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Reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka

A study on reconciliation possibilities after a victor's peace

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Abstract

In 2009, the 26 years long, brutal Sri Lankan civil war between the separatist terrorist group “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam” (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government came to an end. The government eradicated the LTTE, and stability was achieved through a so called “victor’s peace”, not followed by any negotiations or agreements between the warring parties. Ethnic divisions still exist in Sri Lanka, and to ensure a long lasting, sustainable peace, they need to be resolved. One school of thought concerning post-conflict rebuilding is “reconciliation”, the idea that former warring parties need to understand and reconcile with each other to prevent re-emergence of the conflict. Reconciliation can be conducted in different ways, which is something Auerbach points out as she conducted her theoretical framework “The reconciliation Pyramid”. The Pyramid consists of seven stages or ways to work with reconciliation;

Narrative Acquaintance, Narrative Acknowledgement, Empathy, Responsibility, Restitution, Apology and Narrative Incorporation.

This study aims to investigate the way in which Sri Lankan civil society organisations that work with reconciliation operate, how they view their work and what they consider to be most important in a reconciliation process. The reconciliation pyramid will be applied and a conclusion is reached on that the organisations tend to focus on narrative acquaintance and acknowledgement. If this depends on how far the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka has come, how the organisations see their responsibility or if the victor’s peace could have affected the reconciliation process is discussed.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Sri Lanka, Victor’s Peace, Civil society organisations, Reconciliation Pyramid, Auerbach

Words: 10 834

Characters: 69 939

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1 Introduction

When the brutal, 26 year long civil war in Sri Lanka ended in May 2009, it was through a so-called victor's peace – the government side eradicated the separatist terrorist-group “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam” (from here on LTTE).¹ The primary objective of the LTTE was to create a separate state for the Sri Lankan Tamils, the second largest ethnic group next to the Sri Lankan Sinhalese, in the northern parts of the island.² The conflict was asymmetrical and affected the Sri Lankan population in many ways – some estimates of civilian casualties during the conflict are as high as 100 000.³ The civil war had a clear identity dimension.

Even though the conflict has officially ended, there are still many people in Sri Lanka suffering. In 2011, 300 000 were still internally displaced⁴, and disputes between the different identity-groups still remain – interaction between the groups is difficult as they do not speak the same language and have different views and narratives of the other and their history.⁵

In order for the conflict not to re-emerge, the roots of the conflict, being the ethnic and religious divisions, need to be addressed. Many scholars agree that a stable, lasting peace cannot be achieved while conflict divides are still running deep.⁶ How to best build a lasting peace, and what is most important, is not as widely agreed upon. One field of study is that of reconciliation, that views the former warring parties in an identity conflict as coming together and reconciling as the most important part of creating a lasting peace.⁷ What kinds of reconciliation efforts are necessary, how, and by who they should be carried out is disputed among scholars as well as those working with reconciliation.

¹ Höglund, Kristine & Orjuela, Camilla, *Winning the peace: conflict prevention after a victor's peace in Sri*

² *ibid* p. 20

³ Sriram, Chandra Lekha, *Sri Lanka – Atrocities, Accountability, and the Decline of Rule of Law*, 2014 p. 61

⁴ Höglund & Orjuela, p. 30

⁵ Jayaweera, Padma D., *Language as a Tool of Reconciliation and Ethnic Harmony: A Case Study of Sri Lanka*, 2010, p. 99

⁶ Fischer, Martina, *Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Theory and Practice*, 2011, p. 406

⁷ *ibid* p. 406

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine what reconciliation efforts have been made by Sri Lankan local actors, that is civil society organisation that work with reconciliation, and what outlook they have on reconciliation. How do they work, what are their aims and how do they see reconciliation? How far has the society come in the reconciliation process? To analyse the reconciliation process, Auerbach's "reconciliation pyramid"⁸ that will be explained later on will be applied as a theoretical framework. This makes the study cumulative, gives it an inner-disciplinary relevance and an opportunity to contribute to the theoretical study of reconciliation. The reconciliation pyramid consists of seven different stages, or ways to work with, reconciliation. The stages include acknowledging the other party's narrative, showing of empathy towards the other, taking responsibility for abuses committed etc. The seven stages will be the basis for the study. Looking at efforts made by civil society organisations will make it possible to analyse the reconciliation process through a local, grass-root perspective, and to analyse how civil society actors see reconciliation. The extra-disciplinary relevance lies in the importance of reconciliation work in post-conflict societies, and in seeing how local actors can influence the reconciliation process in the circumstances of a victor's peace.

The study aims to be descriptive, albeit analytical, but does not claim to explain why the reconciliation process looks the way it does. However, the results will be analysed and discussed with Sri Lanka's victor's peace in mind.

1.1.1 Research Question

Given the purpose of the study, the research question is:

“How can we understand the Sri Lankan local civil society's organisations' efforts towards reconciliation through Auerbach's reconciliation pyramid?”

With the following analysis points:

- “How do civil society organisations working with reconciliation in Sri Lanka describe themselves?”
- “What do the civil society organisations in Sri Lanka strive for in terms of reconciliation?”
- “What practical efforts towards reconciliation have been taken by local civil society organisations in Sri Lanka?”

⁸ Auerbach, Yehudith, *The Reconciliation Pyramid – A narrative-based framework for analysing conflicts*, 2009

The study will be conducted without knowing the state of the Sri Lankan reconciliation process beforehand. However, a hypothesis is that the reconciliation process has not come very far, due to the victor's peace and the idea that, for now, the former warring parties do not need to reconcile with each other to keep the peace in the country, since one of the sides were almost completely eradicated.

Given that the study only focuses on the work of non-governmental organisations, and not the efforts of other actors such as the Sri Lankan government, it is most likely that the study shows that non-official efforts, deriving from grassroots, are more likely to be found.

2 Previous research and theoretical framework

2.1 Previous Research

Research has been conducted on the post-war society in Sri Lanka and reconciliation in general. Camilla Orjuela, for instance, has for several years researched and published articles about the Sri Lankan civil war and the post-war society. She has written articles on the Sri Lankan civil society during the conflict where she concludes that the civil society "...is neither uniform, neutral or inherently pro-peace", and show that the Sri Lankan civil society is divided, for instance between the Tamil and the Sinhalese.⁹ Moreover, she has, together with Jonas Lindberg, conducted research on the state of corruption in post-war Sri Lanka, where she mentions that the widespread corruption can have consequences on people's perception of reconciliation.¹⁰ She has also carried out research on the Sri Lankan diaspora where she points out that the victor's peace had an effect on the reconciliation process in Sri Lankan society and in the diaspora respectively.¹¹ A victor's peace and its' impact on post-conflict societies, in regards to the Sri Lankan context in particular, is discussed by Höglund and Orjuela in their article "Winning the peace: conflict prevention after a victor's peace in Sri Lanka".¹² More research that has been conducted on the case of Sri Lanka and reconciliation includes Lionel Bopage's article "Sri Lanka: Is there a way forward for peace and reconciliation?"¹³, Padma D. Jayaweera's article "Language as a tool of reconciliation and harmony: a case study of Sri Lanka"¹⁴ and Mano Emmanuel's article "Reconciliation – easier said than done: lessons from the church in Sri Lanka".¹⁵

⁹ Orjuela, Camilla, *Civil society in civil war: The case of Sri Lanka*, 2005 p. 134

¹⁰ Lindberg, Jonas & Orjuela, Camilla, *Corruption and conflict: connections and consequences in war-torn Sri Lanka*, 2011, p. 229

¹¹ Orjuela, Camilla, *Divides and dialogue in the diaspora during Sri Lanka's civil war*, 2017, p. 80

¹² Höglund & Orjuela

¹³ Bopage, Lionel, *Sri Lanka: Is there a way forward for peace and reconciliation?*, 2010

¹⁴ Jayaweera

¹⁵ Emmanuel, Mano, *Reconciliation – Easier said than done: Lessons from the church in Sri Lanka*, 2013

2.2 Reconciliation

The main theoretical concept of this study is “reconciliation”. In this study, reconciliation is defined as “changing attitudes from denial and resentment to acceptance and trust”.¹⁶ Reconciliation occurs after a conflict has ended, to come to terms with the conflict and the consequences that it brought. According to Rosoux, reconciliation can be seen as a “...continuation of the negotiating process *after* an agreement is achieved”.¹⁷ Through this statement, she assumes that reconciliation is achieved after peace has been negotiated. Rosoux also questions whether reconciliation is always necessary or even achievable.¹⁸ However, in order to create a stable and lasting peace in post-war communities, reconciliation is considered necessary by many scholars.¹⁹ Through reconciliation, the society can move forward, settle differences and reconcile with their past.

