



**Lund University**  
**Lund University Master in International Development and**  
**Management**

**THE STATE OF THE NATION IN TIMOR-LESTE**

*Understanding the Shape of the Nation through the Perspectives of Timorese Youth*

*Maubere People,  
Maubere, child of East Timor,  
tear open your belly,  
your cravings,  
ruts of neglect, of anguish, of oppression,  
and hurl them to the wind,  
to your furthest brother,  
in the secret places of the sacred land ...*

- Xanana Gusmão

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## ABSTRACT

With the new governing structures created through the transitional administration of the United Nations (UN), old and new fault lines in the past decade have exposed themselves in Timor-Leste: rural-urban divides, generational divides, communal divides, and political divides. This paper utilises Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolism approach to understanding nationalism by focusing on subjective elements as opposed to macro- or external structures. It posits that nationalism and thus nation-building can be managed through the instilling of cultural symbols and values and alluding to a national identity, which is necessary in this country's case. It seeks out this national identity through the opinions and perspectives of Timor-Leste's largest and active population: youth, and from the nation-building aim of the government through key documents.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, nation-building, Timor-Leste, East Timor, ethno-symbolism, identity.

**Words:** 14, 980

## **FOREWORD:**

This research paper seeks to understand a phenomenon whose term is widely used but not easily understood. During my stay in Timor-Leste, I felt the compelling lure of enigmatic pride as it was building up to the end of 2011 and entering of 2012. Everyone agreed that this would be a landmark year in this country's history and one which will determine its future development. Despite persistent poverty, bouts of civil violence, disenchantment in the rural areas, a diverse ethnic base, and its scattered history branded by First- and Third-World colonialism, Timorese people spoke highly and passionately about the direction of their country and the need for solidarity and development. They spoke of its young age, its problems but also of its potential. I was overcome with this "phenomenon" and I guess one could say that this research paper searches to understand this collective identity and which purpose it serves in development in Timor-Leste.

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## TERMINOLOGY

<b><i>Chefes de sucos:</i></b>	traditional local chiefs.
<b>Ethno-Symbolism:</b>	a school of thought in nationalism that stresses the importance of myths, values, symbols, and traditions in the formation and persistence of a nation.
<b><i>Firaku:</i></b>	Timorese people of the east, characterised as ‘strong, hotheaded’.
<b><i>Funu:</i></b>	(Language: Tetum) war; to fight.
<b>Imagined Community:</b>	a concept by Benedict Anderson asserting a nation is socially constructed and imagined by people who see themselves as part of this group, even though members may never meet all other members.
<b><i>Kladi:</i></b>	Timorese people of west, characterised as ‘friendly or passive’
<b><i>Koremotan:</i></b>	a celebration in Timor-Leste of departure which takes place after the year of a deceased relative.
<b>Mestico:</b>	person of mixed Portuguese origin.
<b>Modernism:</b>	period in sociology marked by the move from agrarianism to capitalism, characterised by industrialisation, secularisation, rationality and the nation-state.
<b>Nation:</b>	a nation is a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy, and common rights and duties of all members
<b>Nationalism:</b>	an ideology that places the nation of the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being, comprising of three generic goals: national autonomy, national unity, and national identity.
<b>Primordialism:</b>	an argument in nation theory that asserts that nations existed since the beginning of time.
<b>Social Identity:</b>	that of an individual’s self-construction that comes from perceived membership in a relevant social group.
<b><i>Tais:</i></b>	a traditional woven cloth that varies by region in design, color and style in Timor-Leste.
<b>Tetum:</b>	one of the two official languages of Timor-Leste. Rooted in the Austronesian language
<b><i>Uma Lulik:</i></b>	a thatch-roofed conical house at the center of spirituality and tradition in Timor-Leste.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CNRT</b>	<i>Conselho Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor</i> , National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction
<b>FRETILIN</b>	<i>Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente</i> , Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor.
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GoTL</b>	Government of Timor-Leste
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>ISS</b>	International Social Survey
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNMIT</b>	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
<b>UNTL</b>	<i>Universidade Nasional Timor Lorosa'e</i> , National University of Timor-Leste

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of nationalism is accompanied by a labyrinth of literature asserting different meanings at different levels of analysis. From the onset, the concept itself derives different sentiments depending on one's perspective considering the array of 'nationalist movements' that have occurred in the recent past, especially in light of decolonisation. Nationalism's positive aspects include notions such as self-determination and a sense of community, meanwhile the negative side of nationalism is often associated with xenophobia and fanaticism. The half-island nation of Timor-Leste (the official name for East Timor) is a particularly interesting case in terms of nation-building and nationalism. The formerly Portuguese colony was of little significance to the rest of the world during its decolonisation in the later part of the last century. Quickly after the departure of the Portuguese, Indonesia invaded Timor-Leste in December 1975. As international attention grew throughout the twenty years of Indonesian occupation, many were surprised at the extent to which the Timorese forces were able to resist the subversive interests and ethnic-cleansing caused at the hand of their neighbours under President Suharto. What otherwise would have produced fundamental structural changes resulted paradoxically in the strengthening of Timorese society (McWilliam 2005: 27).

