do not directly concern peacebuilding often play an important role in improving the relationship between Muslim and Christian youth. Therefore I broadened up the scope of my research and decided to also ask youth questions about other activities they organize and the role these activities play in their lives. As my research developed, I decided to give attention to the ways art and creativity can contribute to establishing new ways in which people envision themselves and their relations to others.

Before departing to Ambon I tried to get in touch with researchers, journalists and other people who had worked on Ambon before. I did this with the aim to create a social network that could facilitate my research while I was on Ambon. During conversations and email correspondence, they sometimes suggested useful ideas for my research. For example, Tjitske Lingsma, a Dutch journalist who worked on Ambon told me that members of small-scale youth peacebuilding organizations are active in falsifying rumors that may lead to new outbreaks of violence. During my fieldwork the theme of rumors became more and more important, as informants often referred to this without my asking about this subject.[71] This is why the theme of rumors is now extensively covered in this thesis.

Much academic literature on Ambon's conflict provides explanations and ideas about why the Ambon inter-communal violence came into existence. While many authors give more or less plausible explanations, or point to relevant factors that significantly influenced the situation, I felt that more needed to be clarified to fully grasp why the 1999-2002 conflict came to be.[72] I hoped that my fieldwork would shed more light on this and improve my understanding of the conflict. Because of this, I asked detailed questions about the origins of the 1999-2002 conflict during interviews. The answers of my informants however often did not further clarify what happened on Ambon. In turn I realized that many Ambonese youth also do not fully understand why the violence took place. Because of this, I decided it would be more useful to investigate how ambiguity affects social life, rather than to clear up the vagueness

[71] Also see the following newspaper articles: The Jakarta Post, *The Mystery Behind Ambon Riots*, (Published on May 21, 2012). *and* The Jakarta Post, *Murder Sparks Fresh Unrest in Ambon*, (Published on December 15, 2011).
[72] See also: Spyer, 'Media Effects', 23-24.

that seemed to be inherent to Ambon's violence. In chapter three I will discuss scholarly literature on the 1999-2002 conflict on Ambon and analyze the roles ambiguity has played throughout the conflict.

§2.2 Gathering Data

In the previous section I have tried to explain how my research questions were formed and why this thesis addresses certain themes and subjects. This section will illuminate the data collection process for this research project. During the six weeks I spent on Ambon, I mainly gathered data through semi-structured interviews. I conducted 18 in-depth interviews in total. Eight of these interviews were with members from Badati, four interviews were with members from Moluccas Peace Generation and Young Ambassadors for Peace, two were with well-known local religious leaders, two with students from IAIN, and two more with student leaders from Maluku. Furthermore, I did three focus group discussions (FGDs) with groups of youth, one at the Reconciliation School that was discussed in the introduction of this thesis, another one with a group of youth from Moluccas Peace Generation. I conducted a third FGD with a small group of teenagers that was led by an older youth who had received training from an NGO to help peers to deal with traumatic experiences. Besides this, I tried to gather information whenever I could through participant observation.

During my interviews with young peacebuilders, I chose to do semi-structured in-depth interviews. This meant that I prepared some main subjects and questions to discuss, but did not use a fixed question list.[73] I decided to do so in order to discuss similar subjects with different youth, while also leaving opportunities for interviewees to bring up stories or experiences they feel are important. In this way I could keep the interview data I gathered during one interview comparable to the data I gathered at others, while I also had attention for differences between youth's feelings, experiences and opinions.

During the introduction to the interview I encouraged interviewees to talk about topics they felt are important. I tried to minimalize the influence I had on my informants by asking non-directive questions and taking an active listening stance to encourage them to speak

[73] Readers can find an example of an often used question and topic list in appendix 1.

freely.[74] I also encouraged them to take the time to share more elaborate stories with me when answering my questions. This sometimes resulted in interviewees answering several questions and covering several subjects within one answer. Because of this, I often had to rearrange the order of subjects while doing an interview. Another way in which I tried to encourage informants to speak freely was by telling them before the interview started that any answers given would only be presented anonymously in the thesis. While some quotes may be recognized by fellow peacebuilders from the same informal youth group, I have carefully selected quotes that do not easily lead to a specific young peacebuilder or damage her or his reputation, and I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis.

Besides stimulating informants to speak freely, I also made effort to get data on collective norms and ideals that are present in social life. One way in which I tried to achieve this was by asking first how people in general think about a particular subject. Later on I would ask interviewees to also share their personal feelings or opinions. In this way, I was able to gather data about both youth's personal feelings and their assessment of more broadly shared views. During the three FGDs, I tried to stimulate discussion among the youth themselves. This gave me the opportunity to see how youth interact with one another, which also gives clues about the collective norms and ideals they share. I noted that the stories informants shared with me during FGDs were often less personal than the stories I heard during interviews. Furthermore, youth less often shared views that could be interpreted by others as provocative or insulting. For example, youth would not give answers that name a person or group as being responsible for or starting or provoking violent incidents, or sharing a version of a story or rumor that others may not agree on.

During the interviews with the young peacebuilders and the FGDs, I made handwritten field notes which I processed as soon as possible after the interview. While processing the data I tried to reconstruct the conversations I had as literally as possible. Besides taking field notes, I also recorded most of the interviews I conducted.[75] This gave me the opportunity to transcribe

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[74] S. Kvale, *Interviews. An introduction to qualitative research interviewing* (London 1996) 118. *and* B. Emans, *Interviewen, theorie, techniek en training* (Groningen, 1990) 151-153.

[75] This depended on the consent of the interviewees.

important segments accurately, check parts where my field notes were not clear and further analyse some of the passages.

Before I departed for Indonesia I tried to learn some basic *Bahasa Indonesia* to facilitate my research. However, my Indonesian skills were not nearly sufficient to be able to conduct interviews in Indonesian, especially because Ambonese usually speak their own dialect of Ambonese Malay. Therefore all the interviews were conducted in English. Nevertheless, my effort to learn a little Indonesian often earned me some appreciation and helped to start casual conversations with my informants. If an informant's English skills were insufficient to adequately answer my questions, I often received the help of Badati member Pierre Ajawaila or dr. Iis Istiqomah from IAIN to translate the interviews, as well as occasionally using other interpreters. With all the interpreters that aided me, I agreed that they would try to translate as literally as possible. My limited Indonesian skills gave me the opportunity to verify that my translators accomplished to translate as literally as possible. While the presence of interpreters may in some cases have influenced the answers of my informants, it also gave me possibility to talk about interviews with my interpreters after an interview was completed. In this way I was able to get another opinion on the answers my informants gave me, or illuminate answers that were not entirely clear to me.

Because I was in Ambon for only six weeks, I relied for a great deal on the contacts I established in these first few weeks to get in touch with other people. Although I will discuss the 'path of the ethnographer' more thoroughly in the next section, it is good to mention that this situation also influenced the selection of interviewees. First of all, it were the people that I already knew through Facebook and email that put me in touch with NGOs, religious leaders and Badati once I arrived on Ambon. Also within the group of Badati I was dependent on some main informants who helped me to get in touch with others within the group. They usually advised me on which people would be interesting to interview. Therefore, the selection of interview partners was often based on what was pragmatically possible. Nevertheless, because my informants would take my opinions and wishes into account, I believe that I managed to interview a selection of young peacebuilders that was both interesting and varied. I interviewed both younger and older youth, males and females, Christians and Muslims, and tried to do interviews with those young peacebuilders who would more often take the lead or make

decisions within group discussion. I also selected informants for interviews if I noticed that certain people would talk and share their opinions and feelings easily.

When it comes to the selection of the locations I used for the interviews, I used to follow the suggestions of my informants when I tried to make appointments with them. This would usually result in meeting in a café or restaurant where we would try to find a suitable, quiet place to do the interview, where we would not be disturbed by others. Inevitably, we would sometimes be disturbed by noise, as Ambon City is quite busy. Furthermore, the unexpected presence of other guests at the restaurant or café sometimes clearly limited the opportunity of informants to speak freely, as informants would sometimes interrupt their story when someone was passing by.

As mentioned before, I also tried to gather as much data as possible through participant observation. I had the opportunity to do participant observation during casual conversation with my informants before and after interview meetings. Sometimes I also had the opportunity to join some of the regular activities and meetings from Badati when I was invited. I also often joined the youth from Badati to leisure activities, such as sharing meals or snorkeling at Ambon's beautiful beaches. Although I was not focused on doing research at those moments, sometimes casual conversation would lead to a discussion about the subject matter of this thesis, which then provided additional research data.

The additional data gathered during participant observation was often interesting, as it gave me insight in the subjects, activities and questions that young people are concerned with on a daily basis. This included organizing and reflecting on their activities on a pragmatic level, small-talk on common interests such as art, sports, music and social media, as well as discussing how the impact of their activities could be maximized. Besides this, it struck me that during FGDs and in other group situations, young people are often much more careful when talking about sensitive issues in groups than during interviews. Especially the FGDs gave me the opportunity to analyze the norms and ideals that people share, as is exemplified in section 1.1. While the restraints of youth in group situation not only showed that many youngsters are careful not to raise tensions within groups, it also suggests that they often felt relatively comfortable sharing information with me during interviews.

§2.3 Progression of Fieldwork

Ambonese people frequently asked me was why I chose Ambon to do research. During my master degree at the University of Groningen, I became interested in the theme of religion, conflict and peacebuilding. This is the main reason why I decided to do fieldwork on this subject for my master thesis. I emailed many peacebuilding organizations around the globe and eventually decided to go to Ambon. I thought Ambon was an interesting choice for several reasons. First of all, Indonesia is currently undergoing some radical changes that provide a very interesting context for the Ambonese conflict. Since Suharto's New Order broke down, a multitude of political organizations have risen to compete for power within Indonesia's newly established democracy. At the same time, Islam has become more prominent in Indonesia's popular, public and political life. This development put pressure on religious minorities within Indonesia.[76] Second, I was particularly interested in the Ambonese case because of its historical ties with the Netherlands. Thirdly, after emailing two small scale youth organizations on Ambon, I directly received a positive response from them. As I knew I would have limited time for doing research, the prospect of having people who are interesting in my research and who are willing to help gave me pragmatic reasons to pursue a project on Ambon.

As soon as I decided on Ambon for my research project I tried to get in touch with as many people who work or live on Ambon as possible, to establish a social network which could facilitate my research. Through email and Facebook I came in touch with dr. Iis Istiqomah, a lecturer from Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ambon (the State Institute for Islamic Religion on Ambon (IAIN)). Dr. Istiqomah not only helped me to get in touch with other teachers and students from IAIN and several local NGOs who work on peacebuilding, but also was a good companion and discussion partner who helped me analyze my observations and structure my ideas. Furthermore, one of her students, Abha Mahulauw, helped me a lot at the start of my fieldwork by showing me around on motorcycles and helping me find my way in Ambon City.

Like with every fieldwork project, things never work out as planned or expected. Once I arrived on Ambon, it proved to be quite difficult to make appointments with some of the people I was having contact with through email and Facebook. Moreover, some of the

[76] Van Wichelen, *Embodied Contestations*, 85-86.

peacebuilding groups I wanted to research did not have activities planned which I could attend and research. Therefore I soon realized that I needed to look for other groups to do research on. Meanwhile, I was doing interviews whenever I could, with students and teachers from IAIN, and employees of NGOs. In this way, I was at least able to get some first impressions that could later function as additional research data.

After spending two weeks on Ambon, I came in touch with an interpreter who had worked for a Dutch journalist I knew. This interpreter brought me in touch with a locally well-known religious leader, reverend Jacky Manuputty, who in turn advised me to meet the youth from Badati. When I joined a meeting of Badati, some members were immediately willing to help me out by functioning as contact persons, interviewees and interpreters. As mentioned before, the youth from Badati were also active on many different levels, making it an interesting group for me to research. In the course of the last four weeks I spend on Ambon, I interviewed eight members from Badati, joined them on regular activities and had many casual conversations with them.

§2.4 Position as Researcher

As a participant observer and interviewer, I was part of the social situations I researched. As a result, the research data I gathered are by no means neutral. This does not mean that my research does not present any valid knowledge. However, it does mean that the analysis of my research data requires reflection on and interpretation of my position as researcher during my fieldwork.[77] That is what I intend to do in this subsection.

During my fieldwork I realized that most young people were curious about what I was doing. Because of this, it was easy to get in touch with people and create a social network. This not only facilitated my research, it also made my research trip a pleasant experience. Besides people's interest in what I was doing, Ambonese also proved to be very careful and attentive hosts. Often when I met Ambonese youth, they would make sure that I felt comfortable and entertained. This socially pleasant behavior may have led to informants giving socially desired answers instead of sharing their actual feelings and opinions on a particular subject.

[77] Hammersley en Atkinson, '*Ethnography*', 15.

I sometimes was confronted with skepticism towards researchers. Some youth told me that they had been interviewed by researchers before, but that researchers tend to forget to share their outcomes with their informants. In this way, only researchers benefit from the interactions that they have with their informants. In this respect, several youth have asked me to share my research results with them once I finished my research. Hence, I have promised the members from Badati to share my research results with them as soon as my thesis would be finished. Although this thesis is not aimed at evaluating the peacebuilding efforts of young people, I hope that the members of Badati will find the insights presented in this thesis to be beneficial to the work that they are doing.

During the six weeks I spent on Ambon I stayed in a family-owned guest house in a Christian neighborhood of Ambon City. During the first two weeks I mostly met Muslims through my contacts at IAIN. As a result, some Christian guests and the Christian owners of the guest house sometimes argued that I should also give attention to Christian Ambonese and that otherwise, my research would be partial. Interestingly, youth who have friends in both Christian and Muslim communities rarely made such comments, which may indicate that they were less afraid that my research would be biased. To be sure, I tried to talk to Muslims and Christians equally during the rest of my research.

Finally, it is plausible that the political sensitivity and ambiguity surrounding Ambon's violence may have affected the freedom some youth have experienced to share their versions of 'the truth' on Ambon's violence. This may especially be true because I often had limited time to build a good rapport with my informants. Nevertheless, I have confidence that many youth were relatively honest when I communicated with them, as they often shared stories with me that could offend others in private situations, and in some cases asked me to keep these stories private.[78] These experiences suggest that many youth felt comfortable enough to entrust even more sensitive stories to me. Nevertheless, there are also instances in which it became clear to me that youth rather not talked about certain subjects, mainly concerning debates on the

[78] Also see the thesis by Lidewyde Berckmoes on Burundian youth on the effects of political sensitivity, suspicion and trust on research results (Berckmoes, *Being and Becoming in Bujumbura,* 28). The effects can be mediated by building relationships of mutual human respect between researchers and informants.

conflict or circulating rumors. However, this also gave me useful information about what topics are sensitive to talk about.

As I previously mentioned in this chapter, I hoped that my fieldwork would help me to better understand the violence that took place. However, many youth told me that they were surprised by the initial outbreaks of violence, and did not understand why it happened. Furthermore, I heard many different and sometimes contradicting views and stories about the conflict. While all this obscurity and the different views and opinions sometimes confused and frustrated me, it also shows that ambiguity is something that Ambonese youth have to deal with in their peacebuilding activities and in their relations to me as a researcher. These experiences also helped me to identify the roles of ambiguity, gossip and suspicion as a factor of importance in Ambon's conflict and peacebuilding process.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have tried to give insight in the process of data collection and the theoretical decisions I made that have led to this thesis. It has pointed out some of the difficulties and opportunities I had while doing research on Ambon, as well as showing some of the ways in which I tried to deal with problems and obstacles during the research process. I have also tried to show how the development of research questions was influenced by the data collection process and developments in the field. The following three chapters will focus on the empirical data that I have collected among young Ambonese peacebuilders. The empirical data will be linked to the theoretical framework of this thesis in chapter six.

Chapter 3. Violence on Ambon

In this chapter, I will discuss the views of both scholars and Ambon's young peacebuilders on the 1999-2002 conflict. In the first section, I will focus on some of the structural factors that created tensions between Christian and Muslim communities that are most frequently forwarded in academic literature. In the second section, I will show how during a second phase of Ambon's conflict, religion became increasingly important as an identity marker that separated fighting parties. In the third section, I will argue that some questions surrounding the 1999-2002 conflict remain unanswered, and that this lack of clarity itself has contributed to the tensions. These first three sections will provide a background that helps us to understand the views on the conflict forwarded by the young peacebuilders that I have interviewed. Their views and opinions will be discussed in the fourth section. In section five, I will try to explain the differences between the views of scholars and those of youth by relating the views of young peacebuilders to the social context in which they currently operate.

§3.1 Increasing tension and competition

Within academic literature, several scholars have pointed at a multitude of socio-economic, religious and structural factors that created tensions, which eventually contributed to the outbreak of the 1999-2002 conflict. In this section, I will focus on these factors, which will improve our understanding of Ambon's conflict. I will show how academics interpret the conflict as a multi-faceted conflict with several interrelated triggers and causes, which - *over time* - consolidated religious communities as the main opponents in the war.[79] From the discussion in this section, it will also become clear that both national and local factors are crucial to understand the origins of Ambon's violence.

In her book on Ambon's history, journalist Tjitske Lingsma describes there was a tense climate on Maluku already in 1995.[80] This could be noticed in the competition for local government positions. Because of the nepotism of the local and national government systems, having a Muslim or Christian on a certain position could provide fellow believers access to

[79] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 22.
[80] Lingsma, *Het Verdriet van Ambon,* 220.

money, jobs or power. Furthermore, historian Gerry van Klinken argues that communities in Maluku were characterized by a closed social stratification system that separates a hereditary aristocracy from commoners. Membership in the aristocracy was often a requirement if one wants to participate in the local bureaucracy and government positions. This created a situation in which different patronages competed for power. Van Klinken argues that when competition between different patronages increases, these rival networks may mobilize for war.[81]

As also mentioned by informants, some scholars point to traditional competition between villages as a factor that contributed to the violence.[82] Van Klinken argues that villages on Maluku remained independent from regional and national authorities to an extent that is uncommon for the rest of Indonesia. In these villages, stories circulate about battles between villages that took place back as far as the 17th century, some of which deal with competition between Christian and Islamic villages. Van Klinken argues that when these villages were confronted with present-day tensions and violence, this inter-village competition was revived easily.[83] Van Klinken's argument can be supported by a case-study of Birgit Bräuchler, who shows how traditional relations between villages on the Maluku island Haruku influenced the way violence was patterned over the island.[84]

Another factor contributing to the tensions on Maluku that has been forwarded by scholars was the shifting balance between Christians and Muslims population sizes on Maluku, as this could influence election results.[85] Because of this, interreligious marriages, which usually led to one of the partners converting to the other partner's religion, started to cause additional tensions between religious communities.[86] Besides, religious leaders wanted to make sure that no one converted to another faith. Despite Christian efforts to maintain a numerical balance, the proportion of Muslims on Maluku rose from 49.9% in 1971 to 56.8% in 1990 because of an influx of Muslim immigrants, mainly from Sulawesi and Java.[87]

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[81] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 16.
[82] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 13.
[83] Fridus Steijlen, *Kerusuhan, Het Misverstand over de Molukse Onrust* (Utrecht 2001) 10.
[84] Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture', 97-113.
[85] Bertrand, 'Legacies of the Authoritarian Past', 62.
[86] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 221.
[87] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 12.

However, the animosity against immigrants did not only have to do with these immigrants being Muslim, but also with them being non-Ambonese. This is confirmed by some scholars who argue that most of the early Christian violence was directed against immigrants from Sulawesi, which were considered to be 'outsiders' who profited from the Ambonese economy.[88] The Christian frustration with the competition with these Muslim immigrants was at least partly shared by Ambonese Muslims, as one of the leaders of the Muslim militia commented to journalist Lingsma that they too would have liked to 'throw out the Sulawesi immigrants'.[89] While rarely mentioned by my informants, some of them cited that tensions between (especially Christian) Ambonese and immigrants from Sulawesi were on the rise before the outbreak of violence in 1999.[90] While throwing out immigrants may have been an option at the start of the conflict, the violence between Muslims and Christians persisted and constantly broadened the distance between Christian and Muslim communities.[91]

Some scholars also point out that many Ambonese who eventually joined the violence were unemployed youth.[92] As we have seen, opportunities to gain material security relied for a great deal on family ties, place of residence, and religious background. Without the right connections, youths' social, economic and political opportunities are severely limited. While Maluku already had high unemployment rates, this situation was pressurized further by economic difficulties that Indonesia as a whole was going through.[93] In this situation, participating in violent conflict provided youth with a way to deal with frustrations, stand up for themselves and gain respect among their communities.[94] This observation is confirmed by a former child-soldier that I interviewed. During the interview, he shared his frustration with me of being lauded as a war-hero during the conflict, while being rejected, jobless and labeled as

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[88] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 228 and 233. Before the Moluccan violence, there was also competition between Protestant and Catholic Christians on the Moluccas. Also see: Schulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 62.

[89] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 233.

[90] One informant for example argued that immigrants do not have any knowledge about the traditional Pela and Gandong alliances that are present on Ambon. Therefore, he thought that their presence could easily lead to conflicts. For more information about Pela and Gandong, see section 3.4.

[91] Fridus Steijlen, *Kerusuhan*, 9.

[92] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 10.

[93] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 11. *and* Birgit Bräuchler, 'Islamic Radicalism Online: the Moluccan Mission of the Laskar Jihad in Cyberspace', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 15 (3) (2004) 267-285, there 269.

[94] See also: Anton Blok, 'The Meaning of "Senseless" Violence' (1991), in: Idem, *Honour and Violence* (Cambridge, Oxford, and Malden 2001) 103-114, there 105.

'cruel' once the conflict was over. This observation is in line with the theory of Mark Juergensmeyer, who argues that people often participate in violence to gain 'symbolic empowerment', a feeling of security, dignity and purpose.[95]

Besides the above named local factors, scholars also point to national factors that are important to understand the violence on Maluku. At the end of his regime, Suharto made effort to Islamize Indonesia. This development threatened the privileged position Christians had in political, educational, governmental and military positions since colonial times under the Dutch.[96] The fall of Suharto's regime in 1998 subsequently gave rise to debates about Indonesia's future national (and religious) identity. These national debates were reflected in increasing identity competition in Maluku[97], in which religion became more important as identity marker within Ambonese patronage systems.[98] As a result, an ambiguous situation arose in which clear norms and customs to regulate the patterns of reciprocity were missing. As is argued by the theories of Stewart and Strathern which were presented in chapter one, such a lack of clarity can give rise to suspicion and rumors.[99]

As is reported within academic literature, these national conditions indeed gave rise to rumors on Maluku, in which these national debates and tensions were reflected.[100] These rumors in turn further catalyzed social tensions.[101] For example, anonymous pamphlets were spread saying that the Muslim governor Saleh Latuconsina replaced 38 Christian government officials by Muslims.[102] Christians accused Muslims of wanting to create a fully Islamic Indonesia, while Muslims accused the Christians of supporting the RMS (Republik Maluku Selatan), to create an independent, Christian Maluku.[103] Also, rumors were spread about

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[95] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 191.

[96] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 220-221.

[97] Seul, 'Ours is the Way of God', 563.

[98] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 18.

[99] Furedi, *Culture of Fear*, 30.

[100] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 21, 28. *and* Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 18. *and* Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 223.

[101] These examples are similar to the ones that were passed on to me by my informants, which will be discussed in the next section.

[102] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 18.

[103] The RMS was a Maluku independence movement that arose after Indonesia gained independence from the Dutch in 1949. While support for the movement disappeared almost entirely in Maluku, some of the Maluku diaspora in the Netherlands still (passively) support the RMS cause. See: Spyer, 'Media Effects' 26. *and* Schulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 62-64.