Reconciliation is especially important in identity conflicts, where the different sides need to reconcile with each other, heal and stop seeing the other as an enemy. Therefore, “identity” and “narratives” are central to the reconciliation concept. Conflicts based on identity are, unlike conflicts based on material or territorial reasons, built on the feeling of one party or group that it is being discriminated, denied its’ rights or forced to compromise on its’ identity.²⁰ Narratives are collective group memories, stories and perspective on historical events created about the own group, and the other group – as good and bad, friends and enemies etc.²¹ These narratives could revolve around events before, during or after the conflict and describes a certain perspective on glories, traumas, victimization and motives.²² Clashes of different narratives, and different perspectives from different sides of the conflict, could be a reason for an outbreak of conflict, and shows why reconciliation is so important to keep a peace.

Reconciliation moves beyond “conflict resolution” and “conflict management”, and focuses not only on formal steps taken by formal parties to rebuild a country after a conflict, but also on making the former warring parties live together, get along, and stop seeing the other as an enemy.²³ Reconciliation is in this study not seen as a goal or something you can reach, but a process to make the peace more lasting. Full reconciliation might in many cases be impossible, but that does not mean that the society cannot work with and reach a level of reconciliation that builds a foundation for a lasting peace.²⁴ Reconciliation can be

¹⁶ Auerbach, Yehudith, *The Reconciliation Pyramid – A narrative-based framework for analysing conflicts*, 2009 p. 303

¹⁷ Roseux, Valérie, *Is Reconciliation Negotiable?*, 2013, p. 472

¹⁸ *ibid* p. 472

¹⁹ Fischer, p. 406

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 294

²¹ *ibid*, p. 299

²² *ibid*, p. 294

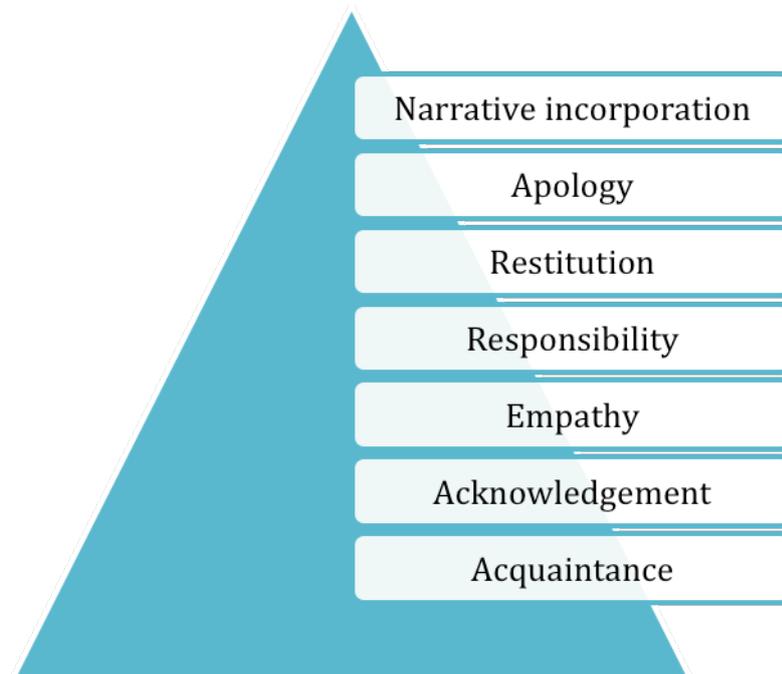
²³ Auerbach, p. 299

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 304

achieved through different kinds of efforts, and the concept is closely linked to “transitional justice”, that focuses on accountability issues and truth-seeking in post-war societies.²⁵

2.2.1 Auerbach’s reconciliation pyramid

The reconciliation pyramid is a comprehensive framework, developed by Yehudith Auerbach, which describes seven different stages in a reconciliation process – different ways in which to work with reconciliation and how the identity groups involved in the conflict interact. These include “cold” narrative concepts of reconciliation, and “warm” concepts such as forgiveness and empathy.²⁶ The construction of the pyramid and the stages does not necessarily mean that one comes after the other or that all have to be fulfilled to reach a full reconciliation, although the stages at the base can be seen as a foundation for the ones at the top. The pyramid shows seven different ways that reconciliation can take form, and some efforts can include several of the stages at one time.²⁷ The seven stages are:



²⁵ Fischer, p. 406

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 293

²⁷ Auerbach, p. 304

Stage	Explanation
Acquaintance with clashing narratives	That the parties get acquainted with the fact that different narratives exist, that these are clashing and a part of the conflict. That some sort of knowledge of the other is attained.
Acknowledging the other's narratives, without necessarily accepting them as true	That the parties acknowledge that the other narrative exists, and have knowledge and understanding of the other. Recognising that the other narrative carry some level of authenticity and legitimacy.
Expressing empathy for the other's plight	That the parties express empathy towards the other and their narrative. That they are able to identify with and understand the other party's feelings.
Assuming (at least) partial responsibility for the other's alleged plights	That the parties take responsibility for what they have done in the past, during the conflict. This stage could call for some truth and accountability measures, and is closely linked to transitional justice.
Expressing readiness for restitution or reparation for past wrongs	That the victims are somehow repaid for what they have gone through. Granting reparations for victim is a more official and political move than the previous stages. This stage is closely linked to transitional justice.
Publically apologising and asking for forgiveness for past wrongs	That the parties apologise for atrocities that they may have committed, often in the form of official, political apologies.
Striving to incorporate opposite narratives into accepted mutual accounts of the past	The final stage, that the different narratives are incorporated into a shared one that includes common views of the past and a joint vision for the future.

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These are the theoretic definitions that will be used to analyse and describe the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. It is important to note that these steps are ideal types – they are not a guide to reconciliation, and a reconciliation process does not have to follow these steps.²⁹ There are no harsh lines between some of the steps, like acquaintance and acknowledgement, that says when one stops and the other one starts.³⁰

²⁸ Auerbach, pp. 303-311

²⁹ *ibid*, p. 310

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 304

2.2.2 Cold and warm reconciliation

Auerbach's reconciliation pyramid indicates that there is not one single way to work with reconciliation, but several different steps that can be taken. Some of these can be considered to be more official, realistic and political, while others take into account the more emotional and healing aspect of the process. As mentioned, Auerbach divides these two schools of thought into "warm" and "cold" reconciliation.³¹ Warm reconciliation includes showing of empathy, apology and forgiveness while cold reconciliation focuses more on narratives (acquaintance and acknowledgement for example) and steps like restitution.³² Some of the steps incorporate both warm and cold reconciliation, depending how they are put into action. For instance, the apology step can be seen as a warm step since it needs to genuinely express empathy and a sense of remorse, while it can be seen as a cold step when it is performed as an official, political act.³³