An interesting aspect of Timor-Leste is that it is young. As one of the last colonies to separate from its ruler, Timor-Leste offers a unique and historically relevant perspective on nationalism and nation building. Additionally, Timor-Leste is an example wherein the nation and the state began as very separate entities: the nationalist movement brought self-determination and the UN built much of the state institutions, which is in contrast to European or older ex-colonies which had a form of administration. However, the stability of these institutions comes into question when old and new fault lines in the past decade expose themselves in Timor-Leste: rural-urban divides, generational divides, communal divides, and political divides, among others.

As a country of great diversity but also small territorially, it has been prone to bouts of violence (driven by a variety of factors) that are only amplified by a country of its size. This is a country that has experienced both European and Third-World colonialism, followed by the recent decade of United Nations intervention and full administration of the state. In nationalist theory, the moulding of a collective identity is often exclusively perceived to be caused by external forces; however, these predominant theories fail to acknowledge the role of culture as more than an objective tool. Culture is often taken as a given, with historical accounts of the nationalist movement in Timor simply proclaiming the reassertion of a "culture" or the "prevailing strength" of a culture or ethnicity compared to Indonesia or Portugal; the importance of culture is certainly referenced widely. For the Timorese, local culture has offered a source of stability and identity even though a strong sense of state-based national identity is still being formed. According to Smith (2001) it is this stability and

identity in local ethnies that contribute to the persistence of a public culture, and thus supports the need for a study on perceptions of a national identity and culture and how the government has incorporated nation-identity into its development agenda.

This paper is concerned with the undeniable popular nationalist enthusiasm that which may be tangible and discernible within historical accounts, constructed through traditions and symbols and interpreted by the population, in an attempt to conceptualize the phenomenon of the nation which is experienced by all in varying extents but difficult to qualify. Nationalism, as conceptually fluid as it diverse, is ultimately tied with the notion of identity. As Anthony D. Smith (2009) asserts, a nation requires ethno-cultural resources in the long term in order to create a cohesive community, mainly because of the critical importance of national identity (21) and this is specifically the case in Timor-Leste. How nationalism becomes ingrained as part of one's identity is often overlooked in favor of the macro-view of nationalism as a project of the elite. The ethno-symbolic approach to understanding nationalism marries the two predominant paradigms to take into account both the structural conditions and the cultural, with an emphasis on symbolism and identity. Smith states that the modernist approach overlooks the "distinctive shape of nations" (ibid: 26) and it is the fact that Smith refers to the subjective elements that shape our identity and affect our actions that makes one realize that nations and nationalism involve a more nuanced approach to study.

## AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Many writers interested in Timor-Leste's independence have associated a nation as something achieved through an accumulation of struggle, while others detail the global politics that permitted its existence. However, while not denying the importance of these interpretations, there is a deeper and more subjective layer to the nation that entails its manifestation in the collective imagination. The aim of the paper is to understand how Timorese youth understand the shape of the nation. The definition for nation by Smith (2001) best characterises the phenomenon:

*"A nation is a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy, and common rights and duties of all members"* (Smith 2001: 12).

The paper will utilise Smith's definition of the nation and an ethno-symbolist perspective to guide both the literature review and interviews by focusing on subjective cultural elements and their nature to change. Furthermore, the components of a nation (i.e. homeland, common public culture, duties) will be seen through the lens of social identity theory and in light of historical/cultural context.

Finally, the essay aims to reify the current state of the nation in relation to culture, and provide discussion in support of the necessity of a common national identity.

This essay will center on the following research question:

- How is the nation conceptualized in the collective imagination of Timorese youth?

To a lesser extent the following questions will support the above research question in linking it to the current situation of Timor-Leste's state-centered development:

- How do youth conceptualize their relationship with the state? What characterises the national identity portrayed by the state and brought to the people?
- How do youth's understandings contribute to nation-building efforts and the strength or saliency of a national identity?