Christian preachers who wanted to evangelize among Muslims and vice versa.[104] During the conflict, rumors were also being spread about forced conversions taking place among both Muslim and Christian communities.[105] These rumors were spread mouth-to-mouth, by (mass) media, and graffiti. Common to all these rumors was that fact and fiction were hard to separate.[106]

In December 1998, this nervous climate led to a meeting that was convened by the governor of Maluku, in which he advised the Ambonese communities to be prepared for trouble. After this meeting, both sides set up *posko*, which means either command posts or communication posts, where armed men gathered to protect their neighborhoods. In this case, being on the alert may have had consequences, as both sides of the conflict hold that the preparedness and visible organization of the other side is proof for the other side's preconceived plan to attack.[107] In this way, the rising tensions that were caused by the spread of rumors also confirmed the predictions of the rumors themselves, making them more likely to believe.[108] Such a view on the violence on Ambon is confirmed by one of my informants, who shared his experience with me about the start of the conflict on Ceram, a large Maluku island close to Ambon:

> *"Suddenly there is a burn near the coast, and we are told that there is an attack from the Laskar Jihad on the Christian village. At that time I did not know if it was really the Laskar Jihad.* [...]. *In Leimu, the young people were gathered in a mosque, and they were told to guard the borders of the village. And the next morning, we were told to spread out and told to guard the borders of the village. By that time the Christians got the wrong impression* [that the villagers from Leimu were planning an attack]. *The Christians also go out from their village and they use several weapons and they go towards the villagers of Leimu."*

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[104] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 222.
[105] Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War', 137.
[106] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 24.
[107] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 27. This is a classic example of the 'security dilemma' that Robert Jervis describes. See: Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma', *World Politics* 30 (2) (1978) 167-214.
[108] Also see: Bottici, 'Rethinking Political Myth', 322.

Although this story does not concern the setting up of *posko* between neighborhoods, it does show how preparing to defend can be misinterpreted by others, and raise tensions between groups of people.

Under these tense conditions, the incident that took place between a Christian public transport driver and a few Muslim passengers on the 19th of January 1999 quickly escalated into riots in Ambon City, which in turn triggered a large scale civil war on many Maluku islands. It can be argued that the initial violence reflected multidimensional tensions within Ambonese society. However, people soon grouped around religion as their main identity marker.[109] This view on Maluku violence is confirmed by the observation that most of the early Christian violence was directed against Muslim immigrants from Sulawesi, which were considered to be 'outsiders' who profited from the Ambonese economy.[110] The Christian frustration with the competition with these Muslim immigrants was at least partly shared by Ambonese Muslims, as one of the leaders of the Muslim militia commented that they too would have liked to 'throw out the Sulawesi immigrants'.[111] While throwing out immigrants together was still an option at the start of the conflict, the violence between Muslims and Christians persisted and constantly broadened the distance between Christian and Muslim communities.[112]

As we have seen in this section, academics point out several local and national factors which help us to explain why Maluku experienced large-scale violence while most parts of Indonesia did not. According to many scholars, the 1999-2002 conflict was grounded in multi-faceted local competition for socio-economic opportunities between different patronage systems, villages, religious communities, Ambonese and immigrants, and individuals. These tensions were amplified by developments at a national level, when the fall of Suharto's New Order led to debates about the national and religious identity of Indonesia. When violence persisted, religion became increasingly important as an identity marker, which eventually led to

[109] Bräuchler, 'Islamic Radicalism Online', 269.

[110] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 228 and 233. Before the Moluccan violence, there was also competition between Protestant and Catholic Christians on the Moluccas, see: Shulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 62.

[111] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 233.

[112] Fridus Steijlen, *Kerusuhan*, 9.

a strict separation of Christian and Muslims.[113] In the next section, I will try to further clarify the roles that religion has played throughout the 1999-2002 conflict.

§3.2 Deepening the Religious Divide

As noted earlier, the conflict on Maluku has often been described as a religious conflict in both Indonesian national and international media. In this section, I will show that the narrow view on the Ambonese conflict as a religious war is contested by academic literature, as well as my informants. Nevertheless, religion – *over time* – did become the most important fault line in the 1999-2002 conflict.[114] This does not necessarily mean however, that religious factors lie at the basis of the violence. Therefore it is interesting to take a closer look at the roles that religion did play in the conflict. I will deal with this subject in this section.

In her book on the Rwandan genocide, anthropologist Lee Ann Fujii tries to answer the question how ordinary people come to commit mass violence against their own neighbors, friends and family. Fujii shows how this question is often answered by pointing to ethnicity (or for that matter religion) as the key driver of violence. In ethnicity-based approaches, violence is seen as the outcome of ethnic group relations which are inherently competitive and often antagonistic. When a crisis occurs, the insecurity (and opportunity) of the moment is thought to inflame people's fears and hatreds for each other, which eventually leads to the commitment of acts of mass violence.[115]

Interestingly, Fujii's data does not support the 'Ethnic Hatred Theory' that is presented above. Fujii shows how in rural Rwanda, much pre-genocidal hatred tended to be local and personal, and not collectively aimed at an entire ethnic group. Given the local and personal character of these grievances, many Tutsi's were shocked and surprised when their neighbors, friends and family members attacked them. In addition, Fujii argues that ethnicity was not the only factor that determined fears between groups of people, as people sometimes feared the government, and Hutu's sometimes killed other Hutu's, while other Hutu's risked their lives by saving or hiding Tutsi's. Nevertheless, Fujii's data also show that the genocide itself changed the

[113] Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War', 124.
[114] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 25.
[115] Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, 1-5.

relationship between Hutu's and Tutsi's significantly. Because of this, Fujii argues that ethnic hatred seems to be a consequence of the genocide, not a cause.

A very similar argument can be made about the conflict on Ambon. First of all, we have seen that academic literature does not only point to hatred between religious communities as a cause for the Ambonese conflict, but also to several interrelated local and national factors that created social, political and economic tensions in Maluku on several levels. These tensions did not only exist between Christians and Muslims, but also between different villages, patronage systems, individuals, and between Ambonese and immigrants. While religion often did function as an important identity marker to separate conflicting parties at several levels, it can be argued that in the *first phase* of the conflict, a multitude of fault lines and related identifications played a role.

When violence persisted, a *second phase* of the conflict can be distinguished, in which religion became increasingly important as an identity marker, especially a strict opposition between Muslim and Christian identities. This eventually led to an almost complete separation of different communities, in which animosity was constantly confirmed through further killing and fears could no longer be disproved by former colleagues, friends and neighbors from 'opposite' communities.[116] This development was amplified by the fact that many of the military and police units did not remain neutral but chose sides according to their religious affiliation.[117] Like in the Rwandan genocide, the continuing violence destroyed social bonds between people and created hatred between people. In this sense, hatred between religious communities was not a cause of the violence on Ambon, but rather a consequence, that subsequently contributed to fuelling the continuation of the conflict. Such a view on the 1999-2002 conflict is confirmed by an adult Christian member of Badati, who told me how he first helped Muslims to escape from a Christian neighborhood when the conflict started, but subsequently became involved in the fighting as the conflict developed, as he wanted to protect his community from outside attacks. Therefore, it is not plausible that his later involvement can be explained by religious hatred that he already had before the conflict

[116] Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 13. *and* Spyer, 'Media Effects', 28.
[117] See the following video on Youtube: *Conflik Ambon-Indonesia* (2010).

started. Besides this, many Muslim residents of the predominantly Muslim neighborhood Batu Merah helped their Christian neighbors to escape when the violence started in January 1999.[118]

An important development that can be marked as the start of this *second phase* in Ambon's conflict was the arrival of the Laskar Jihad in May 2000.[119] The Laskar Jihad was set up on Java out of a rising concern among Muslims in Indonesia that the Christians had the upper hand in the conflict. Therefore, the Laskar Jihad recruited Muslims from Java, Sumatra and South Sulawesi to join the fighting on Ambon as Mujahideen. While the amount and sophistication of arms had grown over time, the Laskar Jihad brought an excess of arms to Ambon, and increasingly ordered local Muslim militias. This second phase can also be characterized by an increasing religious divide on Ambon: opposing parties were increasingly religiously defined and extremist discourses on Christian and Muslim sides were crystalized and amplified.[120]

The Laskar Jihad was set up by Ustaz Jaffar Umar Thalib, who was educated in Salafi/Wahhabist traditions in several Middle Eastern countries.[121] Thalib first set up an organization named Forum Komunikasi Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah (Communication Forum of the Followers of the Sunna and the Community of the Prophet, in short FKAWJ). The FKAWJ utilized the power vacuum that was left after Suharto's fall to participate in national debates on the (religious) identity of Indonesia, arguing for an explicitly religious identity, against 'western immorality', capitalism and Christianity.[122] The FKAWJ also intended to transform all of Indonesia into an Islamic theocracy and frequently warned for plots by Christians, Zionists or

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[118] Jeroen Adam, 'The Problem of Going Home: Land Management, Displacement, and Reconciliation in Ambon', in: Birgit Bräuchler ed., *Reconciling Indonesia, Grassroots Agency for Peace*, (Oxon and New York 2009) 138-154, there 147.

[119] The transition between these phases should not be seen as abrupt or resulting causally from specific developments or events. Instead, transitions between phases is much more fluent and gradual. Therefore it is difficult to determine any clear demarcations between these phases. Because several scholars and informants have emphasized the influence the Laskar Jihad had on the 1999-2002 conflict, I chose to distinguish the arrival of the Laskar Jihad as an indication to when the second phase of Ambon's conflict started.

[120] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 25-26.

[121] Shulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 59. *and* Noorhaidi Hasan, 'Faith and Politics: The Rise of the Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia', *Indonesia,* 73 (2002) 145-169, there 159-162.

[122] The rise FKAWJ and Laskar Jihad coincided with more broad developments, in which both Salafi discourses and Islam in general gained more prominence in Indonesia's public and political life. See: Bianca J. Smith, 'Re-Orienting Female Spiritual Power in Islam', *Indonesia and the Malay World* (2012) 1-23, there 2. *and* Van Wichelen, *Embodied Contestations*, 85-86.

communists to undermine Indonesia as the world's most populous Muslim country.[123] After large scale violence broke out on Maluku, a militant branch of the FKWAJ was formed in 2000, which was the Laskar Jihad (literally, warriors of Jihad). The Laskar Jihad interpreted the violence on Maluku as an assault of Christianity and the West against Islam and Indonesia as an Islamic nation, accusing Christians of supporting the RMS, a short-lived independence movement that was founded in 1950.[124] The inability of the Indonesian government and army to resolve the conflict and protect Muslims from Christian violence provided the direct motivation to set up the Laskar Jihad.[125] During the conflict, the Laskar Jihad was able to send between 4000 and 6000 combatants to Maluku without interference from the Indonesian government, which effectively tipped the balance of the conflict in favor of the Muslims. While on Ambon, the Laskar Jihad not only joined Ambonese Muslims in their fight against Christians, but also entered Islamic worship places to spread their religious views.[126]

While the Laskar Jihad was mainly concerned with moral and religious questions on a national level, we have seen that the initial outbreak of violence also had a lot to do with the local historical, socio-economic, religious and political situation on Maluku. Nevertheless several of my informants and academic sources show how the arrival of the Laskar Jihad consolidated and increased the religious imagery and rivalry during the conflict. As a Muslim religious leader who was involved in the early peacebuilding process explained to me:

> *"Even after the conflict, there was religious radicalism, like the Laskar Jihad, such as the coming of Laskar Jihad who penetrated all the religious worship places. It was also the same in other religious communities. The Christian teaching was also provocative for social disintegration."*

And an adult employee of an Ambonese NGO:

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[123] Idem, 59. *and* Hasan, 'Rise of the Laskar Jihad', 148.

[124] Schulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 61. Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War', 136-137. The RMS continued in the Netherlands, and while some supported the RMS on Maluku, it never had any substantial support among both Christians and Muslim Ambonese.

[125] Schulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 58.

[126] Idem.

"The strong values of Islam came to Ambon at the time when the Laskar Jihad came. Because they did not just send forces to fight here, they also brought the values of the Middle East here. It is very dangerous. So now some of the Muslims they don't feel comfortable any more with the Christians and the Jews. The Soenni tradition is not like that. So after the conflict, in my opinion, Ambon has really changed. The [...] *people changed."*

During my interviews, I always asked my informants whether there were certain groups within Ambonese society that were more actively involved in the violence than others. Interestingly, some of my informants named the Laskar Jihad as people who were more willing to fight than Ambonese themselves. In line with the arrival of the Laskar Jihad, Christians also increasingly began to interpret the conflict in religious terms, calling themselves the Laskar Kristen.[127]

Although there is not a lot of data on the religious rhetoric that was used locally during the conflict, there are some hints that the image of a religiously motivated cosmic war was indeed present in the rhetoric used by both Muslims and Christians during the Ambonese conflict.[128] This is certainly true for the thousands of warriors from the Laskar Jihad that were recruited in Java and other parts of Indonesia. Many of these Mujahideen were unemployed youth with limited possibilities. For them, Jihad provided an image of a cosmic war, giving them possibilities to express resentment and frustration and to gain 'symbolic empowerment', a sense of identity, dignity and purpose. Participation in violence helped them to display their self-image as defenders of Islam and fight against 'Westernization' and 'Christianization', processes which they identify as cause of their own marginal position. Part of the group identity among these Mujahideen was a sense of belonging to a global Islam and concern for international conflicts that were interpreted as part of a global battle between 'Islam' and its enemies.[129]

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[127] See for example: YouTube, *Ambon's Religious Bloodbath* (2007).

[128] For more elaborate of Juergensmeyer's theories on religious violence, see section 1.3. *and* Youtube, *Kemunafikan RMS (Kristen Ambon)* (2010). *and* Youtube, *Djangan Lupah Maluku* (2010).

[129] Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad, Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, (unpublished dissertation) 158 and 229-230.

The fact that some of my informants noticed that the arrival of the Laskar Jihad increased the religious divide on Ambon indicates that it is plausible to assume that, over time, Ambonese people were also influenced by Muslim or Christian images of a religious 'cosmic war'.[130] Many of the local Ambonese who participated in the violence were unemployed youth with limited possibilities, for whom participating in violence provided a way to deal with frustrations, stand up for themselves, and gain respect among their communities. For these youth, adopting the image of a religious war may have been attractive, as it clearly designates allies and enemies, and explains why people are participating in the violence. In addition, the image of a cosmic war gives purpose to the suffering people were going through, as this suffering could be interpreted as a sacrifice for one's own religious community.[131] As we have seen in chapter one, violence is often intrinsically related to the ways people envision themselves and their relations to others. In this case, it can be argued that Ambonese – over time – adapted the image of a religious 'cosmic war' to give meaning to the realities around them and their own involvement in the violence.

The fears of the Laskar Jihad for Christians striving for independent Christian Maluku became reality at the end of the year 2000, when a Christian doctor from Ambon founded the FKM (Front Kedaulatan Maluku, the Maluku Sovereignty Front), which connected itself to the RMS through an official statement in December 2000. Throughout the rest of the conflict, the FKM was frequently attacked by the FKAWJ and the Laskar Jihad. While neither the FKM nor the RMS ever gained significant support, the existence of the FKM confirmed Laskar Jihad's conspiracy theories about the violence on Maluku as waged by Christians to assault Islam and Indonesia as an Islamic nation.[132] At the same time, Christians were arguing against the 'Islamization' policies of the Laskar Jihad and other Muslim organizations.[133] Furthermore, the idea of a war between Islam and Christianity may have been amplified by many military and police units taking sides during the conflict.[134]

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[130] Also see: Bräuchler: 'Cyberidentities at War', 126-127.
[131] Also see: Spyer, 'Media effects', 29.
[132] Shulze, 'Laskar Jihad', 63.
[133] Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War', 137.
[134] Van Klinken, 'Maluku Wars', 8.

Still it is important to realize that different fault lines continued to exist throughout the conflict. One informant would for example describe how conflicts between people from the same religious community could also easily lead to killings:

> *"If we sat around like this* [during the conflict]. *If I do not like you, I can kind of stab you or kill you and I can kind of go home* [without any consequences]. *There was no law enforcement during the riots."*

Some other informants told me that some Muslims and Christians were killed by people from the same religious community when a fight was going on, as in a combat situation a killing could easily look like an accident or an attack by the opposing religious community. Besides this, traditional village alignments continued to influence the ways in which the violence was patterned.[135] Besides, the fault line between Ambonese and non-Ambonese continued to exist. This is confirmed by the observation that Ambonese Muslims did not always agree on the religious principles Laskar Jihad was fighting for. For example, Ambonese Muslims and Laskar Jihad conflicted about Ambonese marriage customs, which were seen as not Islamic by Laskar Jihad. Furthermore, many Ambonese Muslims also did not like that Laskar Jihad tried to exercise command over Ambonese Muslim militias.[136]

In this section, we have seen that in the *first phase* of the 1999-2002 conflict, tensions and competition existed on many different levels within Ambonese society, such as between different patronage systems, villages, Muslims and Christians, Ambonese and outsiders, 'common people' and 'big men'. As the violence continued, a *second phase* of the conflict can be distinguished, in which the ongoing violence increasingly caused hatred between religious communities, which subsequently fueled the continuation of the violence. In addition, religion also became increasingly important as an identity marker, and images of a religious war between Muslims and Christians increasingly dominated conflict reality. In this sense, religious hatred between Muslims and Christians can be seen as a consequence, and not as a cause of the violence. At the same time, the image of a 'cosmic war' between Muslim and Christians

[135] Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture', 105-106.
[136] Lingsma, *Verdriet van Ambon*, 245.

became increasingly attractive, as it provided purpose to the suffering people were going through, while also clarifying the ambiguous and unclear situation people found themselves in.

§3.3 Ambiguity and Rumors

The arguments in the previous sections point to several factors and developments that contributed to the outbreak of the 1999-2002 conflict. While all these factors certainly influenced the situation, I sometimes still had the feeling that some questions surrounding the violence remain. First of all, we have seen that the outbreak of violence on Ambon was surrounded by rumors that raised tensions on several levels. While the truth of these rumors is highly questionable, it is often very difficult or even impossible to falsify them. Take for example the rumors about Christian evangelization campaigns or forced conversions taking place on Maluku. While these rumors caused tension before and during the conflict, to this day, no cases of forced conversion have been confirmed according to national and international standards. Nevertheless, it could have happened occasionally that some communities surrounded by a majority of another religion converted to that other religion to try avoiding attacks.[137] Furthermore it is difficult to say how many Christian Ambonese actually had RMS-sympathies or how many local Muslims wanted to 'Islamize' Maluku to be able to create a fully Islamic Indonesian state. When arguing from the perspective many youth have on the relations between Muslims and Christians before the violence started, it is implausible that many Ambonese would be willing to start years of bloodshed among former friends, neighbors and colleagues to achieve a fully Christian or Muslim Maluku. However, voices that argue exactly this were heard once the conflict progressed. It is difficult to say to what extent such sentiments played a role when the conflict was starting, and which proportion of the population supported such views once the conflict endured.

Secondly, we have seen that scholars argue that much tension present on Ambon before the violence erupted in January 1999 existed along multiple fault lines. While these explanations can clarify why some of the Ambonese became involved in the conflict, they do not fully explain the (coming into) existence of a large-scale conflict. This argument can be

[137] Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War', 137-138.

illustrated by examples. Take the situation in which immigrants from Sulawesi increasingly dominated the markets and public transport sector in Ambon City. While this may explain the anger of residents in Ambon City who were directly competing with these immigrants, it does not necessarily explain why the violence spread so easily to other villages on Ambon Island or to other islands on Maluku. Something similar can be said about the competition between different Ambonese villages. The competition or conflicts between villages may be a determining factor for people to attack another village during the conflict, or pattern the violence once it broke out. It does however not explain why some people also attacked each other while they were not part of rival villages. From these examples, it becomes clear that different people fought each other for different motivations, feelings and reasons. Because of this, it still does not really become clear who exactly was fighting for what reasons and why a large-scale conflict ensued.

Thirdly, even determining who exactly is responsible for specific acts of aggression is usually a difficult question to answer. One of my informants for example mentioned that initiators of violence usually operate at nighttime, which makes it almost impossible to identify them. Moreover, we have seen that youth tend to be reticent when sharing information about violent confrontations with the aim of not stirring up tensions by pointing fingers at others. Because of this, the lack of clarity surrounding the identity of the instigators of violence increases. As it is often unclear who the parties are and who exactly started the violence, and people often based their actions on unclear or sometimes even false information, it is difficult to try structuring the violence on Ambon according to well-planned groups who initiated acts with the intention to achieve certain goals. It therefore does not really make sense trying to create a chronology of events that are linked in a causal chain to help explain why the violence happened.[138]

It is also important to note that tensions or competition by itself do not explain why violence takes place. As anthropologist Patricia Spyer noted about increasing tensions before the violence erupted:

[138] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 29.

> *"One has a situation waiting to happen* [on Ambon]. *Waiting perhaps, but still not yet, not quite, happening."*[139]

This quote illustrates that while tensions may explain why 'a situation is waiting to happen', they do not automatically result in large-scale violence as happened on Ambon. Tensions and competition can contribute to the likeliness of violence, but they do not explain how and why it happens when it actually does.

To explain why the violence did erupt in January 1999, Spyer argues that the tense 'climate' or 'atmosphere' which was characterized by ambiguity and suspicion itself contributed to the outbreak of violence.[140] According to Spyer, this climate was fed by spirals of information and misinformation that was spread during the conflict, which blurred the boundaries between the known and suspected, feared and fantasized, and what is fact and fiction. We already have seen one example on how this climate could have contributed to the outbreak of violence, when a warning about possible conflict in December 1998 led to communities setting up *posko* to protect their neighborhood. The setting up of posts was subsequently interpreted by both sides as a preparation to attack, which further raised tensions.

Another way in which a lack of clarity can have contributed to (further) violence has to do with the lack of transparency surrounding the identity of people who actually commit acts of violence. Because it is not clear who is exactly responsible for acts of violence, possible violent actors cannot be located anywhere in particular, and could therefore be potentially everywhere. This lack of clarity may in turn increase suspicion, fear and tensions among people, which can lead to new outbreaks of violence.[141] Another example is the burning of churches and mosques that contributed to the initiation of cycles of revenge on the first day of the conflict. Interestingly, Spyer refers to one of her informants, who told her that the news that churches and mosques were burning was spread before any actual fire could be detected in Ambon City. Meanwhile, rumors and misinformation about church and mosque burnings were spreading as wildfire across Ambon. This angered many Muslims and Christians who in turn

[139] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 23.
[140] Spyer, 'Media Effects' 24, 35,
[141] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 33.

actually started to burn each other's worship places. To this day, it is unknown who burned the first mosque or church.[142]

In this section, it has become clear that many questions concerning the violence on Ambon remain unanswered. First of all, we have seen that the Ambonese conflict is characterized by the presence of rumors that are difficult to be verified or falsified. In addition, while many factors that caused tension and competition within Ambonese society certainly contributed to the outbreak of violence, they do not necessarily explain the rise of a conflict as large and horrific as the conflict on Ambon. Finally, it is often difficult to determine *who* was involved in the conflict and *how* people became involved in the violence. Anthropologist Patricia Spyer argues that this lack of clarity, in combination with the tense 'climate' that was present on Ambon, itself contributed to the outbreak and continuation of the violence.[143] All of this is in line with the arguments by Stewart and Strathern, who argue that rumors reflect and amplify competition and suspicion between people, especially in unclear situations. Rumors can in turn trigger violence, which subsequently provoke further rumors and acts of retaliation. When violence continued, cycles emerged in which suspicion, rumors, provocation, violence, and political events continuously followed and amplified each other.[144]

§3.4 Youth on the 1999-2002 Conflict

In the previous section, we have seen that scholars point to rising tensions within Ambonese society on several levels, which eventually contributed to the outbreak of violence in January 1999. Interestingly, when I asked my informants about life on Ambon before the 1999-2002 conflict erupted, most of them did not mention rising tensions and competition before 1999, but forwarded very positive ideas about this period instead. Many informants described the history before the violence as being characterized by brotherhood between Christians and Muslims. As a student from IAIN explained to me:

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[142] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 27-28. During more recent outbreaks of violence, it is also often unclear who the perpetrators are. Both during violence in September 2011 and a more recent outbreak of violence in May 2012, people were unable or unwilling to specify the people who participated in the violence.

[143] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 24, 35. *and* Oliver Ramsbotham, *Transforming Violent Conflict, Radical Disagreement, Dialogue and Survival,* (Oxon and New York 2010) 143.

[144] Stewart and Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*, 182.

> *"Before the riot happened in 1999, Muslims and Christians lived together. As a Muslim, I had many Christian friends. During our childhood we were eating together,* [religion] *was not in the way. It was just, we are the same* [as] *human* [beings, em]."