2.3 Victor's peace

A victor's peace is a peace achieved by a military victory – one part defeating the other. The peace does not have to be negotiated and no compromises between the warring parties have to be made. It has been argued that the ending of a war is more likely through a military victory than through negotiations, although a military victory is more likely to bring consequences of human suffering.³⁴ Researches have claimed that a victor's peace is simpler as well as more likely to last, due to the physical removal of an opponent.³⁵ The victor sets all the conditions for the peace, and an opponent with an ability to ruin the peace because of discontent does not exist since they were defeated. The relationship between the former warring parties is by definition asymmetrical. Even if the defeated party is included in post-conflict peace building, it is only because the victor agrees to it. Top-down approaches to peace building, that peace-efforts are introduced and carried out by top institutions to then travel it's way down to the people,³⁶ is more common in the case of a victor's peace, since peace efforts are more likely to stem from the winner. Local ownership, and a feeling of influence over the peace process for the population, might be less likely, since the victor is able to make all decisions. Which approach that is most effective, that the peace

³¹ Auerbach, p. 292

³² *ibid*, p. 293

³³ *ibid* pp. 308-309

³⁴ Höglund & Orjuela, p. 34

³⁵ Hill, Tom H.J., *The Deception of Victory: The JVP in Sri Lanka and the Long-Term Dynamics of Rebel Reintegration*, 2013 p. 357

³⁶ Fischer, p. 423

process stems from the people or from official institutions, and who is included in the process, is contested.³⁷

In contrast to other scholars, Hill argues in his article “The Deception of Victory: The JVP in Sri Lanka and the Long-Term Dynamics of Rebel Integration”³⁸ that a victor’s peace does not automatically bring a more enduring one. He claims that, by looking at a long-term perspective, a victor’s peace can in fact add complexities, such as difficult rebel integration, that makes the risk of the conflict reigniting greater.³⁹ He suggests “...defeating an enemy can blind victors to the urgency of alleviating the complex structural conditions that gave rise to the prior violence”.⁴⁰ In other words, underlying roots of the conflict, like identity divides, might not be addressed during a victor’s peace, since it is not being seen as necessary, as the conflict does not run a high risk of re-emerging in the beginning. Not attending to these issues could make conflict lines reappear years after the peace was achieved.

A reconciliation process in the context of a victor’s peace could bring challenges that may not occur otherwise. Even if reconciliation efforts are being made, it is important to ensure that this is done in a way that does not weaken the trust between identity groups or bring new conflict up to the surface.⁴¹ If reconciliation efforts are concentrated to one particular group or part of the country for example, which is possible if the winning side favours their own group, the conflict lines might deepen as the other group feels marginalised.⁴² Moreover, problems of accountability might occur should the victor not want to take responsibility or seek justice for past wrongs.⁴³

³⁷ Fischer, p. 421

³⁸ Hill, p. 357

³⁹ *ibid* p.369

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 370

⁴¹ Höglund & Orjuela p. 34

⁴² *ibid* p. 31

⁴³ *ibid* p. 30

3 Methodology, Research design and Material

3.1 Methodology

The study is mainly descriptive, as it tries to describe the reconciliation process by civil society organisations in Sri Lanka through the reconciliation pyramid as a theoretical framework. It does not aim to explain why the reconciliation process looks the way it does, but the findings will be analysed in light of the fact that the conflict ended through a victor's peace. The case study will be conducted through a qualitative content analysis on local civil society organisations to examine how reconciliation is seen among Sri Lankan local organisations.

3.1.1 Case study and selection of Sri Lanka as a case

The following thesis is a case study, with Sri Lanka as an analysis unit. The specific phenomenon being investigated, that it is necessary to determine when doing a case study⁴⁴, is reconciliation. Sri Lanka was chosen as a case of reconciliation for several reasons. Firstly, it is an interesting case to examine since the conflict ended the way it did, with a victor's peace. Achieving peace by defeating one of the warring parties does not create the most favourable conditions for a reconciliation process if a reconciliation process can be seen as "...a continuation of negotiation"⁴⁵, and the Sri Lankan peace was not achieved through negotiations or agreements. To complicate things even more, it is unclear who the warring parties were and who needs to reconcile— was the civil war a conflict between the government and the LTTE or between the two ethnic groups Sinhalese and Tamils? It makes it difficult to know what parties need to reconcile with each other, and all the more interesting to see if a reconciliation process has taken place. The asymmetry during and after the conflict, with the government being stronger in numbers and resources than the LTTE, is another dimension that makes the post-conflict society in Sri Lanka interesting to examine. Since Sri

⁴⁴ George, Alexander L. & Bennett, Andrew, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. 2005, p. 69

⁴⁵ Rosoux, p. 472

Lanka is the only case being examined, the study does not claim to make any big generalisations about reconciliation, but the value lies in the description of reconciliation in an unusual case. The study is restricted to focus on the reconciliation efforts after the conflict ended. Reconciliation is not a goal but a process, and it is important to look at all years post-conflict.

3.1.2 Operationalization

The theoretical concepts that will be analysed are “reconciliation” and the seven stages of Auerbach’s reconciliation pyramid. To give the study high validity, the theoretical definition need to correspond with the operational definition, meaning that the study investigates what it claims to investigate.⁴⁶ To facilitate the analysis, a classification scheme has been created, making it possible to classify statements and actions by civil society organisations as one or several of the seven stages. What the organisations say as well as what they do will be analysed, giving a comprehensive picture of how they work, how they define reconciliation and what they find most important in a reconciliation process. What is not being said or done is also being analysed. The operational definitions of the seven steps, and what will be analysed in the literature, are:

	Statements	Actions
Acquaintance	Is it a part of NGO:s vision to integrate people from different groups and getting people together, or to spread knowledge about different perspectives?	Are NGO:s engaging in projects of getting people from opposite sides together, interact, meeting up, and are they trying to educate people on the fact that they see the conflict from different perspectives? What kinds of projects are being carried out?
Acknowledgement	Is it a part of NGO:s vision to integrate people and making them understand and recognize their respective narratives as legitimate?	Are NGO:s working towards getting people from opposite sides together, and educating them on the other sides narratives and making them understand each other? What kinds of projects are being carried out?
Empathy	Is it a part of NGO:s vision to create an empathetic and compassionate society and have people express empathy towards one another?	Are NGO:s themselves expressing empathy towards either side, and are they encouraging people to show empathy towards each other? What kinds of projects are being carried out?

⁴⁶ Teorell, Jan & Svensson, Torsten, *Att fråga och att svara*, 2007, p. 57

Responsibility	Is it a part of the NGO:s vision to have a truthful and equitable society where people and sides take responsibility for their actions and atrocities carried out during the conflict?	Are NGO:s working towards making either side take on responsibility of their actions, through for instance truth commission or pushing for the government to take action? What kinds of projects are being carried out?
Restitution	Is it a part of the NGO:s vision that victims are compensated for their experiences, and that the society is rebuilt?	Are NGO:s working with restitution or compensation for victims, by helping them themselves or pushing for action from other actors, for example the government? What kinds of projects are being carried out?
Apology	Is it a part of the NGO:s vision to reach a society of forgiveness where the sides apologise for their wrongdoings?	Are NGO:s working towards making the conflicting parties apologize, by for instance demanding or encouraging an official apology? What kinds of projects are being carried out?
Narrative Incorporation	Is it a part of the NGO:s vision to achieve full integration, and a common narrative for the entire population?	Are NGO:s working towards incorporating the narratives of the past for the two sides? What kinds of projects are being carried out?

These questions will be the basis of the study when analysing the view of reconciliation among Sri Lankan civil society organisations. They are designed to examine the reconciliation efforts of civil society organisations and how they see reconciliation, and they make it possible to examine both what the organisations say and what they do. The research questions correspond well with the theoretical definition of the seven stages of reconciliation. The questions are intentionally put quite loosely, and will be used more as guidelines rather than being directly answered, which will allow an unrestrained analysis. Issues of reliability, being unsystematic mistakes in the analysis like overlooking a project,⁴⁷ can occur, but are avoided as far as possible by the writer being thorough and going through the material several times. However, as the study will be based on the writer's own interpretations and there is a risk of unintentional subjectivity, it is paramount that the interpretations are presented to enhance the intersubjectivity of the study.⁴⁸ Appendix 2 presents the result of how all the civil society organisations were analysed, and examples of how the organisations were analysed can be found in the section on empirical findings.

