5. Knowledge asymmetry and transitional justice in Côte d'Ivoire¹

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INTRODUCTION

In Côte d'Ivoire, socio-political history is generally marked by violence erupting before, during and after elections. From the introduction of multi-party politics in the 1990s to the latest presidential elections of October 2020, all democratic procedures for the nomination of elected officials have been tainted with violence, with the exception of the presidential election of 2015 which was uncontested and had a relatively low turnout (Bouquet and Kassi-Djodjo, 2016). This includes verbal, physical and armed violence between the supporters or leaders of the various political parties. This brutalization of the Ivoirian political field originates in the acceptance by the social body of the use of force (acts, speech, physical elimination, war) as a means of mobilization in the political game of defending interests and defeating opponents (Vidal, 2003).

In this fragile and volatile political situation, the explosion of violence in the aftermath of the second round of presidential elections of 28 November 2010 was unprecedented (Banégas, 2011). The final results were disputed by the two main protagonists (incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and declared winner Alassane Ouattara), despite the certification of the voting process and results by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Choi Young-Jin,² plunging Côte d'Ivoire into an armed civil war. The role of international actors in certifying elections in Côte d'Ivoire has been cited as one of the factors leading to an environment hostile to the freedom, transparency and credibility of elections (Bekoe, 2017; Thérout-Bénoni, 2012). For four months, tensions between the two camps degenerated into armed fighting between the national Security and Defence Forces (FDS) loyal to Laurent Gbagbo and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI), composed of former 'Forces Nouvelles' rebels,³ who supported his rival Alassane Ouattara (Zounmenou and Lamin, 2011). The arrest of Laurent Gbagbo and his wife Simone Gbagbo in April 2011, by pro-Ouattara forces that were con-

troversially assisted by UN peacekeepers and French forces (Yebouet, 2011), marked the end of the conflict (Simonen, 2012).

During this process which led Alassane Ouattara to power, the post-election violence was tragic for many Ivoirians. Official figures indicate more than 3,000 deaths, with an additional hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, 187,266 Ivoirians seeking refuge abroad, serious human rights violations and large-scale material damage having been recorded (Amnesty International, 2013; UNGA, 2011). In addition, extensive and violent looting took place, roadblocks were set up and a vengeful public discourse was introduced (Koné, 2012). Through these channels, young militiamen and supporters of both sides committed abuses, intimidation, summary executions, sexual violence and other sorts of humiliation and mass crimes in different neighbourhoods of Abidjan and other towns, as well as among ethnic groups deemed close to one candidate or another. The magnitude of this discharge of violence in the social body was not only a response to the disputed elections, but rather should be understood as the culmination of political instability that has been present in Côte d'Ivoire since the early 1990s (Akindès, 2011).

Beyond this violence and the humanitarian crisis, the post-electoral crisis of 2010–11 had various consequences, particularly at the security and social level. The fighting between the FRCI and the FDS has, among other things, opened the door to the movement of small arms and light weapons and increased the climate of insecurity among the population. FRCI troops for example, were made of heterogeneous, disorganized and undisciplined groups of soldiers from the former rebellion; the ex-FDS members who joined before, during and after the offensive on Abidjan; and the unskilled youth enrolled during their progression (Fofana, 2011; Yebouet, 2011).

Between communities, the profound social divisions of the past have been further amplified (Charbonneau, 2013). After the death in 1993 of the post-independence leader and 'father of the nation', Félix Houphouët-Boigny, social diversity, one of the pillars of the houphouëtist political engineering, had been dismantled (Akindès, 2011). His successor, Henri Konan Bédié, developed the concept of *ivoirité*⁴ with intellectuals of his party. Launched in 1994, as a 'simple' cultural ideology of Ivoirian authenticity, *ivoirité* came to be an instrument of struggle for political power (Babo, 2012). Its intrusion into the political debate awakened latent problems of citizenship (Ivoirian versus foreigner) and community division (north versus south) within Ivoirian society (Bredeloup, 2003; Dozon, 2000). This ideology promoted, and continues to promote, a social and communal divide between the Ivoirian people which has not been addressed by successive political leaders.

It is in this fragile situation that the most recent electoral crisis arose, further accentuating the social divides and polarization of Ivoirian society. The existence of two main 'blocs' increases resentment between people (Kouamé et al.,

2015). On the one hand, there are the supporters of Laurent Gbagbo who do not consider that they were defeated in the 2010 presidential elections. For them, the 'takeover' of Alassane Ouattara was illegitimate, because it was achieved through the imposition of the international community. On the other hand, Alassane Ouattara's supporters demanded justice and reparation for the frustrations, abuses and damages to physical integrity that they suffered during the decade of governance of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), the party of Laurent Gbagbo (2000–11). This opposition has often been instrumentalized by the elite as a North-South or Christian-Muslim divide (Straus, 2011). The disintegration of social ties has thus affected social cohesion to such an extent that the Ivorian crisis has also been a crisis of trust between populations, political actors and state institutions (Ngoran, 2012; Queyraud, 2013).

Faced with this deleterious post-conflict context, the new authorities under Alassane Ouattara have put in place a set of actions to restore justice, peace and social cohesion. The consolidation of peace and the reconstruction of the social fabric are among the main political orientations of the new regime. During his inauguration on 21 May 2011, the new President, Alassane Ouattara, announced as his priorities: state reconstruction, national reconciliation, and economic recovery. In practical ways, the appropriation of this political agenda has resulted in the activation of transitional justice mechanisms and the promotion of social cohesion. Consisting of several judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, transitional justice refers to a series of responses to human rights abuses in the context of a political transition to democracy (Arthur, 2009). As a sub-domain of peacebuilding, it is perceived by many as an automatic response to the fragile conflict-exit context (Subotić, 2012). As such, this concept has risen to prominence as a policy response to violence with a certain collective understanding (Hourquebie, 2009, 2014) even though its meaning and definition are not unanimously accepted (Lefranc, 2008, 2009). Transitional justice principles are based on four main 'pillars': the right to justice or the trial of suspected criminals in national, international or hybrid jurisdictions; the right to truth or truth commissions; the right to reparation with financial and symbolic compensation of the victims; and the guarantee of non-recurrence involving demobilization programmes, security and administrative reforms (Kora and Lauvau, 2014). All these actions were applied during the Ivorian experience of exit from crisis, with a particular emphasis on national reconciliation.