Besides describing the pre-conflict interreligious relations as familial, youth also referred to *Pela* and *Gandong* ties that strengthened bonds between Muslim and Christian communities. Pela can be seen as a traditional alliance between villages which can have different religious backgrounds, which is usually created when peace is made after incisive incidents such as wars or accidents.[145] Gandong is the commonly spread idea that all people from Maluku are from common descent and therefore part of the same family.[146] Many informants also mentioned that before the conflict, Ambonese had the custom of celebrating each other's religious holidays such as Christmas or Idul Fitr.

The peaceful descriptions of pre-conflict Ambon by many informants raise the question why things ran out of hand so badly when the violence started on the 19th of January 1999. When I asked about the origins of the violence, many informants referred to an incident that triggered larger outbreaks of violence. While details about the incident varied in different accounts, the main plot of the stories about the incident was more or less the same. According to this story, the violence on Ambon was triggered by a dispute that involved an *angkot* (public transport minibus) driver at Mardika station in Ambon City, which coincided with the Muslims' celebration of Idul Fitr day. Some more detailed versions of the story describe a Christian *angkot* driver and one or a few - in some accounts Buginese - Muslim client(s). According to many of my informants, this fight grew out into a conflict between Muslim and Christian communities. As one of the members of Badati explained to me when I asked him how the violence started:

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[145] Dieter Bartels, 'Pela Alliances in the Central Moluccas and in the Netherlands: A Brief Guide for Beginners', (1977) 1-4. See also: Adam, 'Land Management', 148. *and* Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture', 105-108.
[146] Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture', 105.

"It is just because the people in the terminal want to ask for money from an Angkot driver, he does not want to give the money. So a fight happened, it was increased and it became a conflict." [147]

When I asked the youth why such an incident could lead to large-scale violence lasting several years, many youth told me that the initial violence instigated cycles of revenge that were unstoppable. Especially the news of people being killed, and rumored and actual burning of churches and mosques contributed to these cycles of revenge.[148] Interestingly, most youth started their conflict chronology with this triggering incident, and did not refer to any tensions or competition that existed before the incident. For example, none of my informants mentioned the setting up of *posko* in December 1998, as a sign of rising tensions.

Many young Ambonese also told me that the outbreak of violence on Ambon came as a surprise. They told that they were confused by the violence, and did not really understand why the conflict was happening. Some youth noted that they did not understand what was happening because they were still very young at the time of the conflict.[149] However, even nowadays many youth do not forward detailed ideas about the origins of the 1999 conflict, or sometimes explicitly stress that they still do not really grasp what was going on. As was expressed by Desi, a member of Young Ambassadors for Peace:

"But we don't know why they were killing each other [during the conflict]. *It's like they are killing each other, stealing stuff from other neighborhoods, they burn each other, they have to* [take] *revenge. It is really unbelievable, we were living previously as a family, because of the conflict, they become barbaric, you know barbaric, they will do anything, any violence."*

[147] While this account specifically mentions a money dispute, several other discounts did not mention the fight was about money. This account, like most other accounts, also did not explain why the initial fight or money dispute between the Christian driver and his Muslim clients occurred.

[148] See also: Spyer, 'Media Effects', 27-28.

[149] Many youth that I interviewed were in their early teens during the 1999-2002 conflict.

The confusion described by Desi was shared by at least part of the young Ambonese who were involved in the conflict from the start. This can be illustrated by the story of a youth from Liang. During my interview with him, he described how he became involved:

> *"When I first heard about the conflict, I was in my house. We were having Idul Fitr celebrations. All of a sudden there were people around me who were shouting Islamic things, like 'Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar'. These people told about the conflict that was going on in Ambon* [City, em]. *At that time, I got the information that the young and the old people* [from Muslim Liang village, em] *should go and attack* [Christian, em] *Waai village together before they were attacked first. So they came together using knives."*

Like many other informants, this young male described the pre-conflict relations between religious communities as familial. This youth felt that when the violence erupted, these good relations suddenly came to a halt, as he did not have time to reflect on what was going on and was just expected to gather his arms and join the fighting.

While some youth only referred to the above quoted incident, another common explanation for the Ambonese conflict I heard from the youth is that the 1999-2002 conflict was the result of a big set up. According to these stories, 'provocateurs' tried to stir up the violence to benefit from it in one way or another. To give an example of how informants would typically mention the influence of these 'provocateurs', I will now quote a conversation I had with John, a young peacebuilder from Moluccas Peace Generation, who gave me examples about rumors that were forwarded during the conflict:

> *"Another rumor is that they want to make Indonesia an Islamic nation. I heard a lot of rumors about that.* [...] *And then about that some people still want to make riot in Ambon, they play this big game. Some people say that the provocateur comes again, and want to make Ambon in riots again."*

In a conversation with a youth from Ambon's band community:

"It [the 1999-2002 conflict, em] *is a plan from the higher level. It is some people, unclear people, I don't know exactly who, they want the riots here to happen because of that they can gain some benefit from it. They do provocation to get benefit from the riots. But the people don't want it."*

In another conversation with two young peacebuilders from Badati:

James: "[...] *after the conflict started* [on the 19th of January, 1999, em], *the Muslims were wearing a white headband and the Christians were wearing a red headband."*

Mohammed: *"You can find the same story with a lot of people about that hour* [that moment, em]. *Because if you visit your friends, let's say if you are Christian and you visit your friend, you do not know yet that this conflict will occur. Suddenly there are people with white headbands everywhere."*

James: *"That is probably the most important indication that there is a set up. How do you know that you should do this* [wear headbands, em]*?*

Common to most of the stories about provocateurs or rumors is that it is not exactly clear who the 'provocateurs' were, and who was responsible for the set up or conspiracy. When informants do mention who may be responsible for setting up the conflict, they usually point at rather abstract actors such as 'the government', 'the big men', or 'the army'. Furthermore, in the stories, it often did not become really clear in what way 'the provocateurs' are going to benefit from the existence of enduring, large-scale riots.

When asked about the origins of the conflict, youth would most often refer to the triggering incident, the cycles of revenge that followed, and the idea of a conspiracy or set-up. Although less often, some youth also mention other factors that contributed to the conflict, or that caused tension before the conflict started. These factors can be grouped together into three categories. First of all, some youngsters would point out that conflicts between villages or neighborhoods in Ambon City used to be relatively common. Some informants told me that the

neighborhoods where the conflict started - the predominantly Christian Mardika and the majority Muslim neighborhood Batu Merah - had minor riots between youth from both neighborhoods almost annually.[150] Also, some youth pointed at a tradition of competition and conflicts between villages that can be found both on Ambon and in other islands on Maluku.[151] While these stories do not necessarily explain the outbreak of the 1999-2002 conflict, these stories do allow space for rioting and fighting as something that is familiar to at least some Ambonese. It is plausible that this made joining the fighting a more sensible option to some.

Secondly, some other young people also pointed out that the start of the conflict on Maluku was surrounded by rumors that raised tensions between several segments of Ambonese society. It is important to notice that these tensions not only existed between Muslim and Christian communities, but also between different villages and immigrants and original Ambonese. Although many young people argued that the start of the 1999 riots came as a surprise to them, some of them mentioned that they had heard rumors about a conflict that was going to happen before it actually started. One student from IAIN for example described how he heard that Christians had been planning to attack the Muslim communities before the 1999 riots began. Another student told me about the rumor that Christians started the conflict because they were jealous that a Muslim was recently appointed as governor of the Maluku province.

Thirdly, some informants pointed to a violent cultural or emotional trait that Ambonese people are supposed to have. While this idea was less common among the young peacebuilders I have talked to, some students and adults pointed out that Ambonese easily get emotional and angry, which may cause conflicts to get out of hand. When I asked a girl who is involved in a youth peer-counseling group to explain more about this, she told me the following:

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[150] One of the youth told me that in these conflicts between neighborhoods, Christians from Batu Merah would also fight the predominantly Christian Mardika, while Muslims from Mardika would also fight predominantly Muslim Batu Merah. While this remark could point out that tensions existed before the 1999-2002 conflict erupted, youth often shared these views with me to argue that current small-scale outbreaks of violence should not be seen as related to large scale conflict between Muslims and Christians in general.

[151] Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture', 105-106.

> *"It can be anything* [that starts a conflict]. *Maybe it is just boys getting drunk at a party, and they fight each other. One dies, and then the family of the dead, the family wants to take revenge. It has nothing to do with religion, sometimes it is even between people from the same religion. Only when people from a different religion fight, it may escalate into a religious conflict."*

I asked people who referred to this characteristic of Ambonese people to explain why Ambonese get angry or emotional easily. Many of my informants however did not give additional explanations about this cultural trait Ambonese people supposedly have.

Sometimes, the view that Ambonese get provoked easily is combined with the idea that the riots in Ambon are a set up. A student leader from Maluku for example first argued to me that the Ambonese conflict was a government conspiracy and that the government persuaded ordinary Ambonese to fight. When I asked him how the government achieved this, he gave the following answer:

> *"You know the reason* [why ordinary people were fighting]. *Their fight was about, when the religious symbols have been used for* [creating] *the conflict, when a church is burned, a mosque is burned, it rises up the tension among fellow believers, and it encourages them to fight."*

Later during the interview, the student leader also argued that the conflict on Maluku was not about religion at all, but was just there because of political reasons. During my conversations with Ambonese youth, the image of the 1999-2002 conflict as a religious war was more often explicitly contested, especially by those youth who blame 'provocateurs' for raising religious tensions. In fact, only one of my informants mentioned hatred or competition between religious groups as a cause for the conflict or reason why people participated in the violence.[152]

[152] Interestingly, the only youth who did refer to pre-conflict religious hatred on Muslim and Christian sides also mentioned that in earlier times, Muslims and Christians lived peacefully together without any hatred, and he used to have many Muslim friends. Furthermore, he argued that his own hatred for Islam was the result of family members and friends losing their houses or getting killed in smaller conflicts before the violence erupted in January 1999.

Additionally, most youth who participated in the violence referred to outside events and circumstances to explain their involvement in the conflict. Like the young male from Liang village who is quoted earlier in this section, who shared that he did not have much time to reflect on what was happening when the conflict erupted. He argued that once the religious leaders in his village decided that it was war, he just was supposed to gather his arms and join the fighting. Many youth who were involved in the violence named defending their communities or village as an important reason to get involved in the violence. Often, the need to defend one's own village or community led to a wish to take revenge once a village or community was attacked. This clearly shows from a conversation I had with a member of Moluccas Peace Generation who was involved in the fighting:

Erik: *"How did you become involved in the violence?"*
Julie: *"I had to defend my village."*
Erik: *"Did you also attack other villages?"*
Julie: *"Once, after Waai village was attacked."*

It can be argued that the people who were involved in the fighting did not want to present themselves as aggressors, and therefore argue that they at least initially just wanted to defend their own community. However, most youth also argued that before the conflict started, they had many friends from other religious communities. It is therefore plausible to believe that involvement in the fighting was indeed often triggered by earlier incidents of violence instead of pre-existing desires to attack former friends.

While the above factors and ideas explain why the violence started and grew in 1999, the youth also gave me hints and explanations about the reasons why the violence lasted for several years. We have already seen that according to some young people, the conflict ran out of hand because Ambonese get angry easily and want to take revenge for what happened to them. In other instances, informants would point out that many Ambonese to this day fear that people want to take revenge. Therefore, it can be argued that this fear is based on past conflict experiences, where people have actually experienced retributive violence by other Ambonese.

Besides this, some youth forwarded that provocateurs continuously searched for new issues and rumors to stir up the conflict again when it was starting to cool down. For example, a member of Young Ambassadors for Peace explained to me:

> *"So it was like, like the provocateurs will use a new issue to make people in the conflict.* [...] *any issue will come up, and they will use religion or ethnics so it will become a sensitive issue to make people in conflict."*

While again, the identity and aims of the provocateurs is unknown, quotes like these show that rumors that made people nervous and increased tensions continued to be circulated occasionally throughout the conflict years.

Some young people also mentioned that Muslim and Christian communities living almost fully separated is a factor that contributed to the violence lasting for several years. Because the communities lived separated, it was very difficult for people to get in touch with each other, raising suspicion between them. For example, a member of Moluccas Peace Generation noted that when rumors were circulating about one of the parties preparing for an attack, there were only limited possibilities for others to check whether this rumor was true. In this situation, the preparations to counter a possible attack may subsequently be interpreted as preparations for an attack by the other party. This in turn further increased tensions between communities.

We have seen that scholars often try to explain the violence by referring to local competition for socio-economic opportunities on many different levels of Ambonese society. The tensions that were caused by this local competition were subsequently amplified by national developments, such as the debates on the national and religious identity of Indonesia after Suharto's fall. Some of the factors mentioned by scholars are also referred to by Ambonese youth, such as the occurrence of rumors, the competition between villages or the resentment of some Ambonese towards immigrants. However, it is interesting to note that most young Ambonese describe the pre-conflict times on Ambon as familial and harmonious, and emphasize the triggering incident which initiated the violence on January 19th of 1999 to explain the start of the conflict. Furthermore, many young people tend to explain the 1999-2002 conflict by referring to the influence of 'provocateurs' or a political conspiracy or set-up.

In the next section, I will give explanations for these differences, which will show how the views of youth relate to the social context in which they currently operate.

§3.5 Youth's Views Understood in their Social Context

In the previous section, we have seen that many young people stress the idea that the 1999-2002 conflict occurred due to the influence of 'provocateurs' and 'big men' who plot conspiracies. Many informants who referred to this 'conspiracy-idea' also stressed that both Muslim and Christian Ambonese are part of the same family and therefore would never hurt one another without being provoked first. Moreover, young people only rarely mentioned the many local factors noticed by scholars that contributed to the conflict, and forward very positive ideas about life before the 1999-2002 conflict erupted. While the influence of outside actors cannot be denied, youth's stories about the influence of 'provocateurs' and conspiracies raise the question why Ambonese let themselves be tricked into committing the atrocities that happened during the conflict years. This question is especially significant if one considers that many youth describe the relations between Muslims and Christians before the conflict as being positive and familial.

In this section, I want to argue that the views and positions of youth can be better comprehended once they are understood in relation to the present social context in which they are forwarded. First of all, it makes sense for youth to blame outside actors such as 'provocateurs' or 'big men' for the conflict, because this gives them the possibility to uphold the view that the relations between Muslim and Christians are positive and familial without the influence of outside actors. This perspective on the social relations between Muslims and Christian is also supported by the positive ideas young people have about life on Ambon before the conflict erupted, as it suggests that the conflict only broke out because 'provocateurs' started to interfere in Ambon's social life. This subsequently gives youth the possibility to refer to the positive and peaceful times before the conflict as norm and ideal for the social relations between Muslims and Christians in the present.[153]

[153] Similar observations and analysis are made in post-genocide Rwanda by anthropologist Susanne Buckley-Zistel, who argues that many Rwandans deliberately chose to 'remember' and 'forget' certain aspects intentionally to present pre-genocide relations between ethnic groups as positive. See: Susanne Buckley-Zistel, 'We are Pretending

Seen from this perspective, we can also better understand why some youth explicitly contest the image of Ambon's conflict as a religious conflict. While it is plausible that at least some Ambonese youth – over time – adopted the image of a religious war because of its explanatory strengths, putting too much attention to the religious hatred and imaginary that existed between Muslims and Christians during the conflict may threaten the idea that the 1999-2002 conflict is only caused because of outside influences. Moreover, if people admit that the 1999-2002 conflict was at least partly religiously motivated, it may seem more plausible that religious hatred and rivalry is still present among some Ambonese today, which confirms present fears and suspicions. Instead, Ambonese youth provide an alternative for the explanation that the 1999-2002 conflict was a 'religious war' by forwarding the idea that the 1999-2002 conflict is mainly caused by 'provocateurs' and 'big men'. In chapter one, I have argued that that (religious) violence is often closely related to the way people envision themselves and their relation to others. By forwarding the idea that the 1999-2002 conflict is the result of a conspiracy and idealizing social life before 1999 as positive, youth are able to provide new ways of envisioning the violence on Ambon, while they also forward new ideals that support their peacebuilding activities.

Secondly, the only alternatives to blaming outside actors are to blame oneself or other groups within Ambonese society. Blaming other Ambonese actors for the violence may be a risky thing to do, as it can put tension on the still fragile relationship between different religious communities. I argue that this may explain why many of my informants were reluctant when I asked them about the identity of the provocateurs they were talking about. This becomes clear from this conversation I had with a student leader from Maluku:

Erik: *"Who are these special people, who are the provocateurs?"*

Abdullah: "[Laughs] *No comment, I do not want to mention it."*

Peace: Local Memory and the Absence of Social Transformation and Reconciliation in Rwanda', in: Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman (eds.), *After Genocide, Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond* (London 2008) 125-143, there 125-126.

By laughing, this informant gave me the impression that he certainly had ideas about the identity of the provocateurs, but just did not want to share this information with me. At the same time, only blaming oneself does not really make sense either, as there are definitely more actors having a share in the violence. Therefore, many youth feel it is better not to identify those who are responsible for provocation or set-ups.

Furthermore, Ambonese also have reasons for pointing to their supposed cultural trait of getting emotional and angry easily, as it helps them to explain the involvement of ordinary Ambonese in the violence. The idea of Ambonese people getting angry easily gives people a possibility to criticize the Ambonese for their share in Ambon's violent past. As this cultural trait involves both Muslims and Christians equally, informants can mention it without suggesting that one of the parties is more to blame than others. It can also be argued that raising this argument is done because it gives Ambonese an excuse for being involved in the violence. The idea of getting angry easily may suggest that Ambonese themselves are good people, but just because they get provoked easily, they can be tricked and their emotion is abused to attain goals of others. Whatever way this argument is interpreted, it certainly does provide a view in which Muslims and Christians are united at the same time, because they are both seen as Ambonese who share the same cultural trait.

Besides this, we have seen that young people only rarely point to the competition and tensions within Ambonese society that are mentioned by scholars to explain the 1999-2002 conflict. I argue that there are several reasons for this. Firstly, I have already argued that a positive image of the relations between Muslims and Christians before the conflict offers youth a perspective on which they can build future relationships, because the idealized image they have of the past can function as a normative ideal for the present. Putting too much attention to early tensions is unwanted, because this can spoil this positive image of the past. Secondly, admitting that there has been competition and tension between Muslims and Christians before the violence erupted weakens the idea that the violence during the 1999-2002 conflict only took place because it was 'provoked' or plotted by 'big men'. In this way, youth can present

positive and familial relations between Muslims and Christians as both ideal and normal, that were only temporarily disturbed by outside 'provocateurs' during the conflict years.[154]

Secondly, the views youth have may also do justice to the experiences they had themselves. Although conflicts and tensions were certainly there before January 1999, tensions existed on different levels and conflicts were usually local. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that many Ambonese have experienced positive, peaceful and even familial relations with neighbors, friends and family from different religious communities. At the same time, many youth were very young when the 1999-2002 conflict erupted, which may explain why they did not notice some of the tensions that were going on at the time. This is further confirmed by the observation that many youth told me that they were surprised by the outbreak of violence in January 1999. Besides this, the view that the Ambonese conflict was no religious conflict may also make sense from the perspective of youth, as many youth argue that they had the experience that Muslims and Christians lived together harmoniously before the conflict started. While this does not exclude the possibility that a segment of Ambonese society did feel hatred towards another religious group, it does support the argument that much of the religious hatred and imaginary was the result, rather than the cause of the violence on Ambon. This is further confirmed by the many instances of Muslims and Christians actually helping each other at the start of the conflict.[155]

In this section, we have seen how youth's views can be understood in relation to the social context in which they operate. We have seen that although tensions and conflicts may be there before the 1999-2002 conflict erupted, youth's positive evaluation of pre-conflict Ambon can still do justice to their own experiences. Moreover, the positive views that youth have about pre-conflict Ambon can also be seen as a way in which youth promote their current ideals, as they can present the past as being normative for the present and future. Finally, and maybe most importantly, the views that youth have support their peacebuilding work, as they avoid blaming fellow Ambonese people for the conflict and can maintain the view that the relations between Muslims and Christians actually are, and should continue to be positive.

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[154] Also see: Susanne Buckley-Zistel, 'Remembering to Forget: Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for Local Coexistence in Post-Genocide Rwanda', *The Journal of the International African Institute* 76 (2) (2006) 131-150, there 140-141.
[155] Adam, 'Land Management', 147.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have seen that according to scholars, the origins of the 1999-2002 conflict lie in multi-faceted local competition for socio-economic opportunities between different patronage systems, villages, religious communities, Ambonese and immigrants, and individuals. When the violence on Ambon persisted, a *second phase* of the conflict can be observed, during which the enduring violence between Muslims and Christians caused increased hatred between them. At the same time, images of a 'cosmic war' between Muslims and Christians increasingly dominated the conflict. Besides all this, we have seen that many questions surrounding the violence remain unanswered, as the conflict can be characterized by ambiguity and the spread of rumors that are difficult to verify. But as anthropologist Patricia Spyer has shown, it can be argued that this lack of clarity played an important role in both the outbreak and the continuation of violence, because it caused suspicion and fear among Ambon's communities, and raised tensions between them.

While some youth also mention the factors that have been forwarded by scholars, we have seen that they more often emphasize different aspects of the conflict reality than scholars when they try to explain the violence that took place on Ambon. Young people often emphasize the incident that triggered the violence or refer to the idea that the violence was the result of a conspiracy. In the final section of this chapter, it is argued that youth emphasize these aspects because it enables them to prevent putting blame on other Ambonese, and present good relations between Muslims and Christians as something that is both common and normative.

Chapter 4. Peacebuilding by Ambonese Youth

In this chapter, I will focus on the peacebuilding efforts of Ambonese youth. The first section will focus on the views of youth on the end of large scale violence. Here we will see that the views youth have on Ambon's peace process challenges the focus many academic peacebuilding theories have on macro-actors such as governments and NGOs. The second section will present youth's analysis of the current situation on Ambon, as these views provide the background on which youth base their current peacebuilding activities. Section three focuses on the recent outbreak of violence in September 2011. We will see how youth perceived this outbreak of violence, and why this motivated youth from Badati to start organizing their own peacebuilding activities. In section four I will answer the question what youth consider to be a peaceful situation and their ideas about what must be done to make Ambon more peaceful. In the final subsection of this chapter I will focus on the actual activities of youth peacebuilding groups, and the creative ways they found to build peace on Ambon.

§4.1 Youth on the Peace Process

In the first chapter of this thesis we have seen that many traditional peacebuilding theories focus on the role of macro-actors such as governments, important social institutions and international NGOs when it comes to establishing peace.[156] Besides, many peacebuilding theories argue that establishing justice, law enforcement or at least arriving at a commonly accepted account of the 'truth' is a necessary condition to be able to build peace.[157] Interestingly, when I asked my informants why large-scale violence came to an end after several years of fighting, only few informants referred to peacebuilding efforts that were initiated by the Indonesian government or other macro-actors such as social institutions or international NGOs.

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[156] Bercovitch and Jackson, *Conflict Resolution*. *and* Otomar J. Bartos and Paul Wehr, *Using Conflict Theory* (Cambridge, New York, e.a. 2002). *and* Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 3.

[157] Amstutz, *The Healing of Nations*. *and* Colin Knox and Pádraic Quirk, *Peace Building in Northern Ireland, Israel and South Africa* (Houndmill e.a. 2000) 179. *and* Oliver Ramsbotham, *Transforming Violent Conflict*. *and* Charles Haus, *International Conflict Resolution, International Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (2nd edition, New York and London 2010) 47. *and* Buckley-Zistel, 'Pretending Peace', 127.

Early 2002, Indonesia's commitment to support the global campaign against terrorism motivated the Indonesian government to intensify its efforts to bring the combating groups on Maluku together. These efforts led to the signing of the Malino II accord, named after a Central Sulawesi town where the negotiations took place.[158] In the Malino II accord, representatives of Muslim and Christian communities agreed to end all conflict and violence, abide the law, investigate the truth surrounding the conflict, and to ban and disarm all illegal armed groups and militia's.[159] Because of this, outside militant groups like the Laskar Jihad were forced to leave Ambon and local groups such as the Christian separatist FKM were disbanded. Enduring pressure by the Indonesian government subsequently led to the official disbanding of the Laskar Jihad, while their leader Thalib publicly announced that continuation of Jihad was no longer needed as the situation on Ambon had become relatively secure.[160] The disbanding of groups like the Laskar Jihad and other Christian and Muslim militias effectively reduced the amount of violence on Ambon.