⁴⁷ Teorell & Svensson, p. 57

⁴⁸ *ibid*, pp. 280-281

3.2 Material

Throughout the study, material such as academic articles, official reports and statements conducted by NGO:s or the Sri Lankan government will be used. The material provides different perspectives of the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka, and will together give a comprehensible view of the situation.

Moreover, the main study and the empirical findings will be based on an analysis of set up goals, visions, missions, reports and statutes of Sri Lankan civil society organisations claiming to work with reconciliation, as well as descriptions of projects that are carried out by said organisations. This is the primary material. Through this material, statements and actions taken by the organisations, and therefore their views and how they work with reconciliation, can be distinguished. This is well in line with the purpose of the study. By analysing their own words and actions, it is their own view and not the interpretation of an outside actor that will be analysed.

A selection of 17 civil society organisations have been chosen for the analysis. These are selected on the basis of the fact that they are working locally for reconciliation. Some of them are listed as “organisations that work with reconciliation in Sri Lanka” on the website “insight on conflict”.⁴⁹ A list of the organisations chosen can be found in appendix 1. Because the organisations are listed as working with reconciliation, this is their main area of interest and they have most likely adopted a view that reconciliation is necessary in Sri Lanka. Evidently, this affects the result of the study, which reflects only the view of these organisations, and not the civil society in general. The views of these organisations do not necessarily correspond with general opinions or perspectives. However, since the aim of the study is to examine how local organisations work with reconciliation and how they see their work, and not the general view, the organisations are chosen on good grounds. Moreover, many of the organisations are dependent on donors and funding to be able to continue their activity. This means that they might adapt their work to their donors’ expectations, or portray their work favourably, and it is of utmost weight to be critical to how they describe themselves. Furthermore, the analysis of the organisations says nothing about how successful they are, how many people they reach out to or how much influence they have in the Sri Lankan society. The study simply states the view and work of reconciliation among some of the non-governmental organisations that explicitly work with the issue, and does not claim to generalise reconciliation process. With that being said, looking at what they say about themselves still gives the clearest picture on their perspective on reconciliation.

⁴⁹ Peace Direct: Insight on conflict, *Reconciliation: Organisations in Sri Lanka*, 2017

4 The Sri Lankan context

How the reconciliation process looks after a conflict depends on the context. In order to analyse the Sri Lankan reconciliation process, the Sri Lankan context needs to be considered.

Sri Lanka was a British colony from 1796, and gained independence in 1948.⁵⁰ The majority of the population belong to the Buddhist Sinhalese ethnic group, living mainly in the south, while the minority Hindu Tamil population, lives mainly in the north.⁵¹ There is also a smaller Muslim minority. The Tamils were favoured under British rule, which led to a widespread Sinhalese political nationalism and discrimination of the Tamil minority after the Sri Lankan independence.⁵² For instance, the 1956 official language act declares Sinhala the only official language of the nation, and disregards the Tamil speakers.⁵³ The ethnic tensions led to violence and the creation of the group LTTE, whose aim was a separate state for the Sri Lankan Tamils. These tensions were the main root of the civil war that first erupted in 1983, between the Sinhalese government and the LTTE.⁵⁴ Efforts of peace negotiations and ceasefires, the most successful one facilitated by Norway in 2002 that led to a two-year ceasefire, failed. The conflict did not end until 2009, 26 years after the civil war breakout. The government side declared victory after eradicating the LTTE, and no peace negotiations or peace agreement followed – it was a victor’s peace.⁵⁵

The civilian suffering during the conflict was large. Violence was widespread, the LTTE engaged in terrorism and recruiting child soldiers while abuses like torture and killings were committed by both sides of the conflict.⁵⁶ Some estimate the casualties of the conflict to 100 000 people. The conflict forced people to leave their homes and by 2011 the number of internally displaced people (from here on IDPs) were as high as 300 000.⁵⁷ The last months of the conflict are considered especially brutal. Allegations of human rights violations, carried out by both sides of the conflict, have been expressed by the UN among others.⁵⁸ The international community has received criticism for not intervening or trying to prevent the atrocities being carried out.⁵⁹ Even though the conflict has ended,

⁵⁰ BBC, *Sri Lanka profile – Timeline*, 2017

⁵¹ Orjuela, 2016, p. 67

⁵² Emmanuel, p. 175

⁵³ Blackhall Publishing, *Laws of Sri Lanka: Official Language Act*, 2017

⁵⁴ Emmanuel, p. 175

⁵⁵ Höglund & Orjuela p. 24

⁵⁶ Sriram, p. 65

⁵⁷ Höglund & Orjuela, p. 30

⁵⁸ The UN, *Report of the Secretary-General’s panel of experts on accountability in Sri Lanka*, 2010

⁵⁹ For example: Sri Lanka Campaign, “*How can we have peace?*”, 2015 p. 1

many still live with traumatic experiences and memories. Segregation between the groups still exists, and underlying causes of the conflict has not been addressed – sentiments of Tamil separatism and Sinhalese nationalism still exist.⁶⁰ Ethnic divides and hatred are still prevalent among the Sinhalese and Tamils as well as the Muslim community.⁶¹ The situation is aggravated by the multi-lingual circumstances in the country, with Sinhalese, Tamil and English being spoken by different groups.⁶²

The need for reconciliation in Sri Lanka is immense. To move on from the past and prevent further resurrections of the conflict, the ethnic tensions need to be resolved. Reconciliation efforts made by the Sri Lankan government include making the national anthem in Tamil as well as Sinhala official,⁶³ and introducing a “national integration and reconciliation week”, that is supposed to “...promote unity, peace, affection and brotherhood among people to ensure empathy and trust among diverse ethnicities...”.⁶⁴ The government has also appointed a commission of inquiry on lessons learnt and reconciliation in 2010 to investigate the situation in Sri Lanka.⁶⁵ The commission was supposed to seek truth about the conflict. However, the commission has been criticised for being too one-sided and partial, favouring the government and not describing the situation realistically.⁶⁶ Chandra Lekha Sriram claims, in a chapter about accountability in Sri Lanka, that the investigation “...did not meet the international standards for an accountability process”.⁶⁷

Few perpetrators have been put to justice, and laws such as the Prevention of terrorism act make it possible for the government to still arrest people on very loose grounds, and facilitate abuses such as torture, despite the government promising to repeal the act.⁶⁸ The new government of Maithripala Sirisena, that was elected in 2016, has taken some steps to speed up the reconciliation process, including setting up an office on enforced disappearances and a truth, justice and reconciliation commission.⁶⁹ However, Human Rights Watch claims that their work lacked any real effort to seek the truth or reach accountability.⁷⁰ Other government initiatives to reconciliation are a rehabilitation and reintegration program for former LTTE combatants,⁷¹ and rebuilding of communities affected

⁶⁰ Höglund & Orjuela, p. 20-21

⁶¹ Sarjoon, Athambawa; Agus Yusoff, Mohammad and Hussin, Nordin, *Anti-Muslim Sentiments and Violence: A Major Threat to Ethnic Reconciliation and Ethnic Harmony in Post-War Sri Lanka*, 2016

⁶² Jayaweera, p. 113

⁶³ Moonesinghe, Ghana (2012), *A Road to Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Will We Take It?*

⁶⁴ News.lk, *National Integration and Reconciliation week from January 8-14*, 2017

⁶⁵ Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation*, 2011

⁶⁶ Sriram, p. 80

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 80

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Sri Lanka – Events of 2016*, 2017

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Sri Lanka – Events of 2015*, 2016

⁷⁰ Human rights watch, 2016

⁷¹ Dharmawardhane, Iromi *Sri Lanka's Post-Conflict Strategy: Restorative Justice for Rebels and Rebuilding of Conflict-affected Communities*, 2013, p. 34

by the conflict.⁷² The resettlement of mainly Tamil IDPs in the northern parts of the country is moving along, but the progress have been claimed to be too slow.⁷³