By making national reconciliation a political priority, several actors have sought to take ownership of the concept, each with their own understanding and knowledge of this type of process. Very quickly, a heterogenous set of national and international institutions has been involved in the implementation of this crisis-exit process to participate in the efforts of Ivorian post-conflict reconstruction. These include technical and financial partners and donors

(United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Union (EU), United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)), international non-governmental organizations (including Search For Common Ground (SFCG), the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), Interpeace, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Care International). These also include civil society organizations and victims' associations (Action pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme (APDH), Mouvement Ivoirien des Droits de l'Homme (MIDH), Confédération des Organisations des Victimes des Crises Ivoiriennes (COVICI), Observatoire Ivoirien des Droits de l'Homme (OIDH)). However, despite this willingness to rebuild a lasting peace among the Ivoirian population, the Côte d'Ivoire process of national reconciliation and social cohesion seems to be lagging behind the other priorities announced by the Ivoirian authorities (Akindès, 2017; Banégas, 2012; Charbonneau, 2012; Faujas, 2013; Gaulme, 2012).

Given this context, and the challenge posed by the lack of progress in repairing social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire, this chapter focuses specifically on the plethora of actors involved in the 'peace market'. Moreover, the main interest is in their multiple methodologies, expertise and sources of knowledge in seeking to define and generate an Ivoirian 'social cohesion' model. Discussions will revolve around aspects such as competition in the 'knowledge market' on social cohesion, hierarchies between non-Ivoirian and Ivoirian actors, and examining various frameworks of reference for action. These all point to a significant asymmetry of knowledge with relevance for policy and practice.

The analysis presented here is based on a review of press articles and qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews. In August and September 2018, newspaper articles related to transitional justice and social cohesion were collected for the period from 2012–17 and analysed to identify the different actors around social cohesion and consolidation of peace problematics, their actions and their discourses. Notes and administrative documents, politicians' speeches, various decrees and regulations were also considered. In addition to this literature, field data was collected from January to April 2018 and from October 2018 to February 2019 in Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, but also in the West of Côte d'Ivoire, mainly in the towns of Duékoué, Guiglo and Man. Duékoué was one of the epicentres of violence during the decade of instability which preceded the post-election crisis of 2010–11. Thus, unsurprisingly, the western region of Côte d'Ivoire has been the main area for the implementation of numerous humanitarian interventions, as well as training in capacity building around peace and social cohesion. The field research process consisted of conducting 30 semi-structured interviews with key informants involving governmental institutional actors (ministry,

prefecture and municipalities), senior staff of international and local NGOs, associations of victims, and youth associations.

As a first step, the chapter will discuss the diversity of actors and interventions while highlighting the dominant characteristics of experts and expertise in this context. The chapter will then turn to the relationships between non-local 'experts' and local practitioners before making some concluding remarks on the relevance of this asymmetry of knowledge for future social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire.

FALSE START FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The Ivoirian process of exit from crisis followed the liberal ideological continuum put forward by UN agencies and other international institutions in post-conflict reconstruction contexts (Boutros-Ghali, 1992; United Nations, 2000). This continuum is a tripartite approach to peace comprising the mechanisms of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding with the underlying assumption of addressing the root causes of the conflict by improving economic aspects, human rights and democracy (Collier, 2006). By making this choice, the government authorities have sent strong signals to the international community and to the Ivoirian society of their determination to write a new page in the history of Côte d'Ivoire. In this section, we will see that the implementation of transitional justice in Côte d'Ivoire in this context of liberal peace has provided little room for negotiation among the various stakeholders. We will mainly focus on the political agenda for the implementation of judicial mechanisms as well as non-judicial processes through the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Commission Dialogue, Verité et Réconciliation – CDVR).

Setting the Transitional Justice Agenda

The transitional justice process in Côte d'Ivoire followed an approach focusing on the 'four pillars' of the UN with a national, state-sanctioned framework, and did not include any traditional mechanisms such as the *gacaca*⁵ courts that have been implemented in Rwanda (Rosoux and Mugabe, 2008) or special and hybrid courts such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone (Rodella, 2003). Ordinance No. 2011-85 of 13 May 2011, adopted by the President of the Republic establishing the CDVR, marked the beginning of the formalization of transitional justice in Côte d'Ivoire. Subsequently, with a view to strengthening the fight against impunity, the Ivoirian Head of State set up a national investigative structure: the Special Investigation Unit (Cellule Speciale d'Enquête – CSE) was established in June 2011 to initiate judicial investigations

and proceedings on the crimes committed during the post-electoral crisis. The following month, the presidential decree No. 2011-176 of 20 July 2011 commissioned the National Commission of Inquiry (Commission Nationale d'Enquête – CNE) to conduct non-judicial investigations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

In the space of three months and even before his investiture ceremony as President of the Republic, Alassane Ouattara had already developed a roadmap to lead the post-war process. What is noteworthy is that neither national consultations, nor public debates, open to a wide range of social actors, such as media, victims or opposition parties, were conducted. This lack of inclusion and participation in determining the process of peace-seeking and national reconciliation is surprising considering the context of social division in the country. The choice of a particular version of transitional justice as the way to exit from crisis was thus determined in a 'top-down' manner by the public authorities and their international partners (Gaulme, 2012). At a workshop on transitional justice in Côte d'Ivoire, a senior international NGO leader who took part in the implementation of the Ivoirian process recognized this when saying 'it is inside a room of the Golf hotel⁶ with the collaboration of international actors that the first draft of the document for the exit from crisis was elaborated'.⁷ The nature and speed of the choices made around transitional justice ensured the influx of capital from institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (Charbonneau, 2013; Ricard, 2017). However, they also ensured exclusion of the general population from dialogue and decision-making on the nature of transitional justice needed in Côte d'Ivoire.