While the Malino II accord certainly had positive effects, it surprised me that only few informants mentioned the Malino II accord as a cause for the end of large-scale violence.[161] While many informants acknowledged that the Malino II accord did help to reduce the amount of violence on Ambon and the rest of Maluku, they also pointed out reasons to be critical about the accord. Most importantly, many informants felt that the Malino II accord did not really contribute to the establishment of peaceful social relations at the grassroots level of society. For example, one young peacebuilder argued that although the accord created peace on Ambon, this peace was not 'comfortable'. She explained that this was because not all Ambonese agreed to what representatives of Muslim and Christian communities decided on. A

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[158] One informant told me that earlier negotiations had led to a Malino I accord before the Malino II accord was signed. However, this informant argued that the Malino I accord was not successful at all, because it only involved government representatives.

[159] Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad, Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, (unpublished dissertation, 2005) 222.

[160] Hasan, *Laskar Jihad, Islam, Militancy*, 225.

[161] Only two informants were only positive about the Malino II accord. Interestingly, both two informants were adults who were also personally involved in more official sectors: one was an NGO employee, and the other an adult student leader.

similar idea came up during a group conversation I had with a few members of Badati and some other youth. During this conversation, one of the Badati members made the following remark:

> *"One of the most important reasons why the conflict lasted so long is because the peacebuilding was not involving people from the grassroots at all in the peacebuilding efforts. But if you ask me, the reason why the violence stopped was just because people were fed up. They were poor, they were losing their possessions, they lost their loved ones. It was not because of Malino II."*

An NGO employee forwarded another reason for being critical about the Malino II accord. He argued that the government made a mistake by inviting Muslims and Christians as opposing parties at the negotiations that led to the Malino II accord, as this confirmed the idea that the conflict on Maluku was a religious conflict. This informant felt that politicians should have solved the conflict, as he considered politics to be the cause of the 1999-2002 conflict. It can be argued again that the strategy is used here, in which informants downplay religious aspects of the 1999-2002 conflict to counter current tensions and suspicions and present the relations between Muslims and Christians as positive and familial under normal conditions.

Interestingly, other points of critique on the Malino II accord were forwarded by two informants, who have been personally involved in the negotiations that led to the accord, and also signed it on February 12th, 2002. One of these informants is reverend Jacky Manuputty, a local Christian religious leader who argued that the efforts of the investigation team that was tasked with establishing a truth-account about the conflict were unsuccessful. While the investigation team did research on the Ambonese conflict, it never published its results. Therefore, reverend Manuputty argued that local Ambonese still do not know who was responsible for 'playing the game' that caused the 1999-2002 conflict.[162] A similar critique was forwarded by a teacher from IAIN, who also signed the accord. This teacher argued that although the Malino II accord reduced the violence, it did not establish peaceful relationships at the grassroots level because of controversy over the accord, as some people wanted truth-

[162] See also: Bräuchler, 'Cultural Solutions', 873.

finding and law enforcement to take place before any peace accord was signed. Whatever results were found by the committee tasked to find the truth about the 1999-2002 conflict, I think that it is highly doubtful that the committee would have been able to establish a truth-account that can be shared by all involved actors, since we have seen that the conflict is characterized by sensitive rumors and ambiguity that cannot be easily clarified. Furthermore truth-finding efforts would be complicated because the Indonesian government has often played ambiguous roles in the conflict.

While some informants criticized the Malino II accord, most of my informants did not refer to it at all, but cited other reasons when I asked them why large scale violence came to an end. The most common explanation forwarded by youth on why large-scale violence ended is that people were fed up by the fighting that had lasted for several years. As one of my informants from Badati explained to me:

> *"I think now, people since the conflict in 1999, they are tired to become refugees, they are tired to fight each other. If one of the things happens like conflict, the people, some people will be calmer when facing this conflict, they were not like in 1999, when they became emotional and hated each other. Now they are calmer to face it. They will make some kind of dialogue between the religions to find a solution."*

Besides pointing to tiredness as an explanation why large-scale violence ended, the quote also suggests that this tiredness gives people reasons to remain calm when incidents happen, as they realized that they have a common interest in sharing a peaceful society. According to this informant, this insight provided a foundation on which Ambonese can rebuild trust and the relations that were broken during the conflict.

Many youth also cited another reason why large-scale violence came to an end. Some youth argued that people did not want to fight each other anymore because they 'realized that they have been tricked'. When I asked a former combatant who is now involved in Badati, why he decided to stop fighting, he explained:

> *"The decision to change is because I realize that we are being used. Because our emotions are being used. Second, I kind of* [came to terms] *with God. I was thinking that the children they go to school, they are going up from one grade to another grade, but they actually didn't learn anything."*

Some informants additionally argued that the idea that Ambonese were tricked during the conflict continues to motivate people to remain calm when incidents happen. As is clarified by Desi from Young Ambassadors for Peace:

> *"Because in the conflict times, one group* [Muslims, em] *talk about what they hear about the Christians. And the Christians also tell about the issues* [rumors, em] *about the Muslims. And we* [as peacebuilders, em] *try to correct it from both of them. And the reality is that it is only issue* [it are false rumors, em], *to make them provoked and make them in the conflict, they scare each other, they are suspicious to each other, they decided their victims,* [we try to make them, em] *realize that it is a part of the provocateurs design."*[163]

Contrary to what is commonly argued in peacebuilding theories, the comments by these young peacebuilders suggest that peace on Ambon was not brought about by government initiatives, but by Ambonese themselves, who wanted to improve their living conditions and the social relations they have with others. Interestingly, some Ambonese even take position against more official actors such as the military or the government, by arguing that the conflict was caused by a government conspiracy or 'the provocateurs design'.

[163] In Ambonese Malay, the word that is often used for rumors is 'isu', which is derived from the English word 'issue'. As a member of Young Ambassadors for Peace explained to me, the word 'isu' has three different meanings, namely (1) rumors, (2) problems, and (3) something that can provoke people. Because my informants frequently used the word 'isu' to refer to both problems and rumors, it was often unclear to me whether a certain problem was a 'actual' problem or just a rumor.

In addition to tiredness of the conflict, some youth would also name another, similar reason why especially youth wanted the fighting to stop: boredom.[164] When I asked Mohammed from Badati about life during the conflict, he described in detail how the 1999-2002 conflict was experienced by many youth. The following quote is a small excerpt from his story:

> *"In a short sentence, it is bored life.* [...] *Sometimes I took the risk and drive motorcycle through Christian area. You can imagine the situation. You are so stuck and are so bored; you are willing to take a risk, only to see what happens in the area. There are no things to enjoy life as young people. You cannot go jogging in* [a certain park in Ambon City, em]*, during that time the only basketball court in Ambon, is* [in a conflict area]*, so people cannot play basketball because this place is in the conflict area."*

Later in the interview, Mohammed also argued that boredom was a reason why people did not want to fight each other anymore:

> *"People got bored. They were living in separated areas, in a really tiny complex, they have no interaction. Like I have no ability to go to Natsepa, or eating rujak in Natsepa or go to Pintu Kota or go to Santai beach. Only because it is in a Christian area. So people get bored. And like there is some* [saying] *in Ambonese that is:* 'sampai jua'*. It means enough is enough."*

The view that Ambon became more peaceful was more due to common people starting to interact again was also forwarded by another member from Badati:

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[164] It is also possible that boredom was in some cases also a reason to continue participating in the violence. This for example became clear when I interviewed a youth from Badati who was also involved in the fighting himself. He told me that during the conflict, he became addicted to the fighting. However, this youth also explained that he was fed up with the fighting at a certain point.

"It actually started from the average people. We recognized the people when people start to mingle with each other again. And it started by the average people. For example they meet in the market in the economic area, such as the traditional market."

The idea that common people played a crucial role in ending the large-scale violence was confirmed during a visit I and a few members of Badati paid to the Maluku Band Community (MBC). The MBC is a youth-led community, which set-up a practice room in which music bands can practice at low costs. While I was visiting the MBC, we not only made music together, but also discussed what I was doing on Ambon. This resulted in a group conversation in which the youth stressed the importance of cultural events in establishing peace. According to these youth, it was not the Malino II accord, but music events that brought Muslims and Christians together for the first time since the communities were separated because of the conflict. Interestingly, these activities were not set up with the aim of building peace, but because of interest in the musical event itself. In this way these youth argue that it was tiredness of the conflict and shared interests that really contributed to an improvement of social relations at Ambon's grass roots society.[165]

The views of youth on the end of large-scale violence provide us with several important insights on Ambon's peace process and peacebuilding more general. While peacebuilding efforts by macro-actors such as governments, the military and religious and cultural leaders may certainly contribute to the peace-process in a (post-)conflict situation, youth's remarks show that they do not necessarily establish peace. Instead, youth argue that in the Ambonese case, the effort and willingness of common people to improve their living conditions and develop their lives was crucial for establishing better social relations at the grassroots level of society. What makes government efforts at peacebuilding even more problematic is that many Ambonese have chosen to emphasize an identity that transcends Muslim and Christian identities, but is positioned against the 'provocateurs' and 'big men' from the government and the army that 'tricked' them into fighting. Because of the absence of successful peacebuilding

[165] For an image of the event, see appendix 2.

initiatives by macro-actors, it is both interesting and relevant to investigate the peacebuilding efforts that are made by Ambonese youth. But before we will focus on this, we will investigate the ways in which youth perceive the current situation on Ambon in the next section.

§4.2 Contemporary Ambon

Although the Malino II accord is often criticized by Ambonese youth, the signing of the accord was followed by a massive reduction of large-scale violence. After this, a *third phase* of fragile truce can be distinguished, during which Ambonese tried to overcome past animosities. In this phase, Ambon remained strictly divided into religious territories, which only allowed limited contact between Christian and Muslim communities.[166] Besides this, occasional riots, bombings or sniper attacks continued to challenge the cease-fire that had been established. Yet, slowly, neutral places in Ambon City came into existence that were accessible for both Muslims and Christians. Furthermore, anthropologists noted an increase in peace initiatives within Ambonese society in this period.[167] Because of this, the situation slowly improved until the civil emergency situation was lifted in September 2003, and the last larger outbreak of violence taking place in 2004.[168]

One of my informants noted that the separation of religious communities continued to restrict travel until at least 2005, but since then, the situation has improved considerably. During the years that followed, tensions between Muslim and Christian communities gradually eased, and interaction between communities slowly increased. While the island remains divided into Muslim and Christian neighborhoods and villages, most areas are now accessible to members of both religious communities. Yet, small outbreaks of violence continue up to this day.[169] The most recent relatively large outbreak of violence that received international attention was an outbreak of violence in Ambon City on September 11, 2011, five months before I started my fieldwork.

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[166] Adam, 'Land Management', 143-147.

[167] Spyer, 'Media Effects', 26.

[168] International Crisis Group, 'Violence Erupts Once Again'.

[169] See for example: The Jakarta Globe, *Pattimura Day Riot Injures 50 in Indonesia's Ambon* (Published on May 15, 2012).

During my interviews with young people, I also asked them what their thoughts are on the current situation with regard to the relations between Muslim and Christians. Many youth stated that they are positive about the present conditions. They would for example stress that they have friends from different religious communities and that all areas on Ambon are now safe to go for all Ambonese. This can be illustrated by the following remark made by Melinda from Badati:

> *"I still do my activities like usual. I still go to school, still meet my friends from two communities. I feel free to go everywhere I want, make friends with anyone I like. I feel free to express myself."*

Not only this Badati member, but many other youth, including the ones that were previously involved in fighting, told that they have managed to establish friendships with youth from opposite communities on a personal level. Again, it is noteworthy that youth base their positive judgment of the current situation on an improvement of social relations at the grassroots level.

Besides this, several youth pointed out that many Ambonese have re-established customs from before 1999 that strengthen and exemplify good relations between Christian and Muslim communities. Some youth mentioned that Ambonese have started to celebrate each other's religious holidays together again, sharing food or gifts with friends from another religious community to celebrate a religious holiday. Furthermore some youth also noted that there are villages that have reconfirmed Pela-alliances with villages with a different religious affiliation by helping to repair or build each other's religious buildings together. When youth made such remarks, they also frequently referred to the idea that all Ambonese are 'Gandong', and therefore should not be in conflict with each other.[170]

While most youth gave positive responses when asked about the current situation on Ambon, they sometimes argued that more efforts should be made to improve the relationships between religious communities. For example, some young people argued that there is still

[170] Also see: Bräuchler, 'Mobilizing Culture and Tradition', 105-108.

room for improvement when it comes to the social interaction between Muslim and Christian communities. As Desi from Young Ambassadors for Peace argued:

> *"So now it is better than before, but we need to do more approach like I said before, we need a new strategy to be together, they need to have more interaction, so from more interaction it could minimize the suspicions among them, the revenge, the hate among them."*

In line with the above argument, some youth also argued that many interactions between Christians and Muslims still take place at a formal level and concern relations people have on the market or at college. These youth feel that the relationships between Muslims and Christians can still be improved at an informal, social level. This was also expressed during the following conversations I had with a group of youth from Badati:

Erik: *"Is it normal for young people to interact with each other* [with youth from different religious communities]*?"*

Melinda: *"For me it is no problem. To interact with Muslims. I can go to the Muslim area. It is no problem at all."*

Lela: *"It is so hard. "*

Male youth: *"There are different opinions on this. Sometimes it is difficult."*

Lela: *"Probably at the school and the college it is something normal. But outside of that it is a bit separated."*

While one youth in this group argued that she does not have any problem at all with interacting with youth from a different religious community, two other youth indicated that difficulties sometimes occur. According to one of the girls, this has to do with the observation that youth mostly interact at school and college, but do not become so close to each other that they also want to interact outside of school or college.

A factor that may contribute to the separation of Muslim and Christian youth is the fact that many primary and high schools on Ambon remain divided into Christian and Muslim

schools. Because of this, it is possible that youth only start to interact frequently with people from another religious community once they go to college, where students from different religious communities take classes together.[171] According to some youth, the situation on Ambon can be improved by building mixed schools:

> *"There is no effort* [from the government] *to avoid suspicion between communities, they put no effort to build schools that simply could make all the Muslims and Christian students interact in one school together."*

The idea that common interaction between Muslim and Christian youth is something extraordinary is confirmed by the anecdote that serves as the introduction to this thesis, where Ambon's mixed Reconciliation School is presented as something special.

Another factor that continues to complicate the relations between Muslim and Christian communities is the fact that different religious communities still live separatly to a large extent.[172] Because of this, it is difficult for people to re-establish the neighborly relations they commonly had before the conflict broke out in 1999. In addition, some youth argued that because the communities live separately, it is easier for prejudices and suspicion to flourish.

Besides this, another element that problematizes relations between Muslim and Christian communities is that many Ambonese are traumatized by personal conflict experiences. Therefore Ambonese sometimes still have strong emotions when it comes to relating to people from different religious communities or going to an area with a different religious affiliation. As a student from IAIN explained to me when I asked him under what circumstances he experiences trauma:

> *"When I go out of my house. Especially when I am among mixed people. When I hear rumors, I also get worried about that, because of the trauma. I often have a*

[171] This informant is most probably referring to the mixed Pattimura University. Ambon also has three private universities that are attended by Muslim or Christian students only.

[172] Some groups of Muslims and Christians IDPs have returned to their original neighborhoods that are inhabited by a majority of people from another religious community. However, the return of religious minorities has not taken place in many areas for both social and pragmatic reasons. See: Adam, 'Land Management'.

weird feeling when I go to the border places [between Muslim and Christian neighborhoods, em] *I feel vulnerable to the conflict there. Especially when I go shopping, I meet so many people in town."*

During the interview I had with this Muslim youth, he also told me that he has many Christian friends and has no problem at all interacting with Christians. Furthermore, he said he wanted to have peace on Ambon and hoped that Muslims and Christians will continuously be able to live together peacefully. Still, he fears that rumors are true or that violence breaks out again when he is in a mixed area.

While many youth noted that all areas of Ambon are now safe to go, some told me that they still feel tense when they enter an area that is mainly inhabited by people from another religious community. The tension some people still experience can best be illustrated by an experience I had myself, when a group of youth from Badati and I planned to go camping together for one night at the northern shore of Ambon island. When I spoke with other youth about my camping plans, some of them asked me whether I was afraid to sleep in a Muslim area or whether my parents allowed me to interact with Muslims or sleep in a Muslim area. These remarks suggest that at least some youth are afraid themselves to sleep in certain areas, or that their interaction with youth from another religious community is restricted by their parents. When I spoke to Christian adults about my camping plans, some of them told me to be careful while sleeping in a Muslim area, 'as you never know what might happen'. When I subsequently asked some youth why I received such warnings, they told me that when incidents or conflicts happen, roadblocks are set up which makes it difficult to get back to town. Others told me that people are sometimes afraid that when conflict happens, they accidently end up in a wrong place at the wrong time. As formulated by an NGO employee:

"If you go to another community, you are afraid something will happen. Maybe there is a traffic jam, than the situation can go from zero to one hundred in a minute, it can become something big in a minute. If you go to the wrong place, at a wrong time, you will be a victim of the violence, that makes all of us feel trauma."

Because people are sometimes afraid that something may happen and they get stuck in the situation, they feel more secure in an area that is inhabited by their own religious community.

Besides fearing that they get caught in a conflict situation, some youth also fear that a minority of Ambonese still want to take revenge for sufferings they had to endure during the conflict years. This became especially clear when some youth who had been involved in the fighting told me detailed stories about acts of violence they had committed themselves. When they did this, they would often explicitly ask me not to share these detailed stories with anyone, as these stories may be recognized by friends of families of victims, who then could take revenge for incidents that happened during the conflict. While it is difficult to say whether there are actors on Ambon that still want to take revenge because of what happened in the past, the fear that they might exist is bothering Ambonese youth anyway.

A final factor that complicates relationships between different religious communities is the observation that rumors continue to feed tensions between Muslims and Christians. While it did not really become clear to me how often rumors spread exactly, I know of three relatively recent incidents of violence that were surrounded and amplified by rumors. The first one is the already referred to violence that occurred on September 11, 2011. This outbreak of violence was triggered by an accident during which a Muslim *ojek* (motorcycle taxi driver) died in a Christian neighborhood, which led to rumors about the cause of death of the Muslim driver.[173] When the violence broke out, rumors about the return of the Laskar Jihad and other radical groups flourished.[174] The second one is a small outbreak of violence in Ambon City in December 2011 that was preceded by rumors predicting a bloody Christmas. Most recently, riots occurred on the national holiday Pattimura Day, during which the life of a freedom fighter from Maluku who fought against the Dutch colonizers is remembered. While Pattimura is also officially recognized and lauded as an Indonesian national hero, he has also become a symbol of the FKM separatist movement. On May 15, 2012, the celebration of Pattimura Day led to incidents at the border between Batu Merah and Mardika, when an unidentified group suddenly attacked a

[173] Also see: The Jakarta Globe, *Religious Strife a Daily Reality on Ambon* (Published on October 2, 2012). *and* The Jakarta Globe, *Police Arrest Six Suspects Linked to Last Years SMS Fueled Unrest in Ambon* (Published on May 21, 2012).

[174] The Jakarta Globe, *Ambons Problems Ignored, Report Says* (Published on February 14, 2012).

celebrating group of people participating in the procession.[175] While it is unknown who planned or executed the attack, some of my informants suspected army involvement, as some people thought military grenades were used during the attack, instead of the more common home-made bombs or Molotov cocktails.[176] Although I frequently asked my informants who the people are that get involved in these relatively small-scale fights, most informants stated that they did not have any idea who they were or did not want to share their ideas. Only one informant suggested that the ones who are fighting are probably youth who did not experience the 1999-2002 conflict themselves, and now want to prove their manhood for their community.

Again, the spread of rumors and related outbreaks of violence is in line with the arguments made by anthropologists Stewart and Strathern. In the above rumors, fact and fiction are hard to separate, and a lot of questions are left unanswered about the identity of people who spread rumors, who perpetrate the violence, and the intentions of these actors. As rumors played an important role in triggering, catalyzing and subsequently feeding the tensions and violence on Ambon in the 1999-2002 conflict, it is not surprising that rumors continue to get on people's nerves. Because of this, I argue that youth can contribute to the peacebuilding process on Ambon by looking for ways to break cycles of rumor and suspicion that continue to fuel these small-scale outbreaks of violence.

Although many youth regret that small incidents of violence still happen and many youth praise that when violence breaks out, it remains restricted to small-scale incidents and does not spread to the rest of Ambon or other Maluku Islands. As a student leader from Ambon explained to me:

> *"Take this comparison* [between the current situation and the conflict period on Ambon, em]. *The September 2011 conflict, it did not last more than a day, and it did not spread out. People did not respond to it like they did in the past."*

[175] See: The Jakarta Globe, *Pattimura Day*.

[176] The Jakarta Globe, *From the Heart of Ambon to all of Indonesia, a Message of Peace and a Call for Connection* (Published on May 24, 2012).

A young teacher from IAIN made a similar remark when I asked him about the outbreak of violence in September 2011:

> *"After the last riot* [in September 2011], *because Liang is a Muslim village, and there are Christian villages* [nearby], *many communities are more aware of the conflict. They don't want the conflict any more. The people from* [the Christian village] *Waai came here to consolidate* [the relationship] *between the communities, so that it would not spread to these villages."*

Remarks like these show that although small-scale conflicts still happen, most youth argue that they are confident that the great majority of Ambonese does not want the conflict to return again.

Besides pointing out that incidents of violence do not spread, some youth also stated that the violent incidents happening now have a different character than the large-scale violence that occurred during the 1999-2002 conflict. Different youth would argue that contemporary incidents of violence can be explained by rivalry between specific villages, neighborhoods or groups of youth, not by conflict or rivalry between religious communities.[177] Other young people argued that they are set-up by provocateurs to cause conflict again, while the great majority of Ambonese do not want the conflict to return.

While a majority of youth and adults within Ambonese society explicitly argue that contemporary outbreaks of violence should not be seen as religious violence or part of a religious conflict, the tensions within Ambonese society sometimes continues to be framed religiously. During my stay on Ambon, several informants compared the Ambonese situation to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.[178] Muslim Ambonese compare themselves to Palestinians, as they feel that they as Muslims are oppressed by the Christians. In a similar way, Christian Ambonese argue that they are surrounded by a Muslim majority, as is Israel in the Middle East. The identification of Ambonese Christians with Israel is further enhanced by a

[177] It is well possible that small-scale conflict between youth from different villages and neighborhoods are not necessarily seen to be inherently bad. See: Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 10.

[178] These were mostly people I met informally at restaurants or in the guest house that I was staying in, not the young peacebuilders on which this thesis is focused.

circulating story that forwards the idea that the Christians of Maluku are the lost tribe of Israel.[179]

Because both Muslims and Christians on Ambon identify themselves with the Israel-Palestine conflict, they also use religious symbols that are related to this conflict. Especially Christians use Jewish and Christian religious symbols almost interchangeably, wearing Stars of David around their neck, and decorating public transport vehicles with menorahs. In a Muslim neighborhood where houses were burned in December 2011, I came across graffiti that labeled the neighborhood as being 'Palestine', while at the Muslim university IAIN, a discussion evening was organized on the Israel-Palestine conflict.[180] Besides framing the tensions within Ambonese society in a religious way, a lot of public life in Ambon is also framed religiously. Many Ambonese wear religious symbols openly or use them to decorate vehicles or houses. Some informants told me that even from the slightest difference in dressing manners or language use, it is possible for Ambonese people to determine whether someone is Christian or Muslim.[181] Because of this, people always know almost immediately whether they are in a mixed, majority or minority situation when they participate in public life.[182]

The above observations can be related to the ideas of John Paul Lederach about the moral imagination social actors have. Although the great majority of Ambonese I talked to stress ideas that encompass Muslim and Christian identities, and argue for peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Christians on Ambon, this view on social life continues to be challenged by 'moral imaginations' that stress fault lines between Christian and Muslim communities. This forms another obstacle that young Ambonese peacebuilders have to overcome.