Despite the steps taken, the Sri Lankan government has received criticism for not taking as many reconciliation efforts as are necessary. Criticism that has been raised against the government include Höglund & Orjuela's article on conflict prevention in Sri Lanka, as they claim that the government's view and efforts towards reconciliation is "...conditioned on the recognition of the Sri Lankan government as the victor".⁷⁴ In other words, the reconciliation efforts by the government have been affected by how the peace was achieved. External actors, such as international organisations continue to write reports on the situation in Sri Lanka and push for reconciliation actions to be taken.⁷⁵ The Sri Lankan diaspora is involved in for example giving political and economical support and pushing for justice and accountability.⁷⁶ Although the LTTE are eradicated, the support for Tamil separatism remains high among the Tamil diaspora.⁷⁷

In conclusion, the Sri Lankan post-war context is a complex one, that involves many actors with different intentions. Reconciliation efforts has been taken by the government, but they have been criticised for being too one-sided, and most likely affected by the fact that the civil war ended through a victor's peace. The society has ethnic divides that go a long way back, and reconciliation between the groups is necessary to ensure a lasting peace.

⁷² Dharmawardhane p. 27

⁷³ Al Jazeera, *Is Sri Lanka on the path to reconciliation?*, 2016

⁷⁴ Höglund & Orjuela, p. 31

⁷⁵ The UN; Human Rights Watch, 2016; Human Rights Watch 2017; Amnesty International, *Sri Lanka 2016/2017*, 2017

⁷⁶ Höglund & Orjuela p. 30

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 21

5 Empirical findings

5.1 Reconciliation among civil society organisations

As shown, there is a need for reconciliation in Sri Lanka. How local organisations work with reconciliation will now be presented through Auerbach's seven stages. The organisations analysed are listed in appendix 1, and the result of how they worked with reconciliation is presented through a table in appendix 2. A more detailed description and analysis of reconciliation work in regards to the seven stages are presented below. Worth noting about the organisations is that they work throughout the entire island, although many of them focus on especially war-affected areas like the northern and eastern parts. The organisations work with all ethnic groups and religions, those being Buddhist Sinhalese, Hindu Tamils, Muslims and Christians, and many of them focus on youth or especially marginalised people like women or the poverty stricken.

5.1.1 Acquaintance

All except one⁷⁸ of the organisations analysed work towards making the different groups more acquainted with other narratives, in one way or another. This can be seen in the organisations' efforts to bring together people from different groups.

Many of the organisations state in their descriptions, goals and visions that they in some way work with multiculturalism and bringing together people of different ethnicities and religions⁷⁹, which is in line with the acquaintance stage. Other keywords often found are "diversity", "gaining knowledge" and "create awareness". For example, the "International centre for ethnic studies" state in their mission that they want to work with "knowledge transfer".⁸⁰

Projects promoting integration and diversity can be considered to work with the acquaintance part of reconciliation. Getting people from different groups together, with the goal to introduce them to other perspectives, is what the acquaintance step is about. Many of the organisations' worked with projects regarding these questions. The "champion of change" project, that work towards

⁷⁸ See appendix 2

⁷⁹ See appendix 2

⁸⁰ International centre for ethnic studies

creating a connection between schools with students from different backgrounds,⁸¹ and a project by “Peace and community action” that connect youth from the three major communities⁸² are examples of practical efforts taken towards narrative acquaintance.

Cultural programs that introduce people to the different cultures, languages, practices and stories are another way to work with the acquaintance step. The “Centre for performing arts” and “Samasevaya” are examples of organisations that work explicitly with art and cultural sharing between different groups in reconciliation purposes. They work with creating music or theatre pieces together, making people come together and cooperate as well as performing pieces and sharing their work with the population.⁸³ Furthermore, it is also possible to connect people of different groups and introduce them to other narratives by making them join together in sports. This is something that the “centre for east Sri Lanka social services” work with. The organisation are also getting people together to perform Shramadan, simple community tasks like repairing a road, and have people belonging to different groups get acquainted with each other.⁸⁴

The intent of some of the organisations is to raise awareness, educate, spread knowledge about certain issues, and try to incorporate several perspectives about the conflict and society in the general discussion. Some of the organisations work explicitly with awareness programs, while some organisations and think tanks focus on research about dialogue, identity politics and freedom of expression. There are also organisations that produce articles from different perspectives. For instance, there is “Centre for human rights and research”, that has a mission to educate people, and portrays itself as different from “mainstream media”.⁸⁵ The “International centre for ethnic studies” also work with research, and with promoting diverse identities and pluralistic memories.⁸⁶ Other examples of efforts of awareness raising is the “National peace council’s” project “write to reconcile”, where segments in an anthology about the war is written from different perspectives,⁸⁷ and the “Centre for policy alternatives” multi-lingual civic media initiatives “journalism for citizens” that let citizens express their narratives through the sites Groundworks, Maatram and Vikalpa.⁸⁸ Three additional organisations work with the language through classes, translation and strengthening, in order to enhance communication and knowledge of the other.⁸⁹

Lastly, 12 of the organisations have an ambition to in some way empower the population. This is shown by mentions of empowerment, strengthening the civil society, work from the bottom-up and work with different actors to increase the level of influence of grassroots. This is a way to work with the acquaintance stage

⁸¹ Sri Lanka unites: Projects: *Champions of Change*

⁸² Peace and community action: *Our Work: Our Projects*

⁸³ Samasevaya

⁸⁴ Centre for East Lanka Social Service

⁸⁵ Centre for human rights and research: *What is CHR*

⁸⁶ International Centre for Ethnic Studies

⁸⁷ National Peace Council: *Projects*

⁸⁸ Centre for Policy Alternatives: *Civic Media*

⁸⁹ Karuna centre for peacebuilding; Sandhi institute; Sri Lanka unites

as it gives a voice to marginalised people and their stories. Aiming towards having all or some of the ethnic and religious groups represented in an organisation, that for instance the “International centre for ethnic studies”⁹⁰ have, is an example of this.

5.1.2 Acknowledgement

Considering acknowledgement as a sort of continuation of the acquaintance stage, organisations work in a similar way and to almost the same extent with this. Organisations that seek to make people acquainted with the other group often seek to make the groups understand and see the other’s perspective as legitimate as well. Therefore, projects mentioned in the former passage, like the “champion of change” and culture sharing projects, are also to an extent working with acknowledgement.

Goals set up by organisations that correspond with the acknowledgement stage include fostering understanding, creating relationships, co-existence and building trust, in addition to the some of the same themes as with acquaintance – that is diversity, and integration. Frequently used words and phrases that the organisations use to describe their visions and goals are “mutual understanding between groups”, “acceptance“, dialogue” and “relationship transformation”. Moreover, Sri Lanka unites stresses the point that acknowledging that evil has been committed during the conflict is paramount for the continuation of reconciliation.⁹¹

A practice that is common among the organisations is dialogue training between different groups. The “Karuna center for peacebuilding” that consistently works with dialogue training through workshops and conferences, states the reason behind their work through the following statement:

“People who have become alienated from or dehumanized by one another through war or structural violence are able to develop mutual understanding, discover their common aspirations, and find ways to work together.”⁹²

This is in line with the acknowledgement step in reconciliation, as it focuses on bringing people together and fostering an atmosphere of understanding of the other’s narrative.