International and National Judicial Proceedings

Since the setting of a clear agenda by the Ivoirian state, a series of challenges and distortions have been noted, resulting in partial achievement of the stated transitional justice aims. Relying on a statement of recognition of the International Criminal Court⁸ (ICC) by Côte d'Ivoire, the country being at that time not yet a state party to the Rome Statute, the ICC initiated investigations on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire on 3 October 2011. Three cases concerning Laurent and Simone Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé were brought before the Court. Laurent Gbagbo was transferred to the ICC on 30 November 2011, and was followed in March 2014 by Charles Blé Goudé, Minister of Youth in the government formed by Gbagbo after the presidential election of November 2010. These two cases were joined on 11 March 2015. As for the former first lady, President Alassane Ouattara refused the transfer of Simone Gbagbo to The Hague. On 15 January 2019, after three years of trial, Laurent Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé were acquitted of all charges of crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 and 2011.

In addition to the activities of the ICC, trials and judgments for the perpetrators of the crimes of the post-electoral crisis have taken place in the national courts. Of the 79 accused, mainly Gbagbo supporters, about 15 people were acquitted, while several executives of the former regime were convicted. While domestic trials were still underway, during his National Day address of 6 August 2018, Alassane Ouattara announced the signing of Ordinance No. 2018-669 granting amnesty for crimes related to the post-electoral crisis of 2010–11. Some 800 detainees and persons in exile (including a few of his supporters) who had been indicted (CNE, 2012) saw their sentences erased and prosecutions stopped.

The refusal of the Ivoirian authorities to transfer the wife of the former president to the ICC based on the subsidiarity principle, according to which the Ivoirian courts are now able to judge crimes against humanity, and her subsequent trial in Côte d'Ivoire, have highlighted the limits of the Ivoirian judiciary system. In March 2017, Simone Gbagbo was acquitted of the alleged crimes committed during the post-electoral crisis after the trial qualified as irregular. Moreover, the findings of the investigative reports of the national judicial and non-judicial bodies established by the government authorities clearly identified perpetrators of crimes in both camps (CNE, 2012). However, by repeatedly adopting amnesty measures, hailed⁹ by some and denounced by other national and international human rights NGOs and victims' associations, various Ivoirian authorities have, since the eruption of violence in 2002, contributed to obstructing the judicial avenues for redress. As a reminder, during the decade 2000–10, two amnesty laws, No. 2003-309 of 8 August 2003 and No. 2007-457 of 12 April 2007, had already been passed by Laurent Gbagbo without having a real impact on national reconciliation. In the end, faced with the image of an intransigent government with the mantra 'réconciliation d'accord, mais justice d'abord [justice before reconciliation]',¹⁰ Alassane Ouattara opted for opportunistic decisions according to political contexts. The 2018 amnesty decision was taken with the 2020 elections in mind, and without prior approval of the Ivoirian parliament. It is also worth noting that accusations of victor's justice from both national and international quarters (Malewa, 2015) are reinforced by such acts, as well as the boundaries placed around the reach of the ICC into Ivoirian affairs.

Truth Seeking, Reconciliation and Reparations for the Victims

The search for truth and reparations for the victims in the Ivoirian process was as interwoven as it had been in South Africa. The CDVR was established in July 2011. Its aim was to work independently to reconcile and strengthen social cohesion among all the communities living in Côte d'Ivoire. However, after three years, the work carried out by the CDVR seemed to have failed

to achieve the desired effect of laying the foundations for a genuine process of national reconciliation (Lopes, 2015). The appointment of Charles Konan Banny, politician and former Prime Minister, as the President of the CDVR was problematic. Many actors wanted to see this responsibility vested in the hands of neutral and consensual personalities from civil society or religious leaders.¹¹ Charles Konan Banny was on the side of the ruling party but had ambitions to participate in the 2015 presidential elections as an opposition candidate. Even though he withdrew from the race before the contest, the climate of suspicion created by these presidential ambitions has contributed to instilling mistrust between the government and some actors in the reconciliation process. This ambiguous position has weakened the conduct of the truth-seeking process.

Following the CDVR, a National Commission for Reconciliation and Compensation for Victims (CONARIV) was set up in March 2015. This body was to finalize the work of the CDVR by consolidating the database of victims in Côte d'Ivoire as a basis for a compensation programme. In April 2016, after one year of activity, CONARIV presented its progress report. Of the 874,056 files submitted to the verification unit, more than 64 per cent have been rejected. This rejection has been the object of protest by some victims' associations (COVICI, 2017, 2018). According to these victims' associations, CONARIV did not take into account certain categories of persons (amputees, quadriplegic and vulnerable as a result of war experiences) in their selection criteria. The contestability of the consolidated list of war victims has thus challenged the credibility of the work conducted by that institution.

In addition, in the realization of its mission CONARIV worked in collaboration with the National Social Cohesion Programme (Programme National de Cohésion Sociale, PNCS). Created in 2012, the objective of this programme is to promote social cohesion and national reconciliation through rehabilitation and community dialogue. With the extension of its mandate until 2020, the PNCS has inherited the work of other committees and is currently the sole institution in charge of the issues of national reconciliation and social cohesion. However, it is yet to start the main compensation phase of its work. In addition to the lack of visibility of the PNCS activities, according to Piccolino (2017), the social cohesion process masks a series of ambiguities. On the one hand, the actions and speeches undertaken around social cohesion, such as the building of peace at the local level, have not been supported by actions of peace at the national level (between political elites). On the other hand, in this vein, the programming of the process of social cohesion has not looked at the resolution of the real issues that paralyse reconciliation such as dialogue with the opposition, responsibility of political leaders from all camps combined in successive crises, and restoring the confidence of all parties in the electoral game, among other issues (Piccolino, 2017).