While some informants named problems related to the current situation on Ambon, we have seen that most young people are relatively positive. However, during my fieldwork, I met two informants who were critical about too much optimism about the present situation. One of them is a young peacebuilder Murni, who helps a group of teenage children to deal with

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[179] After a fellow guest of my guest house shared this story with me, I asked some youth what this was about. Most Christian youth told me that they think that this story is unfounded. Nevertheless, they thought that some Christian Ambonese do believe this story.

[180] The poster showed Palestinian boys armed with stones facing Israeli tanks.

[181] I thank dr. Iis Istiqomah for the stories she shared with me on this subject.

[182] For images of such references to the Israel-Palestine conflict, see images in appendix 1.

traumatic experiences they had during and after the conflict.[183] When I asked her how Muslims and Christians relate to each other presently, she gave me the following answer:

> *"It is like, we have a mask. Some people always take a mask and they always say you are my brother, we are sisters, we are grew up* [as part of the same] *people, we are brothers.* [...] *But when we are back in our own community, we still have negative thinking about each other."*

Mohammed, a young peacebuilder from Badati was also critical about the optimism of many Ambonese about the current situation:

> *"Also a root of the problem is denial. Many Maluku people they have denial behavior for what happened here. We often say we have a good relationship, we have Gandong, we have Pela, we are brother and sister, our relation is really tight.* [But] *there is some kind of, we call it day and night interaction. In the day time, they* [Muslims and Christians, em] *meet and the interaction is public, they speak like brothers and sisters. But later in their community, they speak in the language of their own community.* [...] *when we are back in our home, there is some kind of feeling like* [being] *suspicious. So the problem is how to make people interact in the daytime, and also in the night. In the same way they interact* [within their own community, em]."

Mohammed also thinks that by being too positive about relations between Muslims and Christians, Ambonese deny their own share of involvement in the conflict. Later during the same interview, Mohammed elaborated more on this:

> *"The first thing that people have to do is to admit there is a problem. You have to admit that there is some kind of relation that is broken,* [...] *to make this relation*

[183] I do not have detailed information about the nature of the trauma of these children. But earlier in this thesis, we have seen that many youth mention that they still experience sadness and fear for what happened on Ambon, and many of them also had distressing experiences during the conflict years.

[of our original culture] *work again. To always say that the problem is brought by the foreigners* [non-Ambonese]*, it is not fair and it is also stupid, because you always put someone else like a black sheep.* [People say] *there is some kind of conspiracy. It is the politicians, the military groups, that want to make Maluku not safe, or make us stupid, something like that. Even if they* [politicians or the military, em] *have a scenario* [set-up or conspiracy, em] *to make this problem, if we have a strong capacity in our culture to overcome the bad scenario from politicians, the right thing will happen."*

From this comment it becomes clear that Mohammed also criticizes that some Ambonese only blame outside parties for the violence on Ambon, as it draws attention away from restoring social relations between Muslims and Christians. Therefore, it is hard to look for ways in which the relations between Muslims and Christians can be improved. Besides this, the remarks of Mohammed and Murni suggest that at least some Ambonese know that people are often not always as positive about current conditions as they openly share. This can raise suspicion, as people may know others are not openly sharing their feelings, while they do not know what their actual feelings are.

Despite these disadvantages, I would argue that there are obvious reasons why many Ambonese choose not to share their fears, anger or suspicions about others too openly. First of all, openly sharing fears or suspicions may be interpreted as an insult or an unfounded lack of trust. Besides this, accusing someone based on suspicions may provoke discussions about who is to blame for past or present wrongs. In this way, a combination of accusations, suspicions and fears can function like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Initial fears and suspicions can lead to accusations, which in turn can be interpreted as an act of provocation and may cause anger among the accused. This anger among the accused can in turn confirm initial suspicions and fear, which altogether leads to a heightening of tensions. Not sharing fears, anger or suspicions too openly can therefore mean maintaining a safe distance from such social processes. At the same time, there also are reasons why Ambonese describe the current relationships between Muslims and Christians as good and familial. Not only does such a reification of current

relationships maintain a safe distance from any cycles of accusation or suspicion, they also are in line with the commonly mentioned ideals of Pela and Gandong.

In this section, we have seen that the conditions on Ambon have improved considerably since 2002. Not only have large-scale outbreaks of violence stopped, different areas on the island have become increasingly accessible for members of both religious communities. Several informants also point out customs confirming and strengthening good relationships between Muslims and Christians have been re-established, and that Muslim and Christian communities increasingly interact with each other. Youth consider that this positive change is mainly because people were tired and bored of the conflict, and therefore took effort to refrain from fighting, and improve their lives and relations to others. These views are at odds with many more traditional peacebuilding theories, which tend to focus on the role of macro-actors such as governments, religious and cultural leaders and NGOs. Ambonese youth show that although macro-actors and more 'official' peacebuilding efforts can indeed contribute to a more peaceful situation, the efforts of common people are essential to improve social relations exactly where they have been damaged, that is at the grassroots level.

All the above views of youth about the current situation give us important background information about the activities of youth peacebuilding groups like Badati, as youth base their activities on their assessment of the present conditions on Ambon. We have seen that many youth are positive about the current situation, and base their optimism on the improvement of social relations between Muslim and Christian communities at the grassroots level. Furthermore, when youth talk about downsides to the current situation, they also point at factors that concern grassroots relations between Muslim and Christian communities. Youth remarks suggest that suspicion, fear and trauma continue to exist. Moreover, there are several small-scale incidents of violence which were accompanied by cycles of rumors, fear and suspicion. Therefore, young peacebuilders face the challenge of breaking these cycles and forwarding new ways to envision themselves and their relation to others. In the next section, we will see how one of the recent violent incidents, the September 2011 violence, has motivated a group of youth in trying to organize their own peacebuilding activities.

§4.3 'We are not healed yet' – the September 2011 Violence

On the 10th of September 2011, a Muslim *ojek* (motorcycle taxi driver) died in a Christian neighborhood. According to the official police report, the Muslim driver drove too fast, and was severely injured when he slammed into a wall. Although Christian inhabitants of the neighborhood rushed him to the hospital, the Muslim taxi driver did not make it to the hospital alive. Soon after the incident happened, rumors were spread via text messages that the Muslim *ojek* had not died because of a traffic accident, but because he was killed by inhabitants from the Christian neighborhood. During the funeral of the Muslim *ojek* on September 11, heightened tensions led to violence between groups of Muslim and Christian youth. Police and army response was slow, and the violence continued for several hours until nighttime.[184] When calm returned to the city again, authorities officially confirmed eight deaths, the burning of several hundred houses and damage to a few notable buildings such as the head office of the Christian university UKIM.

During my stay on Ambon, people forwarded many different versions about the triggering incident. Several informants mentioned different details and arguments to support the different claims that they tried to make with the story.[185] For example some youth tended to believe that the motorcycle taxi driver was indeed murdered, because they heard that people had seen wounds on the deceased Muslim that must have been caused by knife-cuts. While the existence of these knife cuts is also contested, one youth said that one of his relatives saw the wounds himself. While the youth who believed in the wounds usually thought that the Muslim *ojek* was murdered, they often did not forward any ideas about the identity of the killers. Other youth who thought that the Muslim's death was an accident usually did not mention any wounds, or suggested that the wounds were inflicted post-mortem, so that the death of the Muslim could be used for provoking Muslims. A youth also said that the death of the Muslim was not brought about by the Christians living in the neighborhood, but was caused by provocateurs. He was convinced of this, as the Christian inhabitants of the neighborhood had proven their goodwill by rushing the injured Muslim to the hospital. Another youth suggested that the police was somehow involved in using the death of the Muslim as an act of

[184] The Media Project, *Religious Cooperation Pacifies Ambon* (Published on September 26, 2011).
[185] Buckley-Zistel, 'Pretending Peace,' 128.

provocation, as this youth complained that the police never published the results of an investigation they did about the causes of death of the Muslim taxi driver. This version of the story is confirmed by another youth, who said that the police did not take proper measures to protect the funeral of the Muslim *ojek* on September 11.

What happened exactly on the 10th of September remains unknown to this day. What we do know is that the incident, the uncertainty and the rumors that surrounded it were powerful enough to lead to another outbreak of violence. In many ways, the September 2011 violence provide another classic example of how rumors, in combination with a lack of clarity and suspicion, can fuel outbreaks of violence. As is argued by Stewart and Strathern, rumors circulate around events that are both important and also unclear, and the death or even murder of a community member can be considered such an event. The rumors that subsequently arise reflect patterns of suspicion, fear and competition that are already present in Ambonese society. This can be illustrated by the following remark of Badati peacebuilder Sammy:

> *"This issue* [rumor, em] *spreads around. It was never clarified by the police, not until now. Even now people are looking for the real killer. There is no real explanation* [for what happened to the Muslim *ojek*]. *Who killed this person, or was it just an accident? From this people develop many suspicions. Actually, it is collective suspicion. So the suspicion is not directly allocated to one person, but to all of the community."*

The rumors about the death of the Muslim *ojek* not only reflect patterns of fear, suspicion and resentment between Muslim and Christian communities, but also the ambiguous relation Ambonese have with local and national governments.

Besides this, there are hints that the rumors which triggered the September 2011 violence are also connected to fears and tensions relating to moving around in areas that belong to another religious group or going to public areas that are visited by both Christians and Muslims. When I was reflecting on the stories surrounding the September 2011 violence, it struck me that that the incidents that triggered the September 2011 violence and the 1999-2002 conflict

are both related to traffic and public transport. Besides this, there are more examples in which traffic is related to tensions and violence within Ambonese society. For example, I also heard from an inhabitant of the Muslim village Liang that there used to be conflicts between inhabitants of the Christian village Waai and Muslim public transport drivers who have to pass by Waai on their way to Liang. In the previous section, we have also seen that a NGO-employee feared that traffic jams can make people angry easily.

While there are also tensions, rumors and incidents that do not relate to traffic or public transport, there may be reasons why especially rumors relating to mobility get on people's nerves. In section 4.2, we have already seen that some youth have shared with me that they are nervous when they enter neighborhoods or areas with a different religious affiliation than their own. Other youth told me that they feel tense when they are in mixed areas, such as markets or mixed educational institutions. When people travel with public transport, these different tense situations occur simultaneously, as people from different religious affiliations can share the same *angkot* (public transport minibus), while they also travel through different religious areas. What further complicates travelling is that participating in Ambon's busy and hectic traffic itself is a risky business, as traffic accidents are common, and some youth also organize dangerous motorcycle races on public roads at nighttime.[186] The dangers and tensions on public roads are easily framed in religious terms because *angkot* and *ojek* drivers often decorate their vehicles with religious symbols.[187]

The tensions and violence on Ambon are also related to mobility because violence often directly affects the possibilities of Ambonese to travel to certain parts of the island safely. We have already seen that during the 1999-2002 conflict, roadblocks were set-up to protect neighborhoods from outside attacks. Another way in which conflict and tensions influence mobility is because public transport vehicles often temporarily alter their routes when tensions or conflicts happen. During my stay on Ambon, some of *angkot* routes were still different from

[186] One informant told me that it are mainly youth who were involved in the fighting during the 1999-2002 conflict that participate in these motorcycle races, as they do not have any career possibilities and want to entertain themselves.

[187] The frequent use of religious symbols suggests that participating in traffic is also a way for people to assert one's religious community and identity in public space, which can irritate others in cases of reckless driving or accidents. However, this argument should be confirmed by further research.

normal because of the September 2011 violence.[188] Some youth argued that the routes should be changed back to normal to confirm that tensions were eased again. We have also seen that a Christian youth told me that she is afraid to go too far into Muslim area, as she fears not being able to reach home because of roadblocks when violence erupts unexpectedly. I argue that relations between violence and mobility probably work both ways. Increased tensions or violence cause restricted mobility, while traffic accidents can raise tensions and trigger outbreaks of violence.

Besides reflecting tensions within Ambonese society on different levels, the rumors and stories surrounding the incident of the Muslim *ojek* can also be seen as a way to give meaning to the violence that followed it. The stories that refer to set-ups or 'provocateurs' provide explanations as to why the violence broke out. Furthermore, when youth refer to 'provocateurs', they can maintain the view that common people 'don't want the conflict to happen again'. Versions of the stories about the incident that argue that the Muslim *ojek* was murdered can excuse or even justify the involvement of Muslims in the September 2011 violence. As one informant explained, when a Muslim is murdered by Christians, it 'raises communal solidarity among the Muslims'. In this way, this youth also implicitly acknowledges that it also raises animosity towards Christians.

Maybe most importantly, rumors can to a great degree contribute to the conditions that make outbreaks of violence more likely. That this was the case during the September 2011 violence also becomes clear from a remark from peacebuilder Murni:

> *"In September 10, we had a meeting of our forum. After I returned to the house, the day before* [the violence, em] *I got a SMS about the tragedy. Before the riot, the rumor was already spread* [about the Muslim *ojek* being killed, em]. *Because of the SMS, most of them* [the youth at the forum] *wanted to stay at home, at least those who are living near the border between Christian and Muslim areas."*

[188] Besides this, one youth also told me through Facebook that *angkot* drivers refused to enter the Batu Merah neighborhood when small-scale violence broke out in May 2012.

In this quote, we see that the mere spread of rumors already got on people's nerves. It is well possible that rumors about the possibility of an attack encouraged some to arm themselves and prepare for an attack. A day later, people's fear proved to be a reality when tensions led to fights between groups of Muslim and Christian youngsters.

The response of many of my informants when I asked them about the September 2011 violence was twofold. First of all, many young people tried to strip circulating stories about the September 2011 violence of non-clarified rumors and details that could further raise tensions in Ambon. A student from IAIN explained why many young people were careful when sharing stories about the September 2011 violence. When I asked him whether he thought that the death of the Muslim *ojek* was caused by an accident or murder, this student gave me the following answer:

> *"I am doubtful, I am careful about these issues because I don't want conflict anymore. So I am careful with information about that. But I heard from relatives of the* ojek *that he did not die because of an accident, because there was found in the corpse the remains of violence, he was wounded by something sharp."*

Many other youth would give even more 'neutral' versions of the incident, or would cite different versions of the story without taking position themselves. From answers like this, it becomes clear that many informants were well aware of the potentially disruptive power of words.

Second, informants sometimes explicitly challenged versions of the story that could lead to further tensions between Muslims and Christians, for example the image of the new outbreak of violence as 'the return of a religious war on Ambon'. Ambonese youth told me that during and after the violence, some local and national media quickly concluded that the religious conflict had returned again. The view that was presented by national and international media is challenged by many of the youth I spoke to. Some informants argued that Indonesian national television was also reporting church and mosque burnings, although they did not even take place. Another informant, a student from IAIN, told me the following when I shared a meal with him in Ambon's city center:

"You know, the riots in September, they were here. They were in this place. Here you see the mosque, while over there is the church. This is the separation between Christian and Muslim areas. But the riots were not about religion. That's just what people say in the media. You see the mosque over there, if the riots were about religion, they would have burned it down. And it was confined to this place, it did not spread to other parts of town. So it was a neighborhood fight."

Others would for example say that the violence was not a return of the religious conflict, but could better be seen as riots between groups of rivaling youth, something that happens more often on Ambon and Maluku.

Some youth also tried their best to downplay the scale and impact of the violence in September 2011. Many young people cited that the riots were only small-scale and did not spread, while others told me that the September 2011 violence was only a minor incident and that the situation had quickly returned to normal again. Besides, during the group discussion at the Reconciliation School, one girl mentioned that the September 2011 violence could be considered something positive, as it proves that Ambonese people were getting smarter, as they were not lured into starting a full-on war this time. While it is possible that the September 2011 violence had only limited impact on the lives of some Ambonese, it is difficult to believe that the September 2011 violence was just a minor incident to others. Some informants for example noted that posts where armed men gather to protect their neighborhoods against possible attacks were set-up at the borders between Muslim and Christian neighborhoods again. In some cases, these posts stayed in place for at least two weeks. Another student told me he was not able to go to school for two months because of security measures. Furthermore, many residents of the houses that were burned during the violence still lived in IDP camps with very limited resources only when I visited Ambon, almost five months after the violence took place.

While many informants explicitly challenged the idea that the September 2011 violence marks a 'the return of the religious conflict', it is noteworthy that the fear for religious groups hating each other or are under the influence of violent religious imaginary does underpin the

rumor that triggered the September 2011 violence. Tensions on Ambon rose because it was rumored and feared that the Muslim *ojek* was killed just because he was a Muslim. The September 2011 violence was subsequently accompanied by a rumor about the return of the Laskar Jihad, who are known for their polemic anti-Christian thoughts. While these rumors do not prove that violent religious imaginary is indeed still present, I argue that for many Ambonese, the presence or return of religious hatred or violent religious imaginary still is a plausible scenario raising tension between Muslims and Christians by itself.

Besides this, it is notable that the situation on Ambon is still occasionally framed in terms that emphasize fault lines between Muslims and Christians. In the previous section, we have already seen that the violence on Ambon is often compared to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Besides this, the September 2011 violence is often referred to as 'September 11' [*Sebelas September*], linking it to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001. While many informants argued that the fact that the September 2011 violence erupted on September 11 was pure coincidence, one informant told me that after the September 2011 violence, Ambon now has 'its own 9/11'. In chapter three I have discussed that the Laskar Jihad, the FKM and other radical groups forwarded the idea that the 1999-2002 conflict was part of a global battle between Islam and Christianity. In an article on online radicalism, Birgit Bräuchler also shows how the Laskar Jihad interpreted the Ambonese conflict as the result of a conspiracy of the USA, Israel and Christianity against Islam.[189] While the youth I talked to never explicitly expressed such ideas, linking the September 2011 violence to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA may implicitly connect the September 2011 violence to the radical discourses that were used during the 1999-2002 conflict. Because many Ambonese want to counter these radical discourses, it makes sense that many of them argue that the September 2011 violence did not mark a return of a religious conflict, but should be interpreted as an incident that is related to different tensions. This again confirms Lederach's argument that the way people imagine themselves, their relations to others, and the way they interpret events is crucially important in conflict realities and the opportunities people have to build peace.

[189] Bräuchler, 'Islamic Radicalism Online', 275.

Although many youth thought that the September 2011 violence was exaggerated by both the media and in the rumors that were being spread, they still took the outbreak of violence seriously. To many young people, the violence in September 2011 came as an unpleasant surprise that uncovered suspicion and trauma that continues to be present in Ambonese communities. As commented by young peacebuilder Adhi:

> *"The September 11 event was a warning to the Ambonese people. But before September 11, although we have mingled like normal, there is still suspicion that is kept. September 11 really opens all of that."*

Something similar was said by young peacebuilder Mohammed:

> *"The problem to heal what it is inside is the most important thing right now. If you kill the wound, you can sweep the suspicion.* [...] [You should] *take it* [the September 2011 violence, em] *as a lesson, and then promise to yourself that you will not make the same fault again. What happened right now, in the September 11 conflict,* [means that we should] *recognize, we have to understand we still have the wound within ourselves.* [...] *We have to heal the wound right now, it is something we have to do once again."*

From the quotes of both Adhi and Mohammed, it becomes clear that according to them, the September 2011 violence made them realize that suspicion and trauma continue to play an important role in the interaction between Muslim and Christian communities on Ambon.

Because many young peacebuilders realized that continuing suspicion and trauma could lead to further violence, they were motivated to do something to improve the situation on Ambon. As becomes clear from a comment from Adhi:

> *"I saw the news in the TV* [that presented the September 2011 violence as a religious war] *I saw so many repeating of the pictures. I really became angry. And at the time I am with* [Muslim friends, em] *Iman, Mohammed and Elang. We tried*

to make a statement from the Muslim side that the riots are not really wanted by many of the Ambonese. And by that night, we suddenly realized that our community friends from the Christians have the same thoughts, so we can be, so we together can work together to save Ambon."

Many other youth besides Adhi also shared that they felt the need to do something to ease tensions and improve the situation. Therefore they decided to get in touch with a group of friends they knew from activities within Ambon's youth community groups. On the 12th of September, the day after the September 2011 violence broke out, the group came together with a local religious leader, reverend Jacky Manuputty, in a restaurant in the City Center of Ambon to see what could be done to ease tensions and improve the situation on Ambon.

During a group conversation with Badati members James and Adhi, they told me how many of the youth community groups initially aimed at making Ambon a better and more interesting place by enriching it with cultural activities. At the same time, the youth wanted to show to the Ambonese society and local governments that youth are capable of creating something useful and can contribute to Ambonese society as a whole. According to several members of Badati, the events of September 2011 gave a new focus and direction to the activities of their group of friends and the youth communities they are participating in, as they realized that peacebuilding activities were still necessary to prevent further violence. Besides adding a new focus to existing youth communities, the September 2011 violence also motivated youth to start an entirely new youth community that concentrates on peacebuilding only, called Badati. We will take a look at the activities of Badati in the final section of this chapter, but before that, we will focus on the ideas of young peacebuilders on peace and peacebuilding itself in the next section.

§4.4 'Peace Belongs to the People'

In this section, I will elaborate on youth's ideas about how the situation on Ambon can be improved and peace be established. I will compare these ideas with those that are forwarded in contemporary peacebuilding theories. We will see that when comparing youth's views on peacebuilding to many academic theories on peacebuilding, scholarly approaches are much

more focused on large scale actors and macro processes such as law enforcement, truth-finding and establishing justice. While a few informants also mentioned the importance of law enforcement or truth-finding as conditions for building peace on Ambon, most of my informants envision peacebuilding to be something that has to take place at the grassroots level. In the next section, I will move on to the more practical side of the ideals and ideas that are formulated by youth, and show what pragmatic ways youth have found to work on their ideals.

During my interviews with Ambonese youth, I often explicitly asked them what they consider to be peace or how they would describe a peaceful society. Most youth gave answers that relate directly to the social relations that people have at the grassroots level of society, which focused on three aspects. Many youth mentioned that a peaceful Ambonese society would be characterized by (1) an absence of suspicion and fear among both Muslim and Christian communities, and (2) by the possibility of Muslims and Christians to live together in one neighborhood or village, so that they can build up neighborly social relationships with one another. This was also explained by young peacebuilder Desi:

> *"Peace means that people have to connect to each other. People* [...] *should have a place, to meet each other, to talk to each other, to share thoughts. And sometimes by talking, by sharing, by communicate with each other, they will understand the real character of others."*

Many youth also referred to (3) the ideals of Pela and Gandong, and described a peaceful society as a situation in which Muslims and Christians celebrate their religious holidays together, and help each other with building or repairing churches and mosques.

When I asked young people whether they considered the current situation on Ambon to be peaceful already, many answered that the current situation does not meet their peace ideals yet, as fear and suspicion continue to exist between Muslim and Christian communities. This also shows from a conversation I had with one of the members from Badati:

Erik: *"Maybe you can explain to me, if Ambon was completely peaceful, what would it look like in your opinion?"*

Lela: *"Personally I think that, Ambon is really peaceful if there is no suspicion to another religion. They can do their normal activities, like they had in other cities."*

Erik: *"Do you think the situation is already like that?"*

Lela: *"It is like 75%, we are getting closer to the situation like that.* [...] *There is still suspicion and there is still a trauma.* [...] *When a Muslim enters a Christian area, the Muslim is not feeling really safe. They think that they can probably be killed, or suddenly there are riots and they get trapped in the area."*

Despite most youth thought that their ideals have not been reached yet, we have seen in the previous chapter that many youth still are relatively positive about the current situation on Ambon because it already improved significantly.

When I asked youth about how a more peaceful situation on Ambon could be achieved, they mostly cited two different trajectories. First of all, many youth pointed out that all common Ambonese have a role to play when it comes to building peace. As explained by a student leader from Maluku:

> *"If you talk about maintaining peace in Maluku, it must come from local Maluku people first. Especially between Muslims and Christians. And we have to work together with a strong hand. To meet and know that this is not a religious conflict."*

Furthermore, Melinda from Badati argues that everyone and especially youth have a role to play when it comes to building peace on Maluku:

> *"It should be improved by all people, especially the young people. They have to work with each other, they have to come to their surroundings, their*

neighborhood, they have to make a dialogue, and tell the people that conflict just brings us harm, it brings bad luck. The government needs to put more attention for people to express themselves. It should be done and it should be done by the young people to speak louder about peace."