An additional example of programs fostering dialogue between groups is the “inter-religious trustbuilding activities” and “ethnic exchange programs” carried out by “Samasevaya”⁹³ and dialogue training and projects of interactive dialogue by the “International centre for ethnic studies”.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ International centre of ethnic studies

⁹¹ Sri Lanka unites: Departments: *Why Reconciliation?*

⁹² Karuna centre for peacebuilding: What we do: *Our Work*

⁹³ Samasevaya

⁹⁴ International centre for ethnic studies

5.1.3 Empathy

Expressing empathy towards one another is part of the reconciliation process of some of the organisations. However, it is not an issue worked on by the organisations as much as acquaintance or acknowledgement.⁹⁵

Regarding the goals, visions and missions of the organisations, some express that they work towards developing empathy between different groups. The “Karuna center for peacebuilding” mentions that one objective for their project “inter-religious cooperation for community development and social empowerment” is to “...develop empathy and mutual understanding...”.⁹⁶ Further, the Sandhi institute refers to a learning resource called “list of feelings”, where “compassionate” and “sympathetic” are key words.⁹⁷ This is a part of their practice in non-violent communication that the Sandhi institute has committed to. Non-violent communication is a style of communication focusing on compassionate connection between people, and resonates well with the empathy stage in reconciliation.⁹⁸ Other than that, there are few explicit mentions of “developing empathy”, “compassion”, “working for solidarity” or similar expressions among the organisations. However, aspiring to enhance the “...ability to identify with and understand another person’s feelings...”, which is how Auerbach defines expressing empathy, is more common among the organisations. In fact, many of the organisations⁹⁹ mention “understanding” between groups in their descriptions. As already mentioned though, understanding is also a part of the acknowledgement stage, and it is difficult to determine whether the organisations actually go as far as to work with empathy, or if they only strive for acknowledgement. Organisations that only express an objective for understanding have not been considered working with empathy in this case.

Projects that are specifically carried out in order to increase the level of empathy in society include the project “compassionate understanding” conducted by Sandhi institute.¹⁰⁰ They have conducted workshops and trainings such as “Empathetic listening and Nonviolent Communication” that had female participants from the northern part of the country.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ See appendix 2

⁹⁶ Karuna centre for peacebuilding

⁹⁷ Center for non-violent communication: Training: learn nvc: *feelings list*

⁹⁸ Center for non-violent communication

⁹⁹ See appendix 2

¹⁰⁰ Sandhi institute

¹⁰¹ Sandhi Institute: *Events*

5.1.4 Responsibility

Assuming responsibility, or striving towards the different parties assuming responsibility, is an activity field for some, but by no means all, of the organisations analysed.¹⁰² The ways in which the organisation view and perform their work with responsibility differ.

Nine of the organisations talk of transitional justice, consider accountability and truth to be important or mention responsibility as something they work towards explicitly.¹⁰³ For example, “Women’s development foundation” considers responsibility to be one of their core values.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, “Sri Lanka unites” strive towards “collective responsibility” and “Karuna center for peacebuilding” claims to “foster social responsibility”.¹⁰⁵ Some of the statements, like the Sri Lanka Unites comment on how young citizens have a strong responsibility to turn a new page,¹⁰⁶ refer more to the responsibility of the entire society to create a lasting peace, rather than for a specific group to take responsibility for past wrongdoings. As Auerbach considers the responsibility stage to be more about the latter, it is only statements and actions regarding justice, truth and accountability that will be regarded as concerning the responsibility stage.

Practical work with responsibility includes lobbying and “The National peace council’s” works with responsibility by pushing for measures of accountability in their project of strengthening victims of torture.¹⁰⁷ Their objective is “enhancing commitment to accountability and prevention of torture among key government agencies, human rights bodies and security sector institutions.”¹⁰⁸ By claiming that the provisions regarding combatting torture mentioned in the LCCR report are not yet implemented throughout Sri Lanka,¹⁰⁹ they send a message to the government and push for actions to be taken. Similarly, the “Centre for human rights and research” has expressed critique towards the government and their repeal of the prevention of terrorism act.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, by criticising the government’s efforts regarding transitional justice, claiming that it is “...uncoordinated and non-transparent.”¹¹¹, the “Centre for human rights and research” also pushes for more responsibility taking in the post-conflict society. Similar comments were also expressed by the “Centre for policy alternatives”, that points out a lack of political will towards transitional justice, the absence of a strategy on how to achieve transitional justice and a need

¹⁰² See appendix 2

¹⁰³ See appendix 2

¹⁰⁴ Women’s development fund

¹⁰⁵ Sri Lanka unites; Karuna center for peacebuilding;

¹⁰⁶ Sri Lanka Unites: Departments: *Why Reconciliation?*

¹⁰⁷ National Peace Council: *Projects*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ Centre for Human Rights and Research: CHR reports: *What is happening with the detainees now?*

¹¹¹ Centre for Human Rights and Research: CHR Reports: *Sri Lankan Transitional Justice, At Crossroads*

for better communication between victims and government officials.¹¹² The “International centre for ethnic studies” have also conducted a report from a meeting on truth seeking and prosecution, called “The relationship between truth-seeking and prosecution”.¹¹³ In the report, they state that they, through the report, hope to “...inform policy makers and shapers, and the wider public”¹¹⁴, and contribute to the transitional justice process. Moreover, the report discusses ways in which the civil society can act to influence the transitional justice processes, even if the main responsibility lies in the government and their truth commissions. Education, granting security for witnesses, planning and designing of the government-led truth commissions are examples of this.¹¹⁵ However, no initiatives of local truth commissions in the communities were mentioned.

5.1.5 Restitution

Rebuilding and restoring the post-war society are re-occurring themes among the organisations, like community development, post-tsunami restoration and infrastructure work. These are directed to those who have suffered the most, especially those who have lost their homes, seen their communities destroyed and have no means of living. However, fewer organisations work with restorative measures like economic compensation from perpetrators for victims who have experienced torture or who have lost a family member.¹¹⁶ According to Auerbach’s definition of restitution as a political move to grant compensation for victims who have been wrongly treated, by a party that takes some responsibilities for said wrongdoings,¹¹⁷ the before-mentioned efforts of only rebuilding the society cannot be considered working with restitution in the reconciliation pyramid.

Civil society organisations that work with restitution include “Shanti community animation movement” that works for restorative justice in the northern parts of the island.¹¹⁸ They work with bringing together IDPs and people working with the government’s security forces to build houses, preschools and community centres.¹¹⁹ The objective is partly to build up the parts affected by the war, and partly to make the army interact with Tamil victims and create a relationship. “The Human development organisation” work with legal assistance when it comes

¹¹² Fonseka, Bhavani; Ganeshathasan, Luwie & Daniel Shalomi, *Two Years in Government: A review of the pledges made in 2015 through the lens of constitutional reform, governance and transitional justice*, 2017, pp. 30-32

¹¹³ International Centre for Ethnic Studies, *The Relationship between Truth-Seeking and Prosecution – Report of a Dialogue*, 2016

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p. V

¹¹⁵ *ibid* pp. 36-37

¹¹⁶ See appendix 2

¹¹⁷ Auerbach, p. 308

¹¹⁸ Shanti community animation movement

¹¹⁹ Shanti community animation movement: *Shanti: Capacity building & Programs*

to land issues and workers' rights.¹²⁰ As they try to enhance social justice, support IDPs in the northern parts of the country and strengthening grass-roots in the struggle against inequalities, they work in a way with restitution.

Moreover, there are organisations working with restitution in similar ways to how they work with responsibility, by lobbying and pushing for efforts to be made by other actors. "Sri Lanka campaign" as an example urges the government to keep the promises it has made to victims of war.¹²¹

5.1.6 Apology

When it comes to working with apologies, and especially official or political apologies, few organisations seem to see this as a priority.¹²² It is rarely mentioned as an important step in descriptions, goals, visions or missions.

Only one organisation analysed, the "Sri Lanka campaign", mention that an official apology is necessary for the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka to continue. The opinion of Sri Lanka campaign is that it would take an apology from both sides of the conflict, the Sri Lankan government as well as the international community to reach a full reconciliation.¹²³

Through their report, Sri Lanka campaign is also the only organisation that works practically for an official apology. The report can be seen as a method of pushing the government and international actors to take measures in regards to, for example, official apology. In the report, they researched the view on reconciliation among the population affected by the war as well as expressed their own opinions on peace building. Although they portray apology as an important part of reconciliation, people interviewed in the report emphasised the need for truth and justice more than apology. Based on this "Sri Lanka campaign" suggest that it might be too soon to focus on apology.¹²⁴ This will be further discussed in the discussion part.