Despite this set of difficulties and the doubt about the reliability of their results, various institutions put in place since 2011 have, to some extent, produced knowledge that can serve as a memory of past events and foster social cohesion. Nevertheless, looking more closely, the recommendations stemming from these non-judicial mechanisms have not been fully implemented. Moreover, the dissemination of the CDVR report was limited and was not disclosed to the public until recently, meaning that the list of victims of CONARIV handed over to the PNCS remains only in the hands of the public administration. Since the process is driven by the political and administrative elite, its dynamism depends largely on the Ivoirian public authorities and their development partners. These elements reflect a lack of political will, leading to the belief that the implementation of these instruments was an extraversion strategy (Ricard, 2017) in order to satisfy the 'trickle-down' economic vision of President Alassane Ouattara (Akindès, 2017). As soon as he came to power, President Alassane Ouattara, who is an economist and former technocrat of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) and the Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), showed his ambitious vision to transform Côte d'Ivoire into 'an emerging country by 2020'. This 'vision of emergence', which envisages a socially inclusive economic model (IMF, 2013), has structured Ivoirian political and social discourse while leaving political issues, a primary source of conflict, in the background. The purpose of this political orientation was therefore to lay the foundations for national reconstruction and peacebuilding through economic development.

POWER GAMES AND KNOWLEDGE ASYMMETRY AROUND THE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

From setting its political agenda to its implementation, the Ivoirian transitional justice process has benefited from the assistance of external actors. Public actions in favour of transitional justice have been supported by other non-state actors as illustrated by the two following citations:

At the very beginning, UNOCI provided technical assistance and expertise to the CDVR, as the concept [transitional justice] was quite new and unclear. That is not all, UNOCI has also provided financial support for the success of the process. One million and five hundred thousand US dollars have been made available under the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund [...] but, it is the CDVR that is ahead, and we are in support.¹²

[...] I believe that UNOCI has been a very important partner for us with whom we have had training workshops, and other trainings. Training first for ourselves, as actors, because war is not something we can foresee and therefore when you have to go to into the reparation process, there is no reference, there is no model and

sometimes you have to fumble. And I think that UNOCI has been a great help for us in training.¹³

External actors which are supporting the Ivoirian transitional justice agenda are both technical and financial partners or donors such as the United Nations system, USAID, the EU and the chanceries (Germany, France, Japan) and international NGOs (Interpeace, SFCG, ICTJ, IRC, Care), as well as regional (WANEP) and local organizations (APDH, OIDH, COVICI, Bonne Action). Activities of these practitioners included caravans and awareness-raising tours for peace, radio broadcasts, training sessions, installation of peace committees within local communities, infrastructure rehabilitation programmes (e.g. Presidential Emergency Programme, Infrastructure Renaissance Project of Côte d'Ivoire), and the production of surveys and study reports. In the same way as has been said of the humanitarian field, post-conflict reconstruction processes are becoming a 'peace market' (Montelos, 2009) with clearly demarcated roles for different types of actors: material, financial, experience and knowledge supply from NGOs and international institutions; demands for peace, cohesion and reconciliation by political elites; and programme implementation by local NGOs.¹⁴ Recognizing the existence of such a market does not imply that there is a static set of relations between these types of actors. Indeed, there are negotiations, confrontations, resistances, imbalances in defining and redefining the asymmetry of knowledge. The next section of this chapter will therefore look at how power games between transitional justice stakeholders have been shaped in and through asymmetrical knowledge relations.

Power Struggles between International Actors and Local NGOs

Before 2011, the military-political crisis of 2002 had already attracted a range of humanitarian NGOs that had been growing in number in the period immediately following the 2010 elections due to the deteriorating humanitarian situation (Adou, 2016). As a result, most of these early NGO interventions responded primarily to the emergency situation. Then, as the post-conflict socio-political climate of 2011 'subsided', the interveners and the actions of the emergency gave way to another wave of NGOs, those specializing in peace.¹⁵ This wave of international NGOs has entered this fragile socio-political context, sometimes based on the express request of the state. The evolution of the socio-political landscape and the arrival of new players have redistributed the cards of the political game causing an imbalance of power between various stakeholders. This imbalance of power has been reflected in terms of unequal access to material resources such as the financing of activities, the operational means of human capacity, logistical skills, offices, and computer and technical

tools necessary for the implementation of a transitional process. This new context of multiple actors has also influenced the production of knowledge around peace in the sense that newcomers, with post-conflict experience from other contexts, have positioned themselves as the main producers of discourse and knowledge on and for the Ivoirian post-conflict case.

At the end of the conflict, the Ivoirian economy and administrative infrastructure were almost non-existent. In addition, with the inclusion of transitional justice into the broader peacebuilding strategy, the vast majority of local administrators and practitioners were 'novices' in these priority topics, in comparison to other, newer stakeholders such as SFCG, Interpeace or Care International. Indeed, external actors have, to their credit, rich experience in post-conflict context management, while local actors for the most part were in their first post-conflict experience. Prior to 2011, actors such as UNOCI and UN agencies with some donors such as the World Bank had implemented and financed important projects such as the Post-Conflict Assistance Project (PAPC) resulting from the recommendations of the Ouagadougou Agreement signed in March 2007.

After the post-election crisis, UNOCI, UN agencies and international actors continued to provide financial support and implemented awareness-raising projects on social cohesion and peace in some towns and villages of Côte d'Ivoire. As a local NGO Manager in Duékoué said during our interview in January 2019: 'many NGOs have started some activities here in Duékoué. However, the social cohesion side was much developed by UNOCI and a few other organizations. These were mainly USAID and NGO Verbatims.'¹⁶ Apart from the creation of the national bodies, the vast majority of interventions such as peace awareness, the rehabilitation of administrative and community infrastructures, the establishment of a peace committee and community dialogue sessions, and the publication of study reports were conducted and carried out by international NGOs in collaboration with local actors. In such a situation, the state and the local actors were therefore in a relationship of negotiation with the international actors to set up a process for which they did not control all the levers.