The youth that I spoke at the Reconciliation School also thought that the solution to Ambon's problems lie to a great extent in the choices that average Ambonese make on a daily basis. As a girl commented during the group discussion that I had at the Reconciliation School:

"What we should do is like we are doing [at the Reconciliation School, em]*, we are friends, we are already told to think positively* [about people from different religious communities, em]."

The idea that peacebuilding should be initiated at the grassroots is also forwarded by peacebuilder and religious leader reverend Jacky Manuputty. When I asked him what should be done to achieve a more peaceful situation, he gave the following answer:

"Of course, the answer comes from different levels. It is a responsibility of all of us. The government has a responsibility, the church has a responsibility. For me myself what I have been doing, I say let the peace come from the community down there. They have to. [...] *If there is an opportunity; let them express what they feel about peace. Give them an opportunity to participate in peace activities. It cannot come from top down. It cannot be adopted from another region. Peace belongs to the people."*

From all these comments, we learn that many of Ambon's peacebuilders think that establishing a more peaceful situation of Ambon can be achieved when common Ambonese make effort to improve social situations between Muslim and Christian communities themselves.

Besides pointing to the role that all common Ambonese have to play in the peacebuilding process, many youth argued that relations between Christian and Muslim communities can be

improved by re-establishing Pela and Gandong bonds that Ambonese people share with each other. One youth for example argued that Ambonese village heads, called *raja* or kings, have an important role to play when it comes to building peace, as they have an important influence on people at the grassroots level of Ambonese society.[190] Some informants for example talked about ceremonies or events where *raja* from several villages come together to strengthen and confirm Pela and Gandong ties between Muslim and Christian communities. But according to many Ambonese youth, Pela and Gandong is not something that is established by cultural leaders only. The remarks by young peacebuilders frequently showed that common Ambonese and youth also have a role to play when it comes to maintaining Pela and Gandong bonds. In the words of Desi from Young Ambassadors for Peace:

> *"All of us, me and my friends try to do peace provocation. By sending a message to clarify the issue* [rumors, em]. *We try to inspire people about our situation, about Pela and Gandong."*

In this quote, Desi shows that according to her, Pela and Gandong is not only established by cultural leaders such as *raja,* but can also be promoted and encouraged by common people and youth.

While many young people argued that re-establishing traditional Pela and Gandong can provide Muslims and Christians with an overarching Maluku identity, some also pointed to some downsides to focusing on Pela and Gandong relations. Badati peacebuilder Mohammed for example argued that new Pela-alliances between villages are only very rarely established. Because of this, some conflicts between villages tend to endure, which could trigger larger outbreaks of violence in the future. Moreover, several informants mentioned that it is difficult for immigrants to align themselves with a Maluku identity.[191] According to some young people, solutions for these problems can be found by being creative and flexible when it comes to Pela and Gandong alliances. Mohammed for example mentioned that some groups of Sulawesi

[190] Also see: Birgit Bräuchler, 'Kings on Stage: Local Leadership in Post-Suharto Moluccas', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 39 (2011) 196-218.
[191] Adam, 'Land Management', 148.

immigrants in Batu Merah have been included in Gandong alliances. In this way, these immigrant communities are given a place in Ambon's local customs and traditions. Mohammed also argued that new Pela alliances should be established between villages if necessary.

Furthermore, it is interesting to notice that youth do not consider all facets of social life to be equally suitable to unite Christians and Muslims. Several young people argued that focusing on religious dialogue as a way to bring Muslims and Christians together does not really contribute to solving the problems. This is because many of them feel that the 1999-2002 conflict was not a conflict that was caused by differing religious views. Badati member Adhi forwarded:

> *"The peacebuilding in Ambon didn't start by* [people having a] *religious discussion.* [Having a] *religious discussion to me is not the way to solve it.* [...] *If you are to talk about religious views, the questions would only go back to the 1999 event and they will ask who started it, how many victims were there and other questions."*

According to Adhi, starting a religious discussion to solve tensions is not the way forward, as this reconfirms the importance of religious fault lines between people. Nevertheless, some youth argued that familiarity with each other's religious practice and rituals can help reduce suspicion between religious communities, as it is sometimes feared that animosity is encouraged or attacks are planned within houses of worship. This is exemplified by a rumor that was spread a few days after the September 2011 violence, when the rumor was spread that the Laskar Jihad had returned to Ambon and were gathering in Al Fatah mosque, one of Ambon's main mosques. Some informants also argued that familiarity with each other's religious views, practices and rituals may reduce the suspicion among Muslim and Christian communities.

In chapter one, I have argued that many contemporary peacebuilding theories focus on the roles macro-actor such as governments and NGOs can play in peace processes, and on establishing law enforcement, truth-accounts and justice. In this section, we have seen that young people often emphasize the roles that common Ambonese and especially youth have to play themselves, and have less attention for the roles that large scale actors such governments

or NGOs can play. Besides this, youth only rarely argue that truth-accounts should be established to support the peace process on Ambon. Instead, most young peacebuilders focus on improving social relationships between Muslims and Christians at the grassroots level.

However, the focus of youth on social relationships at the grassroots level does not mean that youth consider government initiatives at peacebuilding to be completely undesirable. When I asked youth about how a more peaceful situation on Ambon could be established, they frequently complained that efforts by both local and national governments to contribute to the peacebuilding process have often been very limited. One frequently heard complaint was about the government not undertaking any effort to restore relations between Muslim and Christian communities after the September 2011 violence broke out, but only contributed to financially compensating victims for broken possessions and burned houses. Furthermore, the earlier quoted remark by Melinda shows that she feels that youth's peacebuilding initiatives could be supported by the government. Remarks like this show that young people feel that the government has a role to play indeed. However, it is doubtful whether government initiatives can provide a solution to Ambon's problems. We have already seen that many Ambonese youth were critical about government-led peacebuilding initiatives such as the negotiations surrounding the Malino II accord. Besides, many youth believe that the government was involved in constructing both the 1999-2002 conflict and later outbreaks of violence such as the September 2011 violence. While the absence of government led peacebuilding initiatives may confirm this suspicion, it is questionable whether all Ambonese would put their trust into government led initiatives if they were there. This may explain why youth more often focus on the idea that peace needs to be brought about by Ambonese people themselves.

When analyzing the views youth have on peace and peacebuilding, some challenges to their work also become visible. First of all, youth face the task of improving the social relationships between Muslims and Christians, while they also need to avoid re-opening or stimulating debates that may raise tensions between different religious communities. Secondly, youth have to be careful when giving meaning and substance to the relations that they try to establish between Muslim and Christian communities. When youth use religious discourses, this may re-open debates surrounding earlier wrong-doings and violence. When focusing too much on cultural discourses such as those surrounding Pela and Gandong, youth need to be

careful not to exclude people who are not originally Ambonese, such as immigrants from Java or Sulawesi. Thirdly, we have seen that at least some Ambonese distrust governmental and religious initiatives at peacebuilding. Therefore, it is important for groups like Badati to not give the impression that they take sides, have a hidden agenda, or in any other way raise suspicion among the people they are working with.

§4.5 Lessons from Ambon's Young Peacebuilders

The previous section showed that young peacebuilders have some challenges to tackle when it comes to building peace between Christian and Muslim communities. In this section, I will focus on the peacebuilding activities that have been set up by Badati and other young peacebuilder groups that I have visited. Throughout, we will see that Ambon's young peacebuilders have found creative solutions for the challenges they have to meet. I have summarized these solutions by pointing to four interrelated ways in which youth on Ambon try to build peace within their communities. In the rest of this section, I will discuss these four ways in the following subsections: (1) Get in touch with each other, (2) 'Provoking Peace', (3) Show you care, and (4) Use your imagination.

Get in Touch with Each Other

When Badati was set-up during the September 2011 violence, one of the first activities that youth organized involved the use of direct personal contact as a way to build trust between Muslims and Christians. One way in which youth tried to achieve this was by getting in touch with the security posts that were set up by both Muslims and Christians to defend their neighborhoods against possible attacks. The young people from Badati collected money to buy some coffee, sugar and bread, and handed these out among the people that were guarding their neighborhoods. While doing this, they took the time to talk about peacebuilding and how Ambon could remain safe. In this way, the youth from Badati hoped that they would be able to calm down the situation and contribute to peaceful solutions to the tense situation that had arisen.

In the previous section, we have seen that when posts were set up again during and in the aftermath of the September 2011 violence, this provided a tense situation that could easily get out of hand again. As was explained by Badati member Sammy:

Sammy: *"Another rumor is that the Laskar jihad had already gathered in Kebun Cengkeh. And they called Adhi to check it, and it turns out that it is not true, even though it already spread out widely in the Christian community. If the rumors had not been clarified, it would have triggered many preparations by the Christians."*

Erik: *"What do you mean by that, by preparations?"*

Sammy: *"Because the Laskar Jihad are identified with war. So the Christians must prepare everything to confront the Laskar Jihad. They must start to guard the borders* [of Christian neighborhoods, em]. *And if people go to the border while preparing to go to battle, it would be very easy to make war."*

Because of such remarks, I argue that it is plausible that because all communities were preparing for possible attacks and people were getting nervous, the actual chances of an outbreak of violence increased.

While the youth from Badati were visiting the security post, they had the opportunity to hear stories and opinions from community members about what was going on. Several Badati members told me that during their visits to the security posts, the people at the post told them that they did not want any further violence to take place. This also becomes clear from a conversation I had with Badati member Peter:

Erik: *"So what kind of opinions did people have?"*

Peter: *"Actually they didn't want to be in riots. But the situation is kind of forcing them to be in riots."*

Erik: *"When you talked to the people, what were the things that you were trying to tell them?"*

Peter: *"Don't get really easily get triggered by the issue* [the rumors, em], *guard the security in your own area, that's all."*

Hearing stories like this directly from the people at the security posts gave youth the possibility to inform people at other posts that the setting up of posts was not done with the intention of planning or preparing an attack on another community, but to guard their own neighborhood. In this way, the Badati members tried to diminish suspicion and build trust between the different security posts. Furthermore, youth from Badati tried to show that Christian and Muslim youth both care for the safety and security of all Ambonese neighborhoods. By supporting all the security posts equally, they showed that they appreciate the effort and care of all Ambonese who want to guard the safety of Ambon. Exactly because Badati is an informal youth organization that does not align itself with any formal structures or a specific religious community, it was possible for Badati to operate without raising the suspicion that they have a hidden agenda.

While the activities of Badati aimed at promoting peace among Ambonese communities, the visits to the different security posts also had an impact on the mixed group of youngsters from Badati themselves. This also becomes clear from the remarks by Muslim Badati member Lela:

> *"When I was giving the coffee in the Christian area, I felt that my trust for the Christians started to grow. Because they welcomed me as a Muslim. So my fear when I entered the Christian area was starting to vanish."*

Lela's remark shows that the activities youth organize also have a positive impact on themselves and their direct personal environment.

Another straightforward way in which youth from Badati improve social relations between Muslims and Christians is by working together as a mixed group of friends. As we have seen, Badati was set-up by a mixed group of youth that already knew each other from activities within different youth communities. As commented on by Badati member Sammy:

"To me, [...] *the most promising approach* [to open up the closed Muslim and Christian societies, em] *would be friendship."*

While many of these other youth community groups in which Badati members are involved do not concentrate on peacebuilding, many youth have argued that these groups also contribute to the peacebuilding process on Ambon, as they facilitate amicable relations between Muslim and Christian youth.

In this subsection we have seen how youth from Badati use direct interpersonal contact to improve relations between Muslim and Christian communities. Through direct personal contact, youth hope to facilitate friendship and reduce tensions and suspicion between Muslim and Christian communities. In this way, the Badati members themselves can form a powerful counterexample against feared stereotypes and scenario's. Furthermore, as Badati is an informal youth organization without affiliation to any formal actors or structures, they were able to operate in tense situations without raising suspicion.

'Provoking Peace'

A factor that continues to challenge Ambon's fragile peace is the occasional spread of rumors that surround incidents or significant dates that are related to important events in Ambonese history. As we have seen in the third section of this chapter, the spread of false rumors and exaggerated responses during the September 2011 outbreak of violence provided direct motivation to several youth to take effort to reduce tensions and calm down the situation. Soon after the September 2011 violence started, some of the youth that were involved in the first Badati activities also decided to start the so-called 'Filter Information Team' (FIT) on Facebook. Whenever text-messages, the media or mouth-to-mouth stories reported incidents or rumors that may raise tensions, suspicion or fears among communities, the youth in the Filter Information Team would get in touch with one another through Facebook and SMS, and try to determine which FIT-member was close to the place where the rumored incident or event is supposed to take place. This FIT-member would subsequently go to the actual place where they would check whether the rumor or news that is going around is actually true. As was explained by Badati and FIT-member Adhi:

"Like in the 1999-2002 conflict, what triggers the communities is false information. For example [...] *while nothing happened actually, there is a rumor that a Muslim village is under attack* [...]. *From that experience we started to clarify the rumors that circle around. Our approach is very simple. We noted or asked our friends in the border area to join together and share phone numbers, and contact each other if we heard the rumors* [...]. *For example, if* [there is a rumor] *that a person from Batu Merah has been beat up in Belakan Soya, a member in Batu Merah will contact us, make sure if the rumor is true or not. From all the rumors that we heard, actually, most of them are not true."*

After checking whether a rumor was true or not, other FIT-members would successively be notified of the outcome of the investigations through Facebook, and would use their social media networks in Facebook, Twitter, SMS and real-life social environment to spread their message. During my conversation with Adhi, he also showed me the Facebook page on which FIT-members communicated with each other. The Facebook page showed several instances in which the example that was given by Adhi was put in practice. In this way, the FIT has managed to falsify several rumors that were spread during and in the aftermath of the September 2011 violence.

It can be argued that the efforts of the FIT are limited, because the youth who are active in the FIT only use their personal social networks, which makes it difficult to spread their message beyond the personal social environment of youth themselves.[192] Besides this, informal organizations like Badati and the FIT have no official or authorative status, which makes it difficult for its members to make an impact beyond their direct personal social networks. Both of these critiques make sense. However, rumors also do not have any official status or direct impact on all of Ambonese society simultaneously. Also, more official messages by formal actors such as governments or religious leaders are often distrusted by Ambonese. Exactly

[192] Similar critiques of grassroots peacebuilding are also formulated in: Celia McKeon, *From the Ground up: Exploring Dichotomies in Grassroots Peacebuilding* (paper presented at an international conference in 2003).

because messages from the FIT and Badati do their work in the same domain as rumors and gossip, which is through informal networks and social media, they can be effective.

Besides 'filtering away' information that can be proven wrong or inaccurate, many young peacebuilders are also very much aware of the importance of how facts are interpreted or presented. In the third section of this chapter, we have already seen that some youth contested the image of the September 2011 violence as a return of the religious conflict. Something similar was said by Badati member Adhi, who also is the founder and an active member of Ambon's bloggers community:

> *"Many mainstream media in Indonesia, starting at September 11* [the September 2011 violence, em], *they are almost like blowing up the scene. They are very harsh in writing news about the riots. But it is an incident,* [...] *not riots. Me and the others said that it was just some events, so we took this message to the bloggers, to twitter, to strengthen this* [position on the news, em]. [...] *He and his friends are afraid that if the media* [repeatedly cast news about the September 2011 violence], *it will provoke people, while the problem is not that big. It are no mass riots, it are just incidents in several places."*

Because of his activities on social media, Adhi was contacted by a journalist from Jakarta to give an eye-witness account for a radio broadcast on the September 11, the day the violence in Ambon broke out. This is what Adhi told me about his experiences while doing the interview with the journalist from Jakarta:

> *"I received a phone call from someone I did not know, so I picked it up, and the call is from a local radio in Jakarta and they ask me to do a live interview.* [...] *I accepted it. The first question they asked me made me annoyed and really pissed.* [The question was] *'How many churches and how many mosques have been burned?'. At the time I know that the riots spots were only two, at the Silo Church* [one of the main churches in Ambon City, em] *and another place. There were rumors that the Silo Church has been burned, but I already clarified that the Silo*

Church did not burn, in front of the Silo Church there is just a truck that was burned."

From this quote, it becomes clear that the rumors that churches and mosques have been burned had already spread to Jakarta within the course of one day. In fact, no church or mosque had been burned, and the rumor could be falsified by Adhi.

While the great majority of rumors that were checked by the FIT were proved wrong, youth told me there are a few exceptions in which rumors were actually verified. In some of these cases, youth decided not to report on confirmed rumors. For example when Adhi went to a hospital during the September 2011 violence to check whether a rumor about the possible death of a Muslim was true, he confirmed that one Muslim had been killed during the outbreak of violence. While Adhi shared this information with some of his friends, he decided not to post about it on Twitter, as he did not want to stimulate anger among other Muslims. While this may damage the credibility of the FIT, Adhi thought that preventing further anger was more important than getting the truth out as fast as possible.

Besides the youth in the FIT or youth from Badati, several other young peacebuilders also told me that they try to falsify rumors through informal communication networks on social media and direct contact they have with friends and family. At the same time, these youth tried to reassure those in their environment by sharing about falsified rumors and spreading more peaceful messages. Interestingly, many youth called this way of being careful about the views they spread 'peace provocation', presenting the way you interact with others as a choice between 'provoking conflict' or 'provoking peace'.[193] In this way, youth from the FIT and other young peacebuilders are able to use the same informal communication networks in which rumors are spread that may raise tensions between Muslim and Christian on Ambon.

Show You Care

One of the other main activities of Badati that I visited was an English course that a group of youth organized for the children who became homeless when their houses were burned during

[193] One of the first local peacebuilding initiatives, Maluku Interfaith Institute, also publishes a magazine called the *'provokator damai'*, or 'peace provocateur'.

the September 2011 violence. The houses that were burned in September 2011 were standing in a border area between a Muslim and a Christian neighborhood, close to where the violence broke out. Now, about eighty Muslim families have taken shelter in a covered soccer field, and a similar amount of Christian families take refuge in an old school building. While the shelters of Christian and Muslim families are near to each other, members Badati told me that the children and youth from the different IDP shelters do not frequently interact with each other.

To make a positive change for the children in the IDP camps, the Badati members decided to start an English course in which youth from both IDP camps could participate. Like other activities from Badati, the activity was set up with the intent of facilitating contact between Muslim and Christian children, who would have the chance to meet each other during class and become friends. At the same time, the members of Badati had the opportunity to give the children from the IDP camps something useful to do, and some time away from the crowded IDP shelters where they usually stay during the weekends. When I visited one of the IDP camps with some members of Badati, one of them told me another motivation to organize the English classes for the youth:

> *"It is a sad situation* [at the IDP camps]*, but our English classes are also a way to show people, to show these children that someone still cares. People often care when an incident has just happened, and they still care two weeks after. But later, people don't care anymore."*

Through taking the effort to organize English courses and bringing the children from the IDP shelters together, youth from Badati can show that they care for the children in the IDP camp.

It can be argued that because the English course does not directly deal with the conflict or peace, it does not really contribute to building peace in the sense of removing past grievances or hate for the people who burned the houses of the IDPs. But the English course by Badati can provide a first step in opening contacts between IDP children, which can show them that not all Muslims or Christians would be able or willing to burn their houses. And as noticed before, the youth from Badati themselves can be a powerful counterexample to the suspicions, stereotypes

and fears that sometimes still trouble the relationships between Muslim and Christian communities.

Besides this, the activities of the youth from Badati also have an impact beyond the children they are working with, as they also get in touch with the parents of the children. Several Badati members pointed out that some parents were at first hesitant to send their children to a mixed English class, and needed to be convinced first. Some of the parents were also hesitant because the English class was taught by a group of mixed youth. Therefore, the youth first organized a get together for all the children at one of Ambon's beaches, to which the parents were also invited. Afterwards, most parents agreed to let their children participate in the English course. While the first few lessons were taught in separate Muslim and Christian classes, later on the lessons were taught in a mixed class. The children from the mixed class will eventually perform a play which the Muslim and Christian children will perform for their parents.

Another activity that was organized by Moluccas Peace Generation and on an informal level by Badati were so-called sleep overs, in which young people were invited to stay at a guest family from another religious community for a couple of nights. We have seen that youth sometimes feel tense when entering a neighborhood that has a different religious affiliation. For many youth who have memories about the violent history of Ambon, and the strict division that used to exist, sleeping over in another neighborhood was exciting, but also a bit frightening. As commented by Lela, when she was hosting an informal camping activity in a Muslim area for Badati members:

> *"With Badati, it was the first time that I did a sleep over in a Christian area. And for some of the Christian friends that are joining us on Saturday* [to a Badati camping activity, em]*, it is the first time that they are going so far into a Muslim area on the island. They sometimes go to Muslim areas when they pass by in town. But they never go as far into the Muslim area as next Saturday. They will have to trust me as a friend that they are going to be safe."*

When returning home from such activities, it is possible that youth feel more confident about visiting different areas on Ambon and have more trust in the relationships that they have with people from another religious community. Several youth also told me that their tensions were eased by the cares of the guest family they were visiting, who promised to make sure that their guest would remain safe throughout their stay. In this way, sleep-overs provide another way in which people from different religious communities can show on a very basic way that they care for each other, which helps to improve the social relationships among them.

Use Your Imagination

As been forwarded before, some of the youth communities related to Badati use music and arts in their activities. During my conversations with youth from Badati and other related youth communities, the youth frequently pointed to the importance of art and music in bringing Muslims and Christians together. As commented on by Badati member Mohammed:

> *"We have this model that creativity has to be combined with care. If you say that you are creative, it has to be combined with care for what happens around you. After September 11 we did this campaign to make young people realize they have to be peace provocateur in their interaction with the community.* [...] *Especially because the main actors during the '99 conflict* [the 1999-2002 conflict, em] *were young people."*

Sometimes, showing care or promoting peace through art and music is done in a very direct way, such as through the singing of the traditional Gandong song which lauds the Gandong bond that all Ambonese share with each other. Several youth pointed out that the Gandong song is often sung at the end of many activities from both Moluccas Peace Generation and Young Ambassadors for Peace. Furthermore, when I was on Ambon, a group of youth were preparing a large cultural event called '*1000 cinta untuk Maluku* [1000 love for Maluku]', in which many youth community groups would participate. This festival was set up with the intention to bring Muslims and Christians together based on a shared love youth have for Maluku.

Another example in which art is used to bring people together is the theater play that the youth from Badati have organized for the children from the IDP camps, which the children will perform in front of their parents. According to one of the Badati members, this play is organized to facilitate friendship among the children. Although this play has not taken place yet while I was writing this thesis, the play and its positive message may also have a broader impact on the parents of the children, and also help parents from different religious communities to get closer to each other.

More often, peacebuilding through art and music is achieved in a much more indirect way. We have already seen that some youth argued that music and art performances were the first events which brought Muslims and Christians together. Nowadays, the many art and music performances of the youth from Ambon's youth communities still provide youth from different religious backgrounds possibilities to work together or meet each other during performances or exhibitions. In addition, the activities of these youth communities give youth opportunities to develop themselves and give them something useful to do. This can also help youth with dealing with the frustration and boredom that sometimes comes along with limited economic opportunities youth have.

Another popular art-form among Ambonese youth and youth community groups is photography. The few expositions that I visited on Ambon, and the numerous photo's youth post on Facebook about their photography activities show a great deal of attention towards the beauty of the Ambonese environment, its customs and its people. As these works of art are created by both Muslim and Christian youth, they present an ideal image of Ambon that is worth striving for by all Ambonese.