5.1.7 Narrative incorporation

The main goal, the final destination for some of the organisations working with reconciliation in Sri Lanka seems to be narrative incorporation.¹²⁵ However, it is clear that the Sri Lankan society is not really there yet, and earlier stages are being prioritised.

¹²⁰ Human Development Foundation

¹²¹ Sri Lanka campaign

¹²² See appendix 2

¹²³ Sri Lanka Campaign, "*How can we have peace?*", 2015 pp. 1; 13

¹²⁴ Sri Lanka campaign, p. 13

¹²⁵ See appendix 2

Two of the organisations speak of “creating a national identity” and “an identity as women instead of ethnic”,¹²⁶ “Creating unity” as a mention in the goals and visions of the organisations can also be a way to express the want for narrative incorporation. This wish is expressed by five of the organisations.¹²⁷ For instance, the organisation “Sri Lanka unites” state as their vision: “To Unite the Youth of All Ethnic and Religious Groups Across Sri Lanka”.¹²⁸ Statements that express a need for “diversity”, “co-existence”, “harmony” and “social cohesion”, that is a much more common statement used by the organisations, are not included in the narrative incorporation stage.

Specific projects designed to work with narrative incorporation are few. Some of the projects of getting people together in different ways, that are described in the acquaintance and acknowledgement stages, can be considered to work with narrative incorporation as “unity” or similar are end goals. The “Samasevaya” project on inter-ethnic exchange that also is considered working with acquaintance and acknowledgement, is an example of such a project.¹²⁹ However, considering how the organisations are still focusing on other steps, and acquaintance and acknowledgement might in these projects be more important, narrative incorporation is not the main working field. Even if some organisations do work with narrative incorporation, their descriptions of this are quite loose.

5.1.8 Summary

In general, Sri Lankan civil society organisations focused on reconciliation work through bringing people from different ethnicities, religions or cultures together, interact and try to understand each other. The focus is on transforming relationships and views of the other, leaving narrative acquaintance and acknowledgement as the most common stages to work with. Working with showing empathy was somewhat common while fewer and fewer organisations worked on the stages at the top of the pyramid, leaving only one to work explicitly with apology. Reconciliation work is spread out across the country, but focused on the northern and eastern areas most affected by the civil war. The organisations focus on grassroots and local communities to a greater extent than on political institutions, although some make efforts to influence political action or empower people to make a difference. The organisations work with all identity groups, but tend to focus a lot on young people, women, victims of war and the poverty stricken.

¹²⁶ Sri Lanka unites; Women Development Foundation

¹²⁷ See appendix 2

¹²⁸ Sri Lanka Unites: Departments: *How We Work*

¹²⁹ Samasevaya

6 Discussion

As shown in the empirical findings, the reconciliation process by the civil society organisations in Sri Lanka is more focused on human interaction and the first stages of the reconciliation pyramid. Any difference between the organisations' statements and actions are not worth noting, except maybe in the stage of narrative incorporation where organisations see this more as a goal rather than having specific projects regarding the stage. The results should be taken fairly critically. Dividing reconciliation statements and efforts into different stages gives a simplification of the reality, and means certain things can be missed. There is a possibility that the organisations work with some of the stages, but that this feels so evident to themselves that they do not consider writing about it in their reports or on their websites. As an example, showing of empathy might be important to the organisations and something that they work with continually, in projects described as "bringing people together" that would only be classified as working with acquaintance and acknowledgement. Moreover, the reconciliation pyramid is a theoretical framework that cannot include every single aspect of reconciliation, and certain actions that are taken by organisations might be missed when trying to incorporate them into the pyramid. That being said - what does the empirical findings mean, and what implications do this have for the Sri Lankan society?

One explanation to why the first stages are more frequently worked with is that these are considered to be more important in the overall reconciliation process. Since acquaintance and acknowledgement are the first stages in the reconciliation pyramid, and the foundation for many other steps,¹³⁰ focusing on these seems like a natural approach. In order for other stages, like showing empathy or taking responsibility, to be achievable, the different groups first have to be aware of and understand each other's differences, stories and narratives. Moreover, the lack of especially efforts regarding narrative incorporation, and the higher focus on co-existence and social cohesion could mean that narrative incorporation is not seen as necessary to reach a full reconciliation at all.

The fact that working with acquaintance and acknowledgement is so considerably more common than working with the other steps could therefore be an indication of the fact that Sri Lanka has not come very far in their reconciliation process yet. As the report by Sri Lanka campaign claimed – "...it is perhaps too early in the process to talk about apology...".¹³¹ That it is more common to work with reconciliation efforts relating to the earlier stages in the pyramid might therefore be a sign of these stages being most necessary right now,

¹³⁰ Auerbach, p. 310

¹³¹ Sri Lanka Campaign, p. 13

and not that they are considered to be more important in the general reconciliation process.

6.1 Cold and warm reconciliation

By just looking at the results, it is difficult to say whether the civil society organisations focus more on warm or cold steps in reconciliation. Considering Auerbach's classification of the stages, where those steps that are more related to narratives are considered "cold" steps, it can be argued that cold steps are seen as more important to the civil society organisations, since narrative acquaintance and acknowledgement are the most common steps taken, and warm steps like "empathy" is fairly uncommon. However, many of the organisations emphasise social interaction, understanding, co-existence, listening and harmony, which does relate to a warmer kind of reconciliation. To simply classify certain kinds of reconciliation measures into "cold" or "warm" only depending on what kind of stage the effort belongs to is a simplification that does not correspond with reality. Many of the steps can incorporate both "warm" and "cold" moves, and it is certain that both kinds are needed in a reconciliation process.

However, as Auerbach regards political actions to be cold and calculated moves, and therefore belonging to the "cold" part of reconciliation, a hypothesis would be that civil society organisations concentrate their work more on the warm part of reconciliation. This might be true to some extent but, as the previous discussion has shown, the organisations work with both warm and cold reconciliation – albeit in different ways.

6.2 The role of the civil society

Even though reconciliation efforts have been carried out by different actors, like the government and international organisations, the focus of this study is civil society organisations. By looking only at the efforts of civil society organisations, the role of the civil society and NGO:s need to be questioned – what kind of actions can or cannot be taken by the civil society organisations, how does this effect their view on reconciliation and does the reconciliation process stem from the civil society and work it's way bottom-up?

There are limitations to how civil society organisations can work with reconciliation, as they do not have the authority to make decision, official statements or the like. Stages of the reconciliation pyramid that requires official actions, like making official apologies, or politically granting reparation for victims, is something that, by definition, can only be executed by officials. Therefore, it is reasonable that civil society organisations focus on other stages of the reconciliation pyramid, where they have more influence and ability to make a

difference. Nevertheless, it is possible for civil society organisations to work with these stages as well, by pushing for actions. As shown in the empirical findings, some of the organisations work with lobbying in certain areas. This is a possibility for them to take action in areas that are strictly speaking more the responsibility of other actors. It is an opportunity to affect policies from the grassroots, bottom-up, and including the civil society in all parts of the reconciliation process. Trying to gain influence, empowering people of different background to take a bigger part of the reconciliation process and making it as inclusive as possible are statements mentioned by many of the organisations. Making the reconciliation process more inclusive to the population and increasing the sense of local ownership could make it more possible to stick, especially in an identity conflict, due to the underlying issues expressed by the population being addressed. Moreover, the importance of actors acting together is stressed by for example Sri Lanka Unites.¹³² Including many actors in the reconciliation process can add a certain value, as the process can become simultaneously top-down and bottom-up.