In understanding how youth conceptualize the shape of their nation it will be easier to understand the resiliency of the national identity as well. In this landmark year in Timorese history with the departure of the United Nations administration, is it feasible to believe that Timor-Leste is a cohesive nation-state? The findings can potentially contribute to understanding whether progress has been achieved in nation-building efforts, especially since the identity-driven civil violence of 2006.

The paper will begin by reflecting on the current prominent literature surrounding nationalism and defining the ethno-symbolism approach which will be utilised to frame the essay. The use of social identity theory (which provides a core distinction between the state and the nation) and Smith's definition of the nation will better structure the essay while ethno-symbolism provides the lens through which it is viewed. This will be followed by the methodology of the study which utilises mixed methods and outlines some of the difficulties encountered through working with subjective elements. Following this, a review of two major documents (the Constitution and the Policy on Culture) creates a benchmark upon which the perceptions of youth will be analysed. The paper will then move into the analysis which is grouped by topic – some of which grew organically from discussions: *Timorese culture*, *The Dowry and State Responsibilities*, *Languages*, *Trust in Government*, and *Role of Youth*. Finally a few closing remarks will be posited in regards to the debate on the necessity of identity in reference to the Timorese context.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Ethno-symbolism

To understand the ethno-symbolism approach to nationalism, it is first important to understand the two prevailing and contrasting theories, modernism and primordialism, to which ethno-symbolism provides an alternative. The first is the **modernist** paradigm of nationalism which asserts that nations and nationalism are by-products of various processes of modernization. Prior to this, the administration of a people was designed in the name of the ruling class or individual. It is to this extent that nationalism, along with nations, nation-states, national identities, and the whole “international” community are considered modern and characterized by social mobility, a modern state, centralization and bureaucratization, industrialism and capitalism, and secularization. Anderson’s (1991) work on the nation centered on modernity and the cultural changes that are brought about through socio-economic change, or capitalism (6). His term, the “imagined community”, is arguably the most referred term in nationalist discourse. This view of the nation in the mind of the individual, Anderson claims was due to the emergence of the printing press, the need to standardize language and the existence of capitalism. Anderson remarked on the nation as a community that must create limits or boundaries in order to differentiate itself from others. His connection between nations and modernity extended to the notion of sovereignty which blossomed in the modern era. It emphasised the characteristic of the community to *desire* sovereignty and self-determination.

In stark contrast to the modernism is the **primordial** paradigm that asserts that nations have been around since the beginning of time and are a “natural” formation that has culminated and developed into our modern idea of nation. Emphasis is placed on the concepts of continuity and that old nations can be traced further back beyond modern times, among the examples being France, England and Spain, who have guarded their historical substance throughout the times (Smith 2001: 50). The similar paradigm of primordialism is associated with “organic nationalism”, as in nations exist in the natural order and have existed since the beginning of time (ibid: 51). Primordialism suggests that biology, psychology, and culture can all support the notion of ancient nations that are necessary for social organization (Spencer & Wollman 2002: 27); it essentially equates nationalism today as the ethnic groupings (tribes) of the past.

The **ethno-symbolic approach** to studying nationalism does not offer to be a paradigm itself, but instead a different way to view nationalism. In contrast to the prevailing and contesting extremes in nationalist theory – the modernist view and primordial view– ethno-symbolism gives more weight to the subjective elements of memory, myth, symbolism, and departs from the elite-centered analysis of

nationalism. (Smith 2001: 57). While it does not dismiss the external political, geopolitical, symbolic, and socio-cultural elements, the approach is more nuanced in understanding nationalism and thereby addresses the issue of identity. It does not claim to be a scientific theory, nor does it aim to offer a specific theory but instead it supplements modernist theory (Smith 2009: 2).

How do people see themselves and others as members of a given nation? Although the idea of “identity” lends itself to a meaning that is natural and primordial, Spencer & Wollman (2002) state that the use of ethnic symbols and materials are neither automatic nor organic, but instead they are powerful value-laden agents deployed to serve a specific purpose (57). Smith’s ethno-symbolist approach to nationalism asserts a stance between the paradigm of primordialism and modernism while not aiming to be a paradigm in itself (Spencer & Wollman 2002: 28). Smith (2009) distinguishes the element of modernity that over-emphasises the nation and nationalism as something that is forged through conflict, created, or imagined by elites as it does not do justice to the social and symbolic effects of conflict (20). The process whereby facets of an ethnicity are debated, changed and reproduced are underestimated in nationalist thought, as well as the profound impact of these ties as a unifying force. The modernist paradigm does not account for the collective passion one feels towards the nation, or the label of “uniqueness” persons ascribe to their nations. Smith’s approach defends that nationalism is not a continuation of ethnic- based social structures but instead a reframing of it in specific culture-laden contexts: “as important as are the economic, political and military developments, it is the inner changes and reinterpretations that are so critical for the shaping and persistence of nations” (Smith 2009: 21).