As noted before in this section, an important aspect to a lot of these creative and artistic activities is that they are not directly dealing with present tensions or Ambon's violent past. They are about enjoying yourself as a youth and getting together based on interests, thoughts and feelings that are shared by all Ambonese youth, both Muslims and Christians. In this way, art and music can help Ambonese to build social relationships with each other in both direct and indirect ways.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have seen that the situation on Ambon improved considerably since large-scale outbreaks of violence have mostly stopped since the Malino II accord was signed in 2002. However, many Ambonese youth feel that the Malino II accord did not establish peace at the grassroots level of society, as tensions and suspicions between Muslim and Christian communities persist to this day. When violence broke out again in September 2011, some youth realized that more needs to be done to improve social relations between Muslims and Christians and prevent further outbreaks of violence. That is why some youth decided to start the informal peacebuilding organization Badati. Interestingly, when youth reflect on peace and the peace process on Ambon, they do not focus on the actions of macro-actors such as governments, religious and cultural leaders and NGOs, but at improving the social relations common people have with each other at the grassroots level of society. To achieve this, youth have focused on organizing activities in which (1) Muslims and Christians can get in touch with each other, (2) they can disprove rumors that heighten tensions and suspicions between religious communities, (3) show that they care for Ambonese society, and (4) organize creative and artistic activities that help Muslims and Christians to get together.

Chapter 5. Conclusion: Peacebuilding Reconsidered

In this final chapter, I will combine the insights and ideas from previous chapters to answer the research questions I have posed in chapter one. The main research question of this thesis is as follows: '*In what ways can youth contribute to the post-conflict peacebuilding process at the grassroots level of Ambonese society?*'. This main question is divided into the following sub questions: (1) 'How do young people's views on the 1999-2002 conflict and the current situation influence their peacebuilding efforts?', (2) 'How do youth creatively deal with ongoing challenges to their peacebuilding activities?', and (3) 'How can the activities and views of young peacebuilders be related to scholarly theories on peacebuilding and conflict resolution?'. In the subsequent sections, I will try to answer these sub questions in the following order. In the first section, I will try to answer the third sub question by relating the views and activities of young Ambonese peacebuilders to scholarly theories on peacebuilding, truth and justice. In second section, I will use John Paul Lederach's ideas about the moral imagination to investigate how the views of Ambonese youngsters influence their peacebuilding activities. In this way, I will try to answer the first sub question. In the third section, I will answer the second sub question by arguing that youth can make a unique contribution to peacebuilding in the Ambonese context in particular and post-conflict situations more generally.

§5.1 Peacebuilding, Truth and Justice

Two central concepts that in academic theories are often closely associated with peacebuilding are truth and justice. Often, both truth and justice are seen as conditions that have to be fulfilled before any peacebuilding efforts can be successful.[194] In this section, I will use the empirical knowledge and arguments that are presented in this thesis to critically examine whether concepts such as truth and justice are indeed as crucial to peacebuilding efforts as is often claimed. As we have already seen in chapter one, perceptions of justice vary widely, with two of the more dominant views on justice being retributive and restorative perspectives on justice. In the course of this section, I will investigate in what ways these two different perspectives on justice - retributive and restorative justice subsequently - could contribute to

[194] Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 10-13.

the peace process on Ambon. After this, I will consider whether the construction of an official truth-account could contribute to establishing peace.

As has already become clear in chapter one of this thesis, discourses on conflict resolution often use a retributive perspective of justice, which aims at restoring the rule of law and punishing offenders for their crimes. We have already seen that such a more legal, state-centered approach often fails to take into take into account the complex and interrelated roles that social, cultural and religious factors play in violent conflicts. This critique is supported by the stories that my informants forwarded about the 1999-2002 conflict. We have seen that tensions in Ambonese society that eventually led to the first outbreak of violence in 1999 were multifaceted and existed on many different levels of Ambonese society. A lot of the historical, cultural, religious and political factors that increased tensions at different levels in Ambonese society are not criminal offences that can be tried by courts, but they do play their role when one wants to understand or analyze the Ambonese conflict.

What further complicates a possible implementation of retributive justice on Ambon is that retributive justice is based on individual responsibility and accountability. In chapter three, we have seen that much of the violence during and after the 1999-2002 conflict was organized on a communal level, with neighborhood or village *posko* and locally organized militia's being the main fighting units throughout the conflict – besides army units and militia's from the Laskar Jihad that became involved in the conflict later. From this it becomes clear that it was often on a communal, and not on an individual level that people decided to organize themselves and get involved in the violence. This of course does not mean that individuals do not have any responsibility for the violence that was committed during the 1999-2002 conflict, but it is surely questionable to what extent (often very young) individuals can be held accountable for committed violence and/or war crimes.

Because the violence was organized at a communal level, a very large share of the Ambonese population eventually became directly or indirectly involved in the violence. Even many people who can be considered to be 'victims' have at a certain point contributed to the continuation of the violence in some way, for example by preparing meals for combatants,

carrying ammunition or giving medical care to wounded fighters.[195] This also became clear from the remark of Moluccas Peace Generation peacebuilder Fatima, who admitted that one time during the 1999-2002 conflict, she once helped to carry fuel that was later used to burn Christian houses. This not only raises the question when exactly one can be considered 'guilty' of participating in violence, it also raises practical questions to implementing retributive justice. Because so many people were at some point involved in the violence, this may imply that a large share of the Ambonese population would have to be convicted.

A problem closely related to implementing a retributive justice is that a retributive perspective on justice relies on a strict separation of victims and perpetrators. This starting point can be challenged by the observation that many actors have played multiple, often ambivalent roles in the course of the Ambonese conflict.[196] This is not only true for macro actors such as the Indonesian government, but also for many common Ambonese. This point may be best illustrated by the story of Christian Badati member Rahmad. When the conflict started in 1999, he initially took great effort and risk to make sure that some of his Muslim friends that were visiting a Christian area could make it back to their neighborhoods safely. Later, when his own community was attacked several times, he decided to help to protect his neighborhood and also became involved in the fighting. Now, Rahmad is active as a peacebuilder, and tries to help his fellow Ambonese to get on with their lives. When Christians became injured during the September 2011 violence, he tried to discourage fellow Christians to take revenge for what had been done. While Rahmad certainly is 'guilty' of participating in the violence, in many instances he also tried to calm down situations or build relationships between Christian and Muslim communities. Persecuting him now for his involvement in the violence at some points in the 1999-2002 would certainly do no justice to other roles he has played during the conflict. Furthermore, it will make it impossible for Rahmad to take care of his family and continue the peacebuilding work he is presently doing at the grassroots of Ambonese society.

In their critiques of a retributive perspective on justice, scholars have also noted that working state mechanisms that could implement retributive justice are often lacking in post-

[195] The difficulties that often exist are also increasingly acknowledged in contemporary war ethics, see for example: Jeff McMahan, 'The Ethics of Killing in War', in: *Ethics* 114 (4) (2004) 693-733.
[196] See also: Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 18-22.

conflict societies.[197] In the Ambonese case, it may be argued that the Indonesian government may be powerful enough to implement a retributive justice mechanism. However, there are also other reasons why it is questionable whether a governmental implementation of retributive justice would contribute to the peace process on Ambon. In previous chapters, we have seen that the role of the Indonesian government during the 1999-2002 conflict has often been too passive, and during other times ambiguous at best.[198] Although the Indonesian government took the effort to encourage the negotiations between Muslim and Christian representatives that led to the signing of the Malino II accord in 2002, many Ambonese themselves feel that these peacebuilding negotiations did not sufficiently involve people from the grassroots of Ambonese society. Finally, we have seen that many Ambonese nowadays suspect unknown governmental or military officials to be involved in setting up the Ambonese conflict. Because of this, governmental initiatives to implement retributive justice aimed at punishing Ambonese for their involvement in the 1999-2002 violence would at best be frowned upon by many Ambonese. Moreover, a government initiative would most likely fail to persecute the government and military officials who are partly responsible for the Ambonese conflict themselves.

When taking all these arguments together, I argue that it is highly doubtful whether any implementation of retributive justice to deal with past wrongs would contribute to the peace process on Ambon. Because of the downsides to a retributive perspective on justice, more recent theories on peacebuilding and reconciliation have therefore focused on a restorative perception of justice. In a restorative perspective on justice, emphasis lies on truth-seeking, and reconciliation through victims forgiving perpetrators for past wrongs. An advantage to a restorative perspective on justice is that social, cultural and religious aspects of conflicts are more easily taken into account, as not the wrongdoings of perpetrators but the multifaceted stories and perspectives of victims are central to a restorative perspective on justice. Additionally, the practical questions that are related to persecuting large segments of society are solved when implementing restorative justice.

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[197] Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 18-22.

[198] We already have seen that military and police units often took sides during the conflict years. The Indonesian government also did not interfere with the Laskar Jihad, who send thousands of warriors to Ambon in the final conflict years.

But even when one is arguing from a restorative perspective on justice, several downsides continue to be present. Whether a retributive or a restorative conception of justice is used, both conceptions of justice rely on a clear divide between victims and perpetrators. As we have seen previously in this section, it is often difficult to make such a distinction, because many Ambonese are victims and perpetrators of violence at the same time. Besides this, even when arguing from a restorative perspective on justice, it is established through some sort of legal procedure, in which victims and perpetrators are more seen as objects of reconciliations than agents. Because of this, justice that is implemented does not necessarily improve social relations between social agents at the grassroots level of society.

Finally, both retributive and restorative perspectives on justice depend on the creation of an official truth-account, which forms the basis for the conviction of perpetrators (retributive justice) or for the acknowledgement of victims (restorative justice). Scholars have shown that when it comes to creating official truth accounts, problems relating how to collect data, document or represent the truth always arise, just as well as questions relating to whether, when, how, and what people actually want to remember. Furthermore, it can be questioned what and whose truth peacebuilding initiatives should be looking for, as a 'truth' is barely ever impartial.[199]

There are reasons to say that these problems are especially present in a conflict like the one on Ambon. First of all, we have seen that the Ambonese conflict can be characterized by messiness, ambiguity, and a general tense atmosphere, which is often fueled by rumors and suspicions between Muslim and Christian communities. In such a vague and ambiguous situation many different actors construct different (versions of) stories about the conflict and the different roles actors played during the conflict, each highlighting other details to suit the message that they are trying to get across. Each of these stories is related to both an actor's personal position and experiences during the 1999-2002 conflict, and to someone's social position in neighborhoods, villages, religious communities, Maluku and the Indonesian state. Because of this, it is difficult to determine any 'objective truth' on which different actors that

[199] This point is also frequently forwarded by critics of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. See for example: Richard A. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Camebridge e.a. 2001) 120, 232-228.

were involved in the Ambonese conflict would agree.[200] Besides this, forwarding any story as the 'official truth' will therefore favor some, while disserving others.[201] Indeed, the 'truth' should never be seen as a neutral product of fact-gathering, but as produced within complex power relation in which power is exercised in the production of truth.[202]

Also from the ways that young peacebuilders themselves operate it becomes clear that trying to find the truth about past or present incidents and developments can be a sensitive issue. We have seen that some young peacebuilders do not want to stimulate peacebuilding through religious debates, as it may re-open sensitive debates about the past which can cause further tensions. Besides, religious debates may emphasize religious fault lines again. Something similar becomes clear from the way youth at the Reconciliation School deal with questions surrounding rumors and suspicions that occasionally continue to be spread. Instead of trying to find out to what extent a certain rumor is true or not, youth at the Reconciliation School decide together not to believe in any rumors at all. This suggests that trying to find a shared truth or verify certain 'facts' may raise tensions among the students.

Moreover, even when young peacebuilders are willing and able to find the truth about a rumor or particular incident, youth feel that openly sharing the truth is not always beneficial for the relations between Muslim and Christian communities. This for example becomes clear from the remark by young peacebuilder Adhi, who told me that when he managed to confirm that a Muslim died during the September 2011 violence, he did not share it on twitter, as it can provoke others to join the violence. Although relatives from the victim of course want to know what happened to this particular victim, spreading the truth too fast at a wrong moment may only provoke further violence. From this it becomes clear that in some cases, it is better to leave truth-questions unaddressed.[203]

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[200] This also has to do with the fact that there were only few neutral journalists or observers present on Ambon during the 1999-2002 violence, as the Indonesian government did not allow any journalists to enter Ambon.

[201] It is this sensitivity when it comes to finding truth that may explain that the commission that was set-up after the Malino II accord to create an official truth account has not been successful.

[202] Ramsbotham, *Transforming Violent Conflict*, 146.

[203] According to anthropologist Susanne Buckley-Zistel, a similar argument can be made on post-genocide Rwandan society, where people are also reluctant to speak openly about the past because of fear between different ethnicities. Buckley-Zistel also argues that getting the truth out may provoke further violence See: Buckley-Zistel, 'Pretending Peace', 137-138. *and* Birgit Bräuchler, 'Cultural Solutions', 874.

Maybe the most important critique on relying on truth is that it focusses on what exists or not exists. In this way, it blurs the influence of other factors, namely the potentially existing, the possible new realities, the maybe.[204] We have seen that throughout Ambon's violent history, what was important was not only what is true or not, but also about what is potentially true. During the conflict, 'the possible', or 'what may be' played a great role in the form of suspicion and fear about other groups possibly planning an attack, or the fear that one religious group would dominate others in the future. However, the youth from Ambon's informal peacebuilding groups have shown that things can also work the other way around. In their peacebuilding work, Ambonese youth strive to achieve ideals within Ambonese society in which fear and suspicion no longer exist and Muslim and Christians are able to build up positive relations with each other that can be characterized by amicability and trust. Although these ideals are often far removed from the current 'true' reality, yet the ideal of 'what could be' clearly serves as motivation to be involved in activities that do have real and positive consequences in Ambon's social life.

All these downsides to trying to find 'the truth' can explain why young people from Badati and other informal peacebuilding groups do not constantly focus on constructing a shared truth account about what happened in the past. Instead, Ambon's young peacebuilders look for ways build and improve social relations between Muslim and Christian communities at the grassroots level in a more personal and informal way, in which possible future realities are at least as important as the past. And indirectly, Ambon's youth also forward their own way of looking at things, their own 'truth'. For example, it may be difficult to officially acknowledge the suffering of victims or address the wrongs of perpetrators. However, this does not mean that it cannot be done more informally, on a person to person level.

In this section, I have tried to answer the following sub question: 'How can the activities and views of young peacebuilders on Ambon be related to scholarly theories on peacebuilding and conflict resolution?'. I have argued that the activities and views of youth challenge some of the more traditional peacebuilding theories that focus on truth-finding and justice as necessary conditions for peacebuilding. As truth-finding and establishing justice necessarily involves

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[204] Johan Galtung, 'Toward a Conflictology, The Quest for Transdisciplinarity', in: Dennis J.D. Sandole e.a. (eds.), *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (London and New York 2009) 511-524, there 514.

sensitive debates on matters that are intrinsically vague and ambiguous, many young peacebuilders tend to focus on establishing informal, friendly relations between Muslim and Christian youth instead. In the next section, I will elaborate further on the way in which young Ambonese peacebuilders forward and try to encourage their perspective on the situation.

§5.2 Identity politics: A New Moral Imagination

In the first chapter of this thesis, we have seen that religious violence often is closely related to the way people view themselves in relations to others around them. Transcending violence therefore also means that people have to look for new ways to envision themselves and their relations to others. In the period between the start of the 1999-2002 conflict and the current situation, several phases can be distinguished in which the ways people viewed their own identity and their relation to others significantly changed. In the first phase of the conflict, outbreaks of violence reflected competition and tensions within Ambonese society on many different levels; between patronage systems, villages, Muslims and Christians, Ambonese and outsiders, 'common people' and 'big men'. While it is difficult to determine which identities had the upper hand before and in the early phases of the conflict, from the observation that tensions existed on different levels, it becomes clear that people did not align themselves with a religious identity only, but also with their village or neighborhood, patronage system and a common Ambonese or Maluku identity.

When the conflict endured and gradually became more organized, a second phase of the conflict can be distinguished. In this phase, the continuing violence between Muslims and Christians constantly broadened the distance between religious communities, which made religion increasingly important as an identity marker.[205] Furthermore, there are indications that images of a 'cosmic war' between Muslims and Christians also played a role at this stage of the conflict. Both sides increasingly perceived the Ambonese conflict as war in which 'Islam' and 'Christianity' were out to destroy each other, in a conclusive war for Maluku.[206] Because of the increased importance of religious identities, the sense of a common Ambonese or Maluku identity gradually declined. However, it has to be noted that other identities continued to play a

[205] Fridus Steijlen, *Kerusuhan*, 9. Van Klinken, 'The Maluku Wars', 13. *and* Spyer, 'Media Effects', 28.
[206] Juergensmeyer. *Terror in the Mind of God,* 191.

role. Most importantly, we have seen that local village alignments and animosities continued to influence the way the violence on Ambon was patterned.

After the conflict, a third phase can be distinguished, which can be characterized as an attempt to overcome past animosities between Muslim and Christian communities, and the violent religious imaginary that accompanied it. As argued by peacebuilding theorist Lederach, this can be done by developing new 'moral imaginations', or new ways to view oneself and one's relations to others. In the Ambonese case, people often emphasize the idea that Ambon's conflict was a conspiracy, and that without the influence of 'provocateurs', relations between Muslims and Christians would have remained peaceful, as Muslims and Christians are both 'part of the same family'. Implicitly, in such a 'conspiracy-view' on the conflict, an overarching Ambonese identity is contrasted with 'big men', 'provocateurs', and government or military officials that are suspected of setting up the Ambonese conflict. This identification works on two levels. There is (1) an opposition created between an elite or group of 'big men' that is trying to benefit from the Ambon's 'common people' by creating conflicts between them. At the same time, (2) a distinction between 'Ambonese' and 'outsiders' continues to play a role, as many Ambonese suspect non-Ambonese politicians, military officials and 'provocateurs' to be setting up Ambon's conflict. The moral imagination that implicitly accompanies a 'conspiracy-perspective' on the conflict is appealing for two reasons, as it (1) challenges the idea that the violence on Ambon is a part of a religious conflict or 'cosmic war', while it also (2) provides alternative explanations for the violence on Ambon.

While the idea of a conspiracy certainly provides a basis for Muslims and Christians to get back together, we have seen that there are also downsides to such a view. First (1), a focus on a shared Ambonese identity has the risk of excluding the many immigrants from Java and Sulawesi that live on Ambon. The division between Ambonese and outsiders is more prominent in the case Ambonese refer to *pela* and *gandong* as a way to bring Muslims and Christians together, as immigrants are often not included in these traditional alliances.[207] Some youth told me that they therefore think that people should be flexible when it comes to interpreting *pela*

[207] This is a critique that is more often forwarded against culturally inspired grassroots peacebuilding. See for example: Donna Pankhurst, 'Issues of Justice and Reconciliation in Complex Political Emergencies, Reconceptualizing Reconciliation, Justice and Peace', *Third World Quarterly* 20(1) (1999) 239-256, there 247. *and* Bräuchler. 'Introduction', 16.

and *gandong* alliances, and make it possible that immigrants are also able to participate in ceremonies and activities that confirm social bonds. However, he admitted that this is done only rarely in practice. Second (2), when people continue to have suspicion towards 'big men' and 'outsiders', the ambivalent relation many Ambonese have with the Indonesian nation can persist. Third (3), a few young peacebuilders warn that only presenting the relations between Muslims and Christians as good and familial may downplay the enduring tensions and suspicions between Muslims and Christians. Youth argue that this can undermine the possibilities people have to explicitly address problems and improve the relations between Muslim and Christian communities.

It is interesting to see in what ways the activities and ideas of youth from informal peacebuilding groups relate to these more common ways many Ambonese view themselves in the current post-conflict situation. First of all, it is noteworthy that youth often do not forward any particular national, regional, religious or ethnic identity explicitly. Yet, from the ways young peacebuilders operate and think about their activities, they implicitly forward and promote their own way of imagining social life and a new sense of identity. This new sense of identity for example shows from the many times youth forward the view that people are fed up of the fighting, and don't want the conflict to return again. Furthermore, we have seen that many activities from Ambon's young peacebuilders are aimed at building friendships, improving social relations at the grassroots, and organizing get-togethers based on common interests between people from different religious communities. From this, youth implicitly imagine, idealize, and encourage a sense of identity that bridges the divide between Muslim and Christian identities. This identity has a neighborly character, as it aims at building relations between Muslims and Christians in an informal way. In this way, youth's activities are in line with the ideas of John Paul Lederach, who argues that transcending violence is done by imagining oneself in a web of relations together with former enemies.

However, transcending violence involves more than just imagining a common future in which former enemies can live together. According to Lederach, transcending violence also requires creative thinking to overcome dualistic polarities. Such creative thinking can be seen in the ways in which young peacebuilders try to include non-Ambonese in their social ideals. While some youth notice the importance of *pela* and *gandong* when it comes to peacebuilding,

it is noteworthy that *pela* and *gandong* only rarely play a significant role in the activities by young peacebuilders.[208] We have also seen that young peacebuilders frequently emphasize a love for the beauty, traditions and people of Ambon, which is exemplified in the art, music and creative writings that youth create in their community groups. While a focus on *pela* and *gandong* may exclude immigrants who are living on Ambon, having a love for Ambon is not reserved for any particular ethnic or religious group. In this way, non-Ambonese immigrants are able to take part in the social relationships that young peacebuilders envision.

Interestingly, youth do not only include immigrants in their social ideals, they only very rarely exclude any group explicitly. Based on their idea that 'the people don't want the conflict anymore', only actors that want the violence to continue are excluded implicitly. These actors are often not specified in any particular way, which leaves the question unanswered whether these people exist. However, occasional outbreaks of rumors and violence suggest that there is at least a minority of people who continue to participate in violence. A reason why youth may avoid naming or specifying these actors is that pointing fingers at any particular group can reinforce tensions between different groups. This risk is even higher when one is not entirely sure whether one's accusations are true. However, we have seen that the idea that the existence of people who are willing to fight is also contested by explaining the involvement of 'common people' in the conflict by referring to the work of outside provocateurs. A similar view was also central to the activities of Badati right after the September 2011 violence, in which youth passed on the message from one posts to another that everyone was organizing themselves just to protect their neighborhoods, and no one had the intention to attack another community. In this way, even people who are inclined to participate in violence are included in the social ideals of Ambonese youth. Another way to explain the violence is by arguing that current outbreaks of violence have nothing to do with tensions between Muslim and Christian communities, but that it is caused be rivalry between different villages or neighborhoods. In these creative ways, youth are able to maintain and promote the view that 'people don't want the conflict anymore'.

[208] Only Moluccas Peace Generation noted that they usually finish their activities by singing the Gandong song, but non-original Ambonese are not excluded from participating.

Nevertheless, I argue that the new moral imagination that young peacebuilders on Ambon promote remains constantly challenged. Not only do current small-scale outbreaks of violence suggest that religious views that stimulate violence continue to play a role, violent incidents such as the September 2011 violence are still framed in religious terms occasionally. While it is not clear whether many Ambonese still maintain hatred or religious views that stimulate violence, violent religious views indirectly continue to influence Ambonese society because people fear and suspect that others have these views.

The views of young peacebuilders have as an advantage that almost no one is excluded from participating in the social relationships that they envision. However, there are also disadvantages to their views. In his theories on how social identities are constructed, sociologist Gerd Baumann shows how every stable sense of identity needs to exclude others to contrast one's own identity with.[209] In this way, social actors are able to give meaning and content to the social identities they uphold. Therefore, a disadvantage to the sense of identity that youth encourage is that it is rather undefined, as youth do not specify any clear 'others' with which one's own identity can be contrasted. Furthermore, the overarching sense of identity that youth promote is often not connected to social practices, traditions and experiences in daily life, as Muslim and Christian communities still live largely separated and occasional suspicion and tensions continue to exist. Therefore, it can continue to be attractive to adhere to more mutually exclusive and dualistic identities that more clearly give a sense of meaning and purpose in insecure and tense times.[210] In addition, as young peacebuilders focus on building social relations at the grassroots level, their ideals do not directly involve any political views. While this enables youth to maintain a safe distance from any dividing political debates, the views and activities of young peacebuilders do not provide a clear solution to the ambiguous position many Ambonese have in relation to the Indonesian state. While these disadvantages are certainly there, it is questionable whether there is a way in which youth could give more substance and meaning to their ideals without taking the risk of having more controversial positions or excluding others.