However, noting that no comparison has been made between either other cases of reconciliation, or different actors in the Sri Lankan reconciliation process, it is difficult to say anything about the influence of Sri Lankan civil society organisations. The effect on the society of the efforts made, and how many they have reached out to for example, has not been taken into consideration. However, it is not in this study's ambition to determine the level of local ownership or the influence of the civil society organisations in the Sri Lankan reconciliation process. What on the other hand can be said is that there are civil society organisations that push for local ownership, empowerment and a bottom-up approach.

6.3 Reconciliation after a victor's peace

Reconciliation needs to be context-specific. The victor's peace being one part of the Sri Lankan context, it is likely that it has affected the reconciliation process.

Since Roseux considers reconciliation to be a "continuation of negotiation"¹³³ between the two warring parties, and the Sri Lankan peace was achieved by defeat without negotiation, one could draw the conclusion that the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka would be of limited scope. With the eradication of the opponent, a reconciliation process might not even be seen as necessary, since there are no parties to reconcile. Depending on who is considered to be the "other party" in the case of Sri Lanka, this is more or less true. If one considers the defeated party to be LTTE exclusively, their eradication might have brought a simple post-conflict situation. The Sri Lankan context being more complex than this though, with complicated identity dimensions, the "other party" is not completely eradicated,

¹³² Sri Lanka unites

¹³³ Roseux, p. 472

and different narratives still exist. Thus, as is shown in the empirical findings, despite the victor's peace, it is clear that a reconciliation process in Sri Lanka is taking place. How extensive this reconciliation process is is hard to determine, having only considered one part of the reconciliation process, not knowing the influence of the organisations and not having compared the reconciliation process with any other. The results show that a reconciliation process, however much influence it has, is possible even after a victor's peace.

A reconciliation process favouring one group in particular, or marginalising another, is a risk after one party has been defeated. Since the civil society organisations do not usually represent a certain side of the conflict, as shown in the empirical findings, biases might not be as distinct as within the government who represent the winning party. No favouring of one group among the organisations was found, and an investigation on this would require another type of study.

Additionally, the search for truth and justice, which can be included in the responsibility and restitution stages, are likely to be affected by the victor's peace. As already mentioned, the government has received criticism for their reconciliation efforts being too one-sided, which resonates well with the victor's peace. The civil society organisations do not represent a side or work in the same way with transitional justice. Nevertheless, the focus on group integration among the organisations, and how harmony and getting along is more crucial than truth, could be an indication that there is an effect of the victor's peace here as well. On the other hand, the pursuit of responsibility and restitution that some of the organisations still work with can be also be an indication of how the victor's peace has affected the reconciliation process. With the government not taking sufficient responsibility actions, it might be more important for civil society organisations to lobby and push for further efforts. There is no way of telling how the reconciliation process among civil society organisations would have looked had the peace been achieved in a different way, and whether efforts towards responsibility or restitution would have been more or less common.

6.4 Further research

The study does not claim to give an overview of the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka, since it only looks at one small part of the process. Moving further, it would be interesting to investigate the efforts made by other actors, for example the government, the diaspora, larger INGO:s or other civil society organisations. A comparative study of these would allow more conclusions and generalisations to be drawn, and differences to be seen between how the reconciliation works. In order to determine the scope or picture of the Sri Lankan reconciliation process, it would also be interesting to compare it to other cases of reconciliation. Moreover, a case study of the reconciliation process in another post-conflict society where peace was achieved through defeat could add more generalisations to the result.

7 Conclusion

After a 26 year long civil war, the LTTE was destroyed by the Sri Lankan government, and peace was achieved. However, there are still challenges to overcome to make the peace in Sri Lanka long lasting and sustainable, especially in regards to reconciliation.

This study has described the reconciliation process among some of the civil society organisations in Sri Lanka working with reconciliation, by applying the seven stages of Auerbach's reconciliation pyramid. The study shows that the most occurring stages are the first ones that form the foundation of reconciliation – narrative acquaintance and narrative acknowledgement. There could be several reasons for this – that these are seen as the most important ones overall, that the reconciliation process has not come that far yet, or that the civil society organisations consider them to be their area of responsibility due to their non-official and people-to-people nature. However, statements and efforts concerning all stages have been observed, including trying to influence other actors to make efforts.

With the victor's peace being a part of the Sri Lankan context, it could have had an impact on the reconciliation process, and how local actors work. Whether it has affected how far along the reconciliation process has come, what kind of efforts that are being focused on or who the reconciliation is directed to is unclear.

In order for Sri Lanka to not fall back into conflict and old conflict lines to reignite, reconciliation between the different identity groups is paramount. A sustainable and long-lasting peace can only be achieved if underlying issues, being the identity divides, are resolved. Whether this means uniting the Sri Lankan people and incorporating the different narratives into one, or only coming to terms with and accepting the diversity among the people, to make people live in co-existence with each other, remains to be seen.

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9 Appendix

9.1 List of analysed NGO:s

1. **Centre for east sri lanka social services CELSS**, <http://celssngo.blogspot.se/>
2. **Centre for human rights and research CHRR**, <http://www.chrsrilanka.com/>
3. **Centre for performing arts CPA**, <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sri-lanka/peacebuilding-organisations/cpa/>
4. **Centre for policy alternatives CPA**, <http://www.cpalanka.org/>
5. **Consortium of humanitarian agencies CHA**, <http://www.humanitariansrilanka.org/>
6. **Human development organisation HDO**, <http://www.hdosrilanka.lk/>
7. **International centre for ethnic studies ICES**, <http://ices.lk/>
8. **Karuna centre for peacebuilding**, <http://www.karunacenter.org/sri-lanka.html>
9. **National peace council NPC**, <http://www.peace-srilanka.org/>
10. **Peace and community action PCA**, <http://www.pcasl.org/homepage.html>
11. **Samasevaya**, <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sri-lanka/peacebuilding-organisations/samasevaya/>
12. **Sandhi institute**, <http://www.sandhi.org/>
13. **Shanthiham: Association for health and counselling**, <http://shanthiham.lk/>
14. **Shanti community animation movement SCAM**, <https://shantisj1.wordpress.com/>
15. **Sri Lanka Campaign for peace and justice**, <https://www.srilankacampaign.org/>
16. **Sri Lanka unites**, <http://www.srilankaunites.org/>
17. **Women's development foundation WDF**, <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sri-lanka/peacebuilding-organisations/wdf/>

9.2 Table of reconciliation efforts among NGO:s

- 1: Acquaintance
- 2: Acknowledgement
- 3: Empathy
- 4: Responsibility
- 5: Restitution
- 6: Apology
- 7: Narrative Incorporation

X represents the existence of statement/action

0 represents the lack of statement/action

The first symbol represents statements

The second symbol represents actions taken

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CELSS	X	X	0	0	0	0	0
	X	X	0	0	0	0	0
CHRR	X	0	0	X	X	0	0
	X	0	0	X	X	0	0
CPA1	X	X	0	0	0	0	0
	X	X	0	0	0	0	0
CPA2	X	0	0	X	X	0	X
	X	0	0	X	X	0	0
CHA	X	0	0	X	X	0	0
	X	0	0	0	X	0	0
HDO	X	0	0	0	0	0	0
	X	0	X	0	X	0	0
ICES	X	X	0	X	X	0	0
	X	X	0	X	X	0	0
Karuna	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
NPC	X	X	X	X	X	0	0
	X	X	X	X	X	0	0
PCA	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
Samasevaya	X	X	0	0	0	0	X
	X	X	X	0	0	0	X
Sandhi institute	X	X	X	X	X	0	X
	X	X	X	X	X	0	X
Shantiham	X	X	0	X	X	0	0
	X	X	0	X	0	0	0
SCAM	X	X	X	X	X	0	0
	X	X	X	X	X	0	0

Sri Lanka Campaign	0 0	0 0	0 0	X X	X X	X X	0 0
Sri Lanka Unites	X X	X X	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	X 0
WDF	X X	X X	0 0	X 0	0 0	0 0	X X