Furthermore, the lack of funding and operational materials for local NGOs such as office space, field vehicles or computers meant that external actors were those driving the interventions. This is clearly articulated by the above-mentioned manager of a local NGO in Duékoué:

what the NGOs do not have is only the financial means (...) so when they [INGOs] provide funds, instead of referring to the [local] actors, they have their own vision. For example, when they arrive, their plan may be to provide support to pregnant women and not to the whole population. Women's pregnancy might not even be a major issue in the community. That is why they often fail when they come here.

They have financial means, but they do not refer to the right people. As far as we are concerned, we have not received any funding yet, but we are doing our best.¹⁷

This uneven distribution of resources between actors has therefore contributed to high levels of field deployment by international actors who implement activities based on their frameworks of reference, experiences and practices learned from other contexts. Furthermore, in many situations, these activities have not addressed the structural drivers of the conflict. For example, in the Guémon region of Western Côte d'Ivoire, one of the epicentres of the post-electoral crisis with several hundreds of killings (Carrefour, Nahibly camp), it is recognized that the land issue is one of the driving factors to the outbreak of violence (Chauveau and Bobo, 2003; Chauveau et al., 2012), and that it continues to be at the heart of political and socioeconomic relations (Koné et al., 2017). However, the many activities implemented by external interveners with support from local actors have not addressed this problem. Our investigations in this region indicate that several actions for post-conflict reconstruction have been conducted, but few have focused exclusively on the issue of rural land tenure. This sensitive issue was mentioned on an ad hoc basis during community outreach activities or during training sessions for peace and social cohesion. As a leader of a local NGO pointed out during a discussion:

I can give you an example concerning [the] land issue. What we missed in this area is truth and openness. There is a need to appease everyone. There are many people here who no longer have any right on the land they used in the past to generate resources for their family needs. They lost everything during the crisis [many local communities had temporarily fled to neighbouring Liberia to escape violence during the post-election crisis in 2011], but they know the new landlords. The authorities just have to decide. The real owner who worked the land is well known. We shouldn't ask him to give up and say that he is no longer the owner of the land. Where will he go after unfairly losing everything? There should be a way to appease everybody. If the land is five hectares, the authorities can share among those who claim ownership of the land. This will bring people closer as they will have to work on the same land. It is not good that one of the two protagonists gets everything when the other has nothing. After that you want to gather both of them in the same room for a training on social cohesion or peace. This can never work when everyone knows that something is missing. People should tell the truth and if there is an issue, we decide in order to allow the other to survive and appease everyone. Land issue is a reality here in Duékoué. It is the basis of many things, many crises and a lot of twists and turns. Land is the main problem here, any other issue is not really important.¹⁸

The lack of financial resources makes local actors dependent on the orientations of donors and other actors and the quasi-exclusivity of operational resources, particularly those of financing, in the hands of international practi-

tioners is one of the key factors in determining their dominant positioning in this competitive arena.

Knowledge Asymmetry between Actors

In the Ivoirian context, the lack of a common framework of reference between the various transitional justice actors, particularly among those involved in the process of national reconciliation and social cohesion, has contributed to the legitimization of knowledge produced outside of Côte d'Ivoire. The knowledge and know-how, the theoretical skills and the experience held by those actors external to Côte d'Ivoire, have structured the dependency/interdependence relationship between stakeholders. In practice, the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Cohesion has been in charge of coordinating the multiplicity of actions and stakeholders. This coordination has been realized through the organization of training workshops with local actors, international NGOs and donors, national and international conferences and press releases, among other activities. However, this coordination has been complicated by the fact that no reference document (e.g. a matrix or guide), which would, for example, define a single official list of victims (Fokou and N'Da, 2018), has yet been developed to guide all these actions, and the production of a national policy document is still ongoing at the time of writing. At a workshop organized by PNCS in collaboration with the Human Rights Division of UNOCI, its Director¹⁹ described this situation:

I invite all the actors working for social cohesion, to bring together their different efforts in order to define in a participatory way the strategic lines of action for reconciliation and social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire. The standardization of national life today requires a more strategic approach to all the issues related to national reconciliation and social cohesion in terms of the design, planning and implementation of actions in the field for greater efficiency. Spontaneous and disparate actions must gradually disappear in order to make room for those who are developing and are taking part in a thoughtful and concerted framework, with a more forward-looking perspective.²⁰

As mentioned above, several actions have been carried out by various stakeholders in an environment devoid of a regulatory framework. In the field, this lack of regulation has fostered the acceptance of the expertise of international NGOs. Indeed, in this context of a lack of a common framework of conduct, international actors have relied on theoretical frameworks and experience gained during similar processes in other countries, contexts defined as success stories (Jones, 2015), to conduct their programmes while local actors have not always had the ability to challenge this type of external know-how. In addition, the 'transfer of knowledge' from international NGOs to local actors has

been a characteristic of the asymmetry of knowledge. In the implementation of the programmes, local actors are reduced to the task of executing projects designed by others. They receive a support package including financial accompaniment, equipment and training modules to carry out their missions. These training modules, which address various themes around peace, inter-community dialogue, reconciliation and social cohesion, are designed by USAID, UNICEF, NRC and others, with the objective of being appropriated by local actors and then transmitted to a target population. However, on closer examination, these training spaces or 'knowledge transfer' processes in the form of capacity-building workshops have legitimized the expertise of these international institutions. A concrete example of this knowledge asymmetry is in the experience of a local NGO manager on the implementation of a 'bridging class' construction project²¹ (*classes passerelles*, in French) conducted by an international NGO with the support of the Ivoirian authorities. A bridging class is a sort of second-chance school to enable children who have been out of school or affected by age limitations to rectify their situation by reintegrating them into the formal education system. As the manager of a local NGO describes:

An international organization called ICI is currently implementing a 'bridging class' project. During the implementation we have been involved (...) I went to Abidjan for the training. The project document required a validation. When we went to validate the document, we found something else. The Ivoirian government had appointed people who came to introduce to us Malians and Guineans who have their own programs in their local languages (...) I agree that they have the experience, but in their home countries. We told them that things are different here. For what happened finally (...) they are currently implementing a 'bridging class' project in Dahoua [locality situated at about 20 km from Duékoué]. School directors have recruited worthless students in their classes, and they call them 'bridging class pupils' (...) This is not what we have been doing here. He had to search for out-of-school children who are 10 or 11 years old.²²

This example from the education sector highlights how the voices of local actors can be marginalized or neglected by international organizations, whose experts leave little room for integrating the experiences of local actors in the construction of post-conflict projects or development programmes in ways that can acknowledge the value of their experience.

REVISED SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT ACTORS

The synergy of actions between actors is a major challenge in post-conflict processes. In the Ivoirian experience, this continuous interaction work is an important element in the sense that the synergy of actions builds bridges

between different categories of actors to reduce the gap between them and ultimately facilitate peacebuilding. This section focuses on the coordination of the actions of stakeholders in the Ivoirian transitional justice process. On the one hand, it will examine the knowledge production of some stakeholders and, on the other hand, the level of collaboration between these stakeholders.

Producing Knowledge for Reconciliation and Social Cohesion

From 2011 to the present day, seven national institutions, with different mandates, were created to address issues related to the post-electoral crisis. In 2011, there was first a ministry in charge of ex-combatants and war victims, which was dissolved in November 2012. In the same year, three other entities were established: the Special Investigation Unit (CSE), the CDVR and the CNE. Then, the PNCS was set up in 2012 and CONARIV in 2015. Lastly, there was the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Compensation for War Victims (MCSIV) established in 2016. However, during the establishment of the first Government of the 3rd Republic in January 2017, the MCSIV was dissolved and its responsibilities were entrusted to the Ministry of Women, the Protection of Children, and Solidarity (MFPES), then since July 2018 to the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Cohesion and the Fight against Poverty (MSCSLP).

Based on research conducted throughout the country, three of these institutions produced and disseminated reports relevant to the social cohesion and transitional justice debates. The first document was that of the CNE, which was responsible for highlighting the post-election crimes of the period from 31 October 2010 to 15 May 2011. After a year of investigation, the Commission submitted its report to the Head of State on 8 August 2012. The second report was produced by the CDVR. Following the extension of its mandate by one additional year, it submitted its final report, which took into account the violations perpetrated in Côte d'Ivoire since the 1990s, to the Head of State on 15 December 2014. The third document, which contains the conclusions of the work of CONARIV, includes a single consolidated list of victims to receive reparation and recommendations on how this should be undertaken. The latter was handed over to President Alassane Ouattara on 19 April 2016.

However, with the exception of the CNE investigation report, the other documents have been highly criticized (COVICI, 2018; Lopes, 2015). The report produced by the CNE was praised by national and international observers as it was one of the first documents from a national institution that clearly established responsibility for violations committed by both camps. During an interview, an official of an international NGO in Abidjan recognized that:

This report was appreciated by all. This is the very first report emanating from a state institution acknowledging that the violations were committed by both camps

in the conflict. It also questioned the role of the dozors [traditional hunters], the FRCI, the *Forces Nouvelles*, etc., who also committed crimes (...) It is also a report that is available, with clear figures, that can be found at the National Commission of Inquiry (...) so this has provided satisfaction. In fact, they listened to us, they made a good report that was praised elsewhere.²³

The conclusions of the other two reports were disputed. The late release of the CDVR report was one of the elements of this debate. It was made public two years after being handed over to the Head of State. In addition, its content failed to meet expectations. The recent research work of Piccolino (2017) on the process of social cohesion in Côte d'Ivoire expresses that dissatisfaction:

In the end, CDVR succeeded in interviewing 70,000 people – victims, perpetrators and witnesses. The majority of its work had little impact however. As a result of the quarrels between Charles Konan Banny and the Government, and the latter's reservation in relation to the CDVR conclusions, the Commission's hearings have for example not been retransmitted by State television. Similarly, the final report, submitted to the President on 15 December 2014, was made public only two years later. The passages concerning the opinions of the voters of Gbagbo on the 2010 elections and the responsibilities of Ouattara in the crisis were considered unacceptable by the Government and redacted from the published version. (Piccolino, 2017: 54)²⁴

Like the CDVR, controversies have emerged around the management and publication of the CONARIV report. The COVICI produced a report to denounce the poor economic management and slowness of CONARIV, while questioning the consolidated list of victims developed by this institution. This list rejected about 64 per cent of the requests for reparations because of the inability of the Commission to contact certain victims, the lack of evidence for certain files, duplicates and poorly informed forms. However, for victims' associations, the rejection criteria are questionable. Furthermore, the MFPES considered that the list inherited from CONARIV was difficult to use (COVICI, 2018).

These differentiated appraisals around the documents produced by these national institutions undermine the credibility of the knowledge that has been generated. In a process of dealing with the past, the construction of a collective memory of past events unanimously recognized by all social actors is an important prerequisite for turning the page and promoting non-repetition of the conflict (Yazami, 2007). This requires first of all the clear and precise identification of all perpetrators of violence (including instigators and executioners) regardless of whether they belong to the victorious side or not, and then the opening of legal proceedings against them to fight against impunity and promote justice. It is in this sense that the CNE report has fully played its role. Secondly, the other equally indispensable part concerns the question of caring for the victims of the conflict (Rondeau, 2016). Multi-scale compensation (financial compensation, symbolic compensation, request for a public apology,

rehabilitation or construction of community infrastructure, etc.) for victims is a key element in this type of operation to contribute to healing and reconciliation while curbing the rise of resentments. However, as we have seen, neither the CDVR and CONARIV, nor even the current ministry in charge of these issues, have really found solutions. This has been the case since the outbreak of the military-political crisis in 2002, when the reparation processes stalled.