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[209] Andre Gingrich, 'Conceptualising Identities: Anthropological Alternatives to Essentialising Difference and Moralizing about Othering', in: Gerd Baumann en Andre Gingrich red., *Grammars of Identity/Alterity, a Structural Approach* (New York and Oxford 2004) 3-17, there 5-6.

[210] See the theories by Juergensmeyer and Kinvall that were presented in section 1.3.

In this section, I have tried to answer the following sub question: 'How do young people's views on the 1999-2002 conflict and the current situation influence their peacebuilding efforts?'. We have seen that through their activities and their views on the 1999-2002 conflict, young peacebuilders implicitly forward a new way in which people can view themselves and their relations to others. In this way, youth are able to present an alternative to those 'moral imaginations' that emphasize religious fault lines or may stimulate violence. Although young people's ideals may be a bit vague, they do make their ideals visible by organizing activities that are in line with their social ideals. In this way, their ideals become connected to the social practices and daily-life-experiences that youth themselves create. In addition, the use of art, music and creative writings play an important role in broadening people's curiosity and appreciation for each other, as well as providing common interests that can bring people together. All this does not mean that it is not necessary to take more steps in the future to improve relations between Muslims and Christians, and look for ways in which an overarching identity can be strengthened and made more meaningful. But imagining and working towards future ideals may be more important than dealing with past and present problems and realities first.

§5.3 Youth and Grassroots Peacebuilding

In the first chapter of this thesis, we have seen that recent peacebuilding theories have increasingly shifted their attention towards peacebuilding that is achieved through working bottom-up, starting at the grassroots of society. But even when scholars acknowledge the importance of grassroots peacebuilding, it is often criticized for being limited in multiple ways. First (1), is it often difficult for grassroots peacebuilding initiatives to reach all people at the grassroots of society. Second (2), it is often questioned whether small-scale informal initiatives can have a substantial impact on more official large scale actors, and the macro-context in which grassroots communities are positioned. Third (3), we have already seen that grassroots peacebuilding is challenged because it often involves local cultural values that are not in line with "outsiders" on a larger than directly local scale.[211] Finally (4), in previous chapters I have

[211] Birgit Bräuchler, 21. *And* McKeon, 'From the Ground Up'.

argued that in the Ambonese context, grassroots peacebuilding efforts by young people continue to be challenged by ongoing rumors and tensions.

Similar critiques can be forwarded against the informal peacebuilding initiatives of Ambon's youth. While visiting the neighborhood posts in the aftermath of the September 2011 can be considered an effective way to reach a large amount of neighborhoods, the number of youth that are currently participating in the activities organized by Badati and other youth community groups remains limited. Besides this, it is questionable whether youth who are not willing to meet and become friends with youth from another religious community would have any interest in participating in the organized activities. Reaching young people who are living in villages that are further removed from Ambon City is even more difficult, as transport to town is both time-consuming and expensive. Furthermore, youth communities such as Badati are operated by youth who also have obligations towards their families, education and (preparations for) professional careers. This sometimes means that youth organizations lack the organizational and professional capacity to keep activities going and ensure their persistence over time. Badati members have told me about several instances in which activities are delayed because of exams or members deciding to leave to pursue other interests or because they get job opportunities in other places.

Because of the above criticisms, it can be argued that in an ideal situation, grassroots efforts at peacebuilding should at least be accompanied by the work of more influential, macro-actors, such as local and national governments, NGOs and religious institutions.[212] However, we have seen that both governments and religious institutions played ambiguous roles during and after Ambon's conflict, which damaged their neutrality and trustworthiness as peacebuilders. Therefore, I argue that in a way, the relative lack of power that youth have can also be considered one of the main strengths of youth. Because youth do not have any substantial economic or political power, they are less restricted by their position in power relations and less easily suspected of having a hidden agenda or benefit from their activities in one way or another. Moreover, as youth are part of the grassroots communities they are trying to reach, it is easy for them to get access to these communities and gain their trust. The advantage of being

[212] Bräuchler, 'Introduction', 5.

a less powerful and therefore more trustworthy actor is maybe most clear if one considers the distribution of coffee and sugar among different posts in the aftermath of the September 2011 violence. As a mixed group of unarmed youth, they were able to get access to different posts without raising tension and suspicion. It is questionable whether more formally actors such as governments or religious institutions would be able to do so, as they were sometimes suspected of setting up the conflict through the use of provocateurs. Because of this, it is arguable that youth are in many cases more able than more 'powerful' actors to deal with rumors and suspicion that challenge peacebuilding efforts.

That their trustworthiness and limited power serves as an advantage to their activities is something that is also acknowledged by some young peacebuilders themselves. This can be explained by the following comment from Badati member Sammy:

> *"What I think is the most successful thing about the young community groups, is that Muslims and Christians meet and it is not by design* [set up by another actor]. *It happens,* [because] *they were looking for each other and they meet up. To me what really make it successful is that we are, is that we have no interest, we are not trying to take any benefit from the meetings, we only meet only because a Christian wants to meet a Muslim friend."*

Because of the situation that Sammy describes, youth manage to create an informal and amicable atmosphere, which serves two purposes. It encourages youth to come together for the reason of building friendships instead of any other personal gains that could compromise this goal. Besides, it enables youth to build friendships among youth without having to take the wishes and interests of outside actors into account, such as goverments, donors or other official institutions.

Besides their trustworthiness as a result of their relative lack of power, youth have another advantage as actors involved in peacebuilding. We have seen that an important aspect to the activities organized by youth community groups is the common interests that bind youth from different religious communities together. Many of these common interests are in line with a

broader youth culture that has developed all over Indonesia.[213] Broadly defined, a 'youth culture' can be considered to be 'what young people are concerned with'[214], or as 'everyday activities in which youth engage'.[215] Typical features of this Indonesian youth culture are hanging out, utilizing the internet and social media, spending time in restaurants, sports, and an interest in global music genres such as pop, hip-hop and reggae.[216] As this youth culture attracts youth from all sorts of backgrounds, it provides a public and cultural domain in which Muslim and Christian youth can interact on a more or less equal base.

However, no youth culture exists in a social vacuum, but is always embedded within broader power relations and the cultural context in which it takes shape.[217] From the views and activities of Ambon's young peacebuilders, it has become clear that they have reshaped this broader youth culture in a way that suits both the Ambonese context and their views. Several scholars, including renowned peacebuilding theorist John Galtung, have argued that youth have a unique potential to be creative and idealistic, as youth are often more open-minded (or even less realistic) than adults.[218] In the previous section, we have seen that such idealism and creativity can also be found among Ambon's young peacebuilders, as they envision a peaceful society in which all people living on Ambon have positive social relationships with each other, and promote such a society through creative writing, music and art. Youth also connect their ideals and creativity to values that are shared by broader segments of Ambonese society than youth alone. For example, some youth have argued that the underlying value beneath many of the activities of Ambon's youth community groups are care and love for the people, customs and beauty of Ambon. While these values are also present in the ideals that underlie *Pela* and *Gandong*, youth are able to reshape these values in a new public cultural space, in which religious and ethnic identities are less important than youth's self-identifications as bloggers,

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[213] See: Martin Slama, 'The Agency of the Heart: Internet Chatting as Youth Culture in Indonesia', *Social Anthropology* 18 (3) (2010) 316-330.

[214] H. Wulff, 'Introducing Youth Culture in its own Right: The State of the Art and New Possibilities', in: V. Amit-Talai and H. Wulff (eds.), *Youth Cultures. A Cross Cultural* Perspective (London 1995) 1-18, there 15.

[215] Slama, 'Agency of the Heart', 316.

[216] Idem, 318.

[217] Slama, 'Agency of the Heart', 316.

[218] Johan Galtung 'Theoretical Challenges of Peace Building with and for Youth', in: *Troublemakers or Peacemakers: Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building* (Notre Dame 2006) 259-80, there 262 and 274. *and* Dan P. McAdams, 'The Psychology of Life Stories', *Review of General Psychology* 5(2) (2001) 100-122, there 106.

musicians, 'peace provocateurs [*provokator damai*]', journalists and photographers. This new cultural space can also be characterized through more frequent use of 'neutral' languages, such as youth slangs and English. By using these languages, youth are able to bridge the language differences that exist between Muslims and Christians.

That youth are able to effectively supply themselves with positive self-identifications through their shared youth culture is especially important when one considers that mostly male youth were involved in the fighting during both the 1999-2002 conflict and the September 2011 violence. Social scientist Mark Juergensmeyer explains the frequent involvement of male youth in violent conflicts by arguing that participating in violence gives insecure young males with limited social and economic possibilities a sense of identity, dignity and purpose.[219] Juergensmeyer's theory can be confirmed in the Ambonese cultural context, where there are hints that violence is sometimes seen as a way for young males to prove themselves as 'defenders of their community'. This becomes clear from a remark made by peacebuilder Mohammed, who said that the most common actors involved in the September 2011 violence were male teenage youth, who were still very young when the 1999-2002 conflict took place. Because they do not have any fighting experience themselves, Mohammed argued that these youth wanted to prove that they are also capable of defending their community.[220] The support that Badati gave to the neighborhood posts can also be seen as a positive appraisal of men defending their communities. By providing possibilities to develop positive identities through youth culture, Ambon's youth communities can help young males to give them alternatives than violence to get a sense of positive self-appraisal. The identity of being a peacebuilder is especially important, as young people can see themselves as a defender of their community by 'provoking peace' instead of participating in violence.[221]

We should however be careful not to idealize the flexibility of youth to form new identities or overestimate their possibility to develop 'neutral' youth cultures in which all youth can equally participate. First of all, as Ambonese youth culture is strongly focused on creativity and

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[219] Juergensmeyer, 'Terror in the Mind of God', 194-195.

[220] Something similar may be true for the occasional riots that take place between groups of youth from the different villages and neighbourhoods.

[221] Siobhán McEvoy-Levy, 'Conclusion: Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building', in: *Troublemakers or Peacemakers: Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building* (Notre Dame 2006) 281-303, there 286. *and* Bristow, *Bosnian Youth,* 65.

art, it may be more difficult to participate for youth who do not have significant creative skills. Second, much of the activities of Ambon's youth communities involve expensive equipment, such as access to computers and the internet, camera's, or musical instruments which may not affordable for all Ambonese, especially young people coming from other Maluku islands. Third, there are also examples of youth cultures that are developed and/or promoted on the internet that either emphasize religious identities, or do not transcend religious boundaries. For example, I also came in touch with two groups of Muslim-only youth who have their own youth communities in which they help each other to learn English. Another informant told me that he was part of an online international Muslim youth community that helped him to be a good Muslim. Furthermore, Birgit Bräuchler has examined the ways religious radicalism was developed and spread on the internet during Ambon's conflict years.[222] While I did not come across youth who were attracted to radical discourses on the internet, Spyer's research does show that online radicalism had an impact on Ambonese society in the past and can possibly do so in the future.

The idea that youth have a unique position and role within Ambon's peace process can be further clarified by comparing it to the grassroots peacebuilding activities that have been initiated by *rajas* or village kings, who function as cultural leaders of Ambon's villages and neighborhoods.[223] While the initiatives by *rajas* may be more influential because they have a relatively high status in their villages, *rajas* are also limited by the place within existing social relations and power relations that they already occupy. Because *raja* have a position in the network of village alliances and animosities, they have more limited maneuvering space compared to youth when it comes to promoting an idealized peaceful society such as young peacebuilders do. Besides, *rajas* mainly have influence on their own, either Muslim or Christian community, and not on a mixed group of people. Finally, because of the traditional and cultural role *rajas* play within Ambonese society, they mainly have an impact on original Ambonese, while having more difficulty to reach immigrants who are living on Ambon. All this does not mean that that *rajas* cannot and do not play an important role in Ambon's peace process. But comparing their roles with those of young peacebuilders does emphasize that young people

[222] Bräuchler, 'Cyberidentities at War'. *and* Bräuchler, 'Islamic Radicalism Online'.
[223] See: Bräuchler, 'Kings on Stage'.

occupy a unique position within Ambonese society that can complement other peacebuilding efforts.

In this section, I have set out to answer the following sub question: 'How do youth creatively deal with ongoing challenges to their peacebuiling activities?'. I have argued that youth can overcome challenges because of their trustworthiness, idealism, flexibility and creativity, connections to the communities they work with, and their ability to connect themselves with other youth through using and developing popular youth culture. Because of the important roles that are often played by youth during conflict, and the unique roles youth and youth cultures can play after conflicts, it is remarkable that the views and experiences of youth in conflict and post-conflict situations have only rarely been acknowledged.[224] In chapter one, I have argued that youth are often seen as passive victims of events that happen around them, or as vulnerable and in need of protection. In other instances, it is argued that young people need peace education or adult guidance to make sure that they will make a constructive contribution to society, instead of rebelling or resorting to violence again. While there often is some truth in such views, I argue that the experiences and views of Ambonese youth provide another perspective, in which youth can be seen as active peacebuilding agents in Ambonese society.

§5.4 Concluding Remarks and Ideas for Further Research

In this thesis, I have set out to answer the following main question: '*How do young peacebuilders on Ambon try to deal with ongoing tensions and rumors to improve the social relations between Muslims and Christians at the grassroots level of society?*' Based on arguments that are presented in the previous chapters, this question can be answered as follows. Ambonese youth use four interrelated methods to try to improve the social relationships between Christians and Muslims. First, youth tried to look for ways that Muslims and Christians get in touch with each other. In this way, both the organizers and attenders of the activities from young peacebuilding groups get the chance to build friendships and transcend suspicion and fear through direct personal contact. Second, youth encourage people

[224] Del Felice, 'The Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth'.

to get their facts straight, and not let themselves be provoked by the rumors that continue to be spread occasionally. Some youth also actively try to falsify rumors that can heighten tensions between groups within Ambonese society. Third, through their activities, Ambon's young peacebuilders tried to show to the people they work with that they care for all people in Ambonese society. In this way, young peacebuilders can themselves be a positive counterexample to the fears and suspicions many Ambonese continue to have. Finally, youth use art and creativity to promote positive messages and get-togethers based on common interests in the activities that youth engage in.

From the ways in which young Ambonese peacebuilders organize and design their activities, several things become clear. First of all, youth who work at the grassroots level of society often focus on establishing informal personal relations between Muslims and Christians, and try to avoid mingling themselves in sensitive controversies that surround questions of truth, justice and culpability. This approach to peacebuilding is at odds with many of the more traditional peacebuilding methods, which see the establishment of truth and justice as conditions for establishing peace. Nevertheless, because of the tension that can come along with re-opening sensitive debates, the approach that youth choose provides a safe way forward. Second, through from the ways young peacebuilders think and act, they implicitly promote new 'moral imaginations', or ways in which Ambonese people can perceive themselves and their relations to others. While youth often do not promote a particular sense of identity explicitly, it becomes clear that they envision a peaceful society in which everyone who shares love and concern for Ambon can participate. At the same time, youth try to bind people together by focusing on art, creativity and common interests. In this way, young people provide alternatives to identifications that affirm religious fault lines within Ambonese society, which can cause tensions to persist. Third, it can be argued that youth have unique advantages when it comes to contributing to Ambon's peace process. Because informal organizations like Badati do not have any official or authorative status, they are less restricted by the position they occupy within existing power relations and less easily suspected of having a hidden agenda. Besides, because youth are part of the grassroots communities they work with, it is easy for them to gain access to these communities and gain their trust. Finally, by linking their peacebuilding efforts to youth cultures, young peacebuilders are able to provide themselves

with positive self-identifications as bloggers, musicians, peacebuilders, journalists and photographers. Besides, they also link this youth culture to broader Ambonese society by forwarding values and ideals that are shared by others.

The research outcomes and conclusions of this thesis do not provide a final say on the peacebuilding activities of Ambonese youth, but can be seen as a first exploration of the roles youth can play in Ambon's peace process. Several interesting questions surrounding the activities of youth remain to be explored through further research. First of all, as many activities of Badati were directly related to the September 2011 outbreak of violence, it would be interesting to see in what ways youth will continue their activities now that the situation has cooled down again. Second, it has to be noted that this thesis is mainly based on interviews with youth and other informants who are actively involved in the peace process on Ambon. It would therefore be interesting to compare the thoughts and activities of young peacebuilders with those of other youth and adults. This can be done through interviewing youth who are not involved in peacebuilding activities or asking adults what they think about the peacebuilding initiatives of Ambonese youth. Third, it would be interesting to investigate in what ways suspicions and tensions are patterned at the grassroots of Ambonese society. In this way, it will be possible to improve our understanding of how the activities and thoughts of young peacebuilders are embedded within the interactions and challenges that youth encounter in every-day life. This will also allow for a better understanding of the remarks that were made by two of my informants, who mentioned that many informants are positive about the current situation while they are in mixed company, but are more negative when they are among people from the same religious community. Fourth, it would be interesting to do more research on the way public life is organized in Ambonese society. As noted in this thesis, people are sometimes tense when moving around in areas that do not belong to their own religious community, while religious symbols also play important roles in public life. In further research, it would be interesting to investigate under which conditions social tensions, fears and suspicion arise. This will give us a better understanding of the challenges that Ambon's society faces. Finally, it would be interesting to get in touch with people who participated in recent outbreaks of violence, as a better understanding of the reasons why people participate in violence can also contribute to a better comprehension of peacebuilding activities.

While in the finishing stages of writing this thesis, I heard that extreme weather conditions had caused floods on Ambon that destroyed 1800 houses and left 9000 people homeless in several neighborhoods of Ambon City.[225] Through Facebook I learned that the youth from Badati and other youth community groups immediately started to collect money to buy rice, coffee, tea and other provisions for the victims of the floods. In this thesis, I hope to have shown how the flexibility and creativity of young peacebuilders have enabled them to overcome past animosities and contribute to Ambon's peace process. By becoming active as disaster relief workers right after Ambon was hit by floods, Ambonese youth have proved once again that they are able to adapt to new challenges quickly, and do not give up when they are confronted with unexpected setbacks. I hope that the combination of ideals, care and perseverance that Ambonese youth have shown will provide inspiration to both scholars and youth living in (post-) conflict situations across the globe.

[225] Buat, Platform voor Molukkers, *Reactie Rode Kruis op Ontstane Commotie* (Published on August 2012).

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Appendix 1. Interview Questions

For most interviews, I loosely used the topic and question list below.

Interview questions

1. Introduction

-60-90 minutes

-Collect stories about your life, your experiences during the violence years on Ambon, and your involvement in the organization (MPG, MAP). Interested in youth's experiences.

-Question are general, because I would like to focus on your stories and on what you feel is important. Please feel free to focus on those subjects and aspects that you feel are important.

-Feel free to share or not share what you want, some questions might be personal.

2. Personal background (5-10 min.)

-From which town/island/pela

-Family background

-Religion

-Education or work

-What are things that are really important in your life?

3. Life before the violence (5-10 minutes)

-How did Muslims and Christians interact with one another before the conflict?

-How was it for you to interact with other communities?

-What are your memories about the times before the violence on Ambon?

4. Experiences during the violent years on Ambon (1999-2002) (15-20 minutes)

-What views do people in your environment (such as friends and family) have about the origins of the violence on Ambon?

-What, in your view, are the origins of the violence?

-What triggered the violence on Ambon?

-Why did people feel they needed to fight one another?

-Are there any groups that were more willing to fight than others? Why?

-How did daily life on Ambon look like during the conflict years? / What activities did people have? How did they cope with the situation?

-What was daily life like for you during those years?

-How do you look back on that period?

5. Life after 1999-2002 violence (10-15 minutes)

-Why did the large scale violence end in your view?

-In what ways did life on Ambon change since the end of large scale violence? (economics, politics, intercommunal relations)

-How do people relate to each other after the violence? In private / public life, in education and work / Do people also have friends from other religious communities?

-What are your feelings about the situation on Ambon for the past couple of years?

-What is it like for you to live on after what happened in the past?

-What are your goals/dreams for the future?

6. Peace (5 min)

-What do you consider to be a peaceful situation on Ambon?

-Do you think there is peace on Ambon now?

-What do you think should be done to improve the situation?

7. Small-scale violence after large scale violence (5-10 minutes)

-What views do people in your environment have on contemporary small-scale outbreaks of violence?

-What are the stories people tell each other about these small outbreaks of violence?

-What do you think, causes the small-scale outbreaks of violence on Ambon?

-What is your view on the current situation?

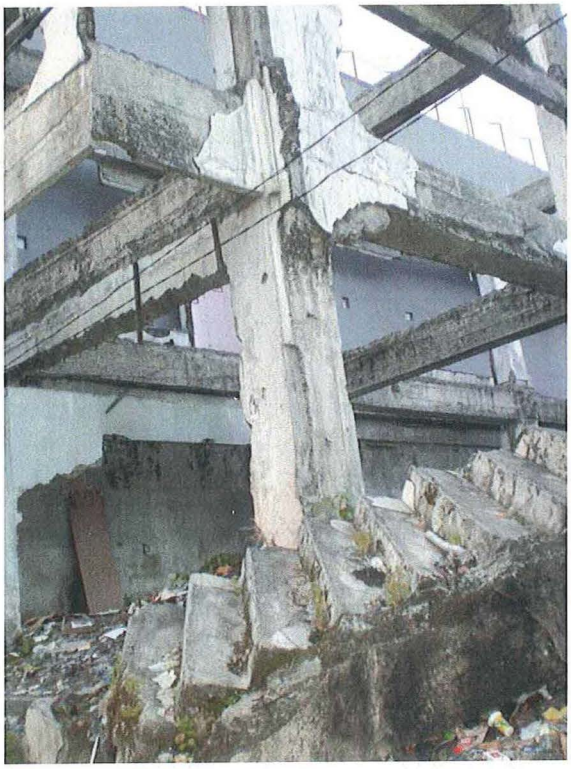

Image 3: Remnants of the 1999-2002 conflict in Ambon's city center.

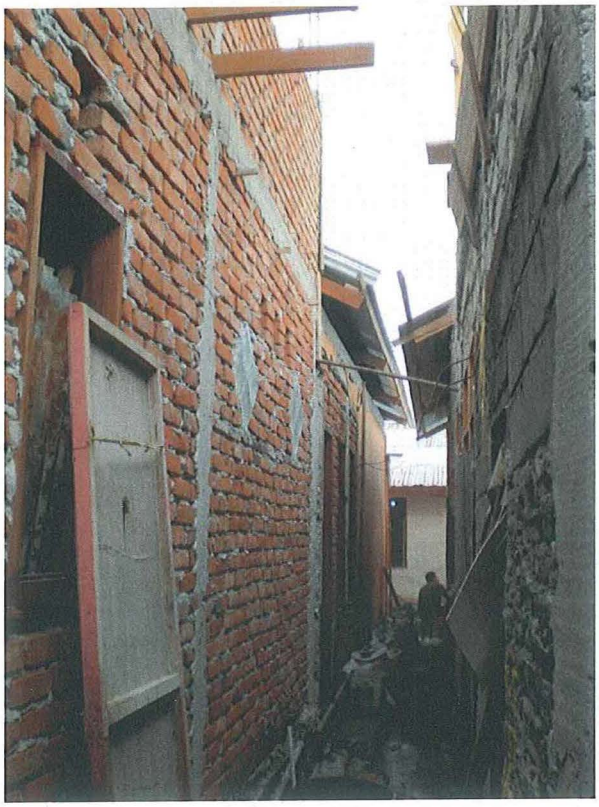

Image 4: Rebuilding of houses that were burned during an outbreak of violence in December 2011.

Image 5: Graffiti that marks the Muslim neighborhood 'Air Mata Cina' as Palestine.

Image 6: Star of David marking a Christian area in Ambon's city center

Image 7: Jamming after a group conversation at Maluku Band Community

Image 8: Meeting to prepare Badati's English classes for refugee children.

Image 9: English classes for refugee children by Badati.

Image 10: Photography and Internet as part of Ambon's popular youth culture.

Image 11: Photograph by Ambonese youth that focuses Ambon's natural beauty.

All photographs belong to the author, except for the image on the cover of this thesis and image 11. The cover image was taken by James Ajawaila when young people from the youth community groups were aiding flood victims on Ambon in August 2012. Image 11 was taken by a young Ambonese blogger (see: http://almascatie.wordpress.com/). All pictures except the cover image were taken between February and April 2012.