It is the 'top-down' approach to these compensation processes that raises both the problems of its application and knowledge production. Indeed, the bearers of this agenda are political actors who share responsibility for the abuses committed either through their speeches (Fofana, 2011) or by supporters claiming to be of their political persuasion, which leaves little room for the victims' voice in such a socio-political situation. To date, a large majority of political actors, as protagonists in these conflicts, have not yet publicly apologized to war victims. Another element is the definition of the status of victim and the method of compensation. From the ministry to victims' associations, the criteria for identifying a war victim are not identical. A consistent gap exists between the list of the CNE, CONARIV and those in the hands of victims' associations. Similarly, the process of compensation is unclear, because there has yet to be a clearly defined model and process put forward by the Ivoirian government which would enable war victims to receive compensation. A lack of knowledge in the sense of a shared understanding and definitions of key terminology across government institutions has stalled, and it was indeed stalled by the political process and has thus negatively affected the implementation of the reparation programme. In addition, the adoption of a top-down approach in the victim compensation process makes it difficult or even impossible to take into account the knowledge produced by non-state actors. The knowledge produced by victims' associations has little legitimacy and thus impact vis-à-vis those of public administrations. However, these associations have identified the victims of war in the first place and therefore have lists that are in many cases different from the official lists, thus creating disputes. Here, the vertical approach adopted leads to misunderstandings between stakeholders.

Weak Collaboration between Reconciliation Actors and Social Cohesion Programmes

Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire, and the western region of Côte d'Ivoire have been the focus of many humanitarian interventions and capacity-building trainings around peace and social cohesion. As elaborated above, these two localities paid a heavy price during the decade of instability, during and after the post-election violence of 2010 (Amnesty International, 2013). Similarly, in these regions, international and local NGOs have carried out several projects and field surveys. Their aim was to support the actions of

the Ivoirian authorities. For example, Interpeace, an international NGO based in Geneva and active in Côte d'Ivoire since 2013, under the invitation of the President of the CDVR, conducted participatory research on the dynamics of conflicts in the West and then in Abidjan. This study was based on a participatory action-research method. At the end of the investigations, a film was produced, a study report issued, and a results dissemination workshop organized in July 2015. In a similar way, another NGO – WANEP-Côte d'Ivoire – spent two years from 2014–16 carrying out a conflict management programme in four towns in western Côte d'Ivoire (Danané, Touleupleu, Bloléquin and Taï). According to the project leader, nearly 13 social conflicts were managed through population awareness sessions and dialogue sessions between conflicting parties.²⁵ At the end of this programme, a stocktaking workshop was held, and the study report produced was distributed both to the local administrative and security authorities (*préfets*, *sous-préfets*, security forces, and others) and to the national authorities (Ministry of Interior, MFPES) through its National Secretariat based in Abidjan.

It is worth noting that those two and many other organizations have carried out their activities, projects and research programmes in the same area and with various procedures. In the Ivoirian case, practitioners have multiplied this type of action sometimes without real coordination between them. However, some implementing actors have noted this lack of collaboration among different stakeholders in the social cohesion process:

From a Ministry of National Reconciliation, we later moved to a transversal entity, integrating the notion of social cohesion and reconciliation in the framework of transitional justice. From a [truth] commission, emerged a National Commission for Compensation of Victims, that also produced a report. In the meantime, the [truth] commission functioned in tandem with the PNCS but without close transversal links between both institutions (...) The mistake that was made, in my opinion, is that these two institutions did not talk to each other. These two institutions had no collaboration platform while they had the same target and in the same country.²⁶

This point of view illustrates the context in which national public organizations have worked, thus showing the communication deficit between them. Another view on this was articulated by the official of another international NGO:

There are NGOs working in the construction of the public service. This is because the partners, the actors, the funders believe that not everything can go through the state. We have to go through other civil society organizations and involve NGOs. But unfortunately, the problem is that many NGOs do not report to the state. The other thing is that when they conduct activities, there is no continuity and, in that case, there is no consistency.²⁷

The main ideas emanating from these remarks are: the lack of coordination between civil society organizations and state entities; the lack of sustainability of NGO actions over a long period; and the failure to take into account the knowledge produced by civil society in the decision-making of political actors. It is noticeable that collaboration between NGOs themselves on the one hand, and between public institutions on the other hand, and finally between NGOs and public institutions, has been insufficient to support the circulation of knowledge around the Ivoirian post-conflict reconstruction process. Each actor was guided by their own action logics without always taking into account the other actors and the environment in which they were working. The asymmetry between the actors in the reconstruction process therefore was spread across multiple levels. This has helped to maintain the gap between these different actors in the process of emerging from the crisis.

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on knowledge production around the Ivoirian transitional justice process by focusing on the asymmetrical relations between stakeholders and the resulting asymmetries of knowledge. The elements mobilized for our reflection were the relations between local and international actors and the production of knowledge generated by them in this reconstruction process. Our attention was mainly drawn to the progress of national reconciliation between the Ivoirian populations. Despite the commitment of the Ivoirian authorities and their development partners to addressing the root causes of the conflict, this major national reconciliation project has reached a deadlock and is struggling to produce the expected results, a decade later.

By first looking at the Ivoirian experience of transitional justice in general, we showed that the politicization of the transitional justice process from its conception has had a negative impact on its implementation. The political decision to make a particular version of transitional justice the main post-conflict mechanism was taken without any national consultation with the wider Ivoirian society – as if the aspirations of people who have experienced the violence of the conflict and its consequences did not matter. Moreover, the distortions observed as a result of the choices made by the political actors themselves in the implementation of certain political decisions have undermined the efforts and hopes for the success of such a process. The Ivoirian government's refusal to extradite Simone Gbagbo to the ICC and the 2018 Amnesty Law are illustrative examples. The failure of opportunistic political decision-making from above demonstrates the imperative need to socially co-construct the processes of post-conflict transformation and peacebuilding. In other words, crisis-exit and peacebuilding processes must engage with and involve all social actors (victims, civil society, political actors, etc.) at all

stages through national consultation, from the onset and the establishment of a monitoring committee, during the implementation of the process, and in the implementation of the recommendations.

The analysis of the relationships between international actors (donors, international institutions, NGOs, as well as the UN system) and local actors highlighted that the implementation of transitional justice has evolved into a competitive arena where operational and financial resources were mainly held by international practitioners. As for local actors, they were reduced to the role of implementer for projects designed by others. This situation has fostered dependency/interdependency relationships dominated by international actors. In addition to technical and financial skills, the comparison between experiences and knowledge imported from similar but external contexts and those from local experiences has led to an asymmetry of knowledge between stakeholders in this process. In such transitional justice contexts, external actors should therefore rethink their theoretical and methodological approaches by integrating the reference frameworks and ways of working of local actors to rebalance the skills involved.

Finally, the synergy of actions between these different practitioners still needs to be improved by strengthening the credibility of the knowledge produced, especially by organizations created specifically to shed light on the past and provide historical facts and shape memory. This requires greater collaboration between these different stakeholders in the Ivoirian crisis recovery process. This leads us to say that understanding the production of knowledge on peace, particularly on the theoretical and methodological foundations mobilized by the various stakeholders, is a research axis to be explored in order to promote the integration of local realities and knowledge into post-conflict reconstruction processes, which will ultimately contribute to the success of peacebuilding processes. Admittedly, the positive results of such processes will only be realized over a long period of time. Nevertheless, the new wave of violence accompanying the October 2020 presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire sounded as a negative score in the measurement of success of the ongoing reconciliation process. If the root causes have not been addressed in depth, if local realities have not been fully taken into account, what should we expect?

NOTES

1. The research for this article was kindly supported by a grant of the Swiss Program for Research on Global Issues for Development which is jointly funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).
2. 'Statement on the Certification of the Result of the Second Round of the Presidential Election Held on 28 November 2010', United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, accessed 31 March 2020 at <https://reliefweb.int/report/c%C3%B4te>

-divoire/c%C3%B4te-divoire-statement-second-round-presidential-election-held-28-november-2010

3. The Armed Forces of the Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) are composed of northern army units that mutinied in September 2002 after a failed military coup against Laurent Gbagbo. Those rebellious northern soldiers called themselves the Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) that established its headquarters in the central town of Bouake and imposed its control over the northern half of the country until 2011.
4. The *ivoirité* is the Ivoirian version of modern nationalism (Akindès, 2004).
5. *Gacaca* means 'grass' in Kinyarwanda, and by extension 'justice on the grass'.
6. Hotel du Golf is a luxury hotel located in Abidjan-Cocody. This hotel hosted Alassane Ouattara and his allies during the post-electoral crisis and was the headquarters of the resistance (from December 2010 to April 2011).
7. Remarks gathered at the international workshop on transitional justice in Côte d'Ivoire, organised at Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques en Côte d'Ivoire (CSRS), Abidjan-Adiopodoumé Km 17 (23–24 April 2018).
8. Côte d'Ivoire was not a party to the Rome Statute when, on 18 April 2003, it accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC; on 14 December 2010 and on 3 May 2011, the Presidency of Côte d'Ivoire confirmed the declaration of recognition of the jurisdiction of the Court. On 15 February 2013, Côte d'Ivoire ratified the Rome Statute.
9. The allied political parties of the RHDP (ruling party) as well as opposition parties (EDS, FPI, among others) welcomed the amnesty measure.
10. This formula has been used by Ivoirian authorities to mark their preference for justice in the reconciliation process. During a meeting with a delegation from the Congress of Young Patriots (COJEP) created by Charles Blé Goudé on 31 January 2013 in Abidjan Plateau, Hamed Bakayoko, the Minister of Interior, said: 'But if we want to prosper, if we want to improve our society, we cannot go without justice.' 'Hamed Bakayoko', *Le Patriote Politique*, accessed 31 March 2020 at <https://news.abidjan.net/h/450533.html>
11. Especially in countries such as Togo or South Africa, truth commissions are placed under the direction of religious actors or academics.
12. Extracted from the speech of the head of the Transitional Justice Unit of the Human Rights Division of UNOCI, press service, 2014.
13. Unpublished speech extract, head of governmental institution, April 2018.
14. Interview with two local NGO managers in Duékoué, January 2019.
15. Arrival of Interpeace, ICTJ in 2012.
16. Interview with NGO leader, Duékoué, January 2019.
17. Interview with NGO leader, Duékoué, January 2019.
18. Interview with head of NGO, Duékoué, January 2018.
19. Mariétou Koné, Director of the PNCS, now Minister for Social Cohesion, Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty.
20. SCRP, 9 December 2014. 'Réconciliation et cohésion sociale', PNCS, accessed 31 March 2020 at www.pncs.ci/page.php?page=info_actualite&id_activ=186. See Mariétou Koné, DG PNCS, Abidjan, December 2014.
21. The bridge class project is an NGO-led educational programme that merges two classes (EC and CM) to enable children whose school age has been delayed by socio-political crises to be reintegrated into the Ivoirian education system.
22. Interview with local NGO manager, Duékoué, January 2019.
23. Interview with head of INGO, Abidjan, April 2018.

24. This is reflected in a comparison between a confidential summary of the CDVR report obtained by the author of this article and the published report. 'Rapport Final', CDVR, accessed 31 March 2020 at http://www.gouv.ci/doc/presse/1477497207RAPPORT%20FINAL_CDVR.pdf
25. Interview with the program manager, WANEP-Côte d'Ivoire, January 2018.
26. Interview with head of INGO, Abidjan, April 2018.
27. Interview with head of INGO, Abidjan, January 2018.

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