## Social Identity

As the concept of identity has gained much interest in the last decade within the humanities and social sciences, even though the concept itself did not begin to gain momentum in discourse until the late 1970s (Sokefeld 2001: 531). Nonetheless, political researchers have been slow to incorporate identity into empirical studies even though movements, such as that of the rights of women, religious minorities, and ethnic or racial groups, cannot be explained simply as a quest for material gain (Huddy, 2001: 127-128). To provide an overview of the two distinct branches of social identity theory, the first is known simply as the “social identity theory” and a subsidiary theory referred to as “self-categorization theory”. Both acknowledge the origins of social identity in terms of cognitive and motivational factors, with the former focusing on motivations that lead a group member to endorse or disavow membership and the latter in contrast concentrate on factors that promote categorization of oneself as a group member (Tajfel 1981; Turner et al. 1987; in Huddy 2001: 132). Studies relating to social identity are expansive, but one concept that is questioned is the saliency of identities.

To social identity researchers, the salience of one's ethnic or racial group plays a key role in identity development, and it has become clear in recent years that the existence of a strong, internalized subjective identity is a key ingredient to the development of out-group antipathy, and not simply group membership. Previous studies shown that when the group is salient or important, then group identity is paramount; whereas on the other hand if the group is not salient, then individual identity dominates (Huddy 2001: 130-131). However, the issues of *choice* and the *gradations of identities* will need to be addressed if social identity theory is to be adapted to political phenomenon. The lack of research done about the development of identity and why individuals vary in the degree to which they identify with a group is one of the strongest critiques of social identity theory and yet of the most interest to political scientists. While unable to gauge the gradation of strength in identities, this categorization can help in understanding where strength in nationalist sentiment is derived and also the strength of cultural symbols.

The study of the impact of socially constructed political boundaries (i.e. nations) has implications for understanding the construction of national identities in a globalizing world (Hardwick & Mansfield 2008: 386-387). While this may be out of the scope of this essay, social identity theory is strongly congruent with Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolist approach to understanding nationalism that focuses on the "inner world" of the participants. Indeed, Anderson's "imagined community" highlights the existence of a national identity that is more than ethnic, territorial, economic or political – it is also psychological. The social identity and ethno-symbolism approaches acknowledge the external forces that shape one's group memberships and identifications, while simultaneously recognizing the idiosyncratic qualities that make one 'unique'. This paper admits to the difficulty in mapping national identity because of these idiosyncrasies, but aims to better understand the "shape" of the nation from an alternative perspective, particularly that which is tangible through historical accounts, possible changes in culture, and reflections by Timorese.

## METHODOLOGY

It must be noted that my original research aim was focused on understanding motivators for migration, internal and international, amongst youth. I proposed that migration as a livelihood strategy was a logical step considering the multitude of factors such as: lack of migration controls, migration was not a government priority, an increasingly high unemployment rate, high rural exodus, a population with many working-aged youth, and the relative deprivation in livelihood compared to other countries in the region. I was interested in the impact of nationalism on migration after a few informal discussions where respondents claimed “not wanting to migrate because it would not be Timorese”. Unfortunately, due to lack of data available on migration and not being able to quantify it statistically, my focus shifted fully to nationalism.

### Epistemological and Ontological Outlook

The epistemological outlook of this study is Interpretivist wherein the notion of understanding is centered on understanding than explaining. The theoretical framework highlights the need to define social reality as fundamentally different than the natural sciences (Bryman 2008: 15). The ontological considerations of this study are largely *constructivist*. Constructivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are accomplished by social actors, therefore they are being produced through social interaction and are constantly changing (Bryman 2008:19). Unlike *objectivism* which states that social phenomena exist independently of their social actors, *constructivism* asserts that they are intertwined. Subjects such as nationalism, one’s political ideologies, culture, and ethnicity are constructs of the society in which they live and are constantly under review by the individual. These are social acts that are difficult to predicate because they can be changed by the individual at any moment for varying reasons.

The issue with defining the epistemological stances of this research are that it assumes that the subjects you are working with are already sharply defined, and that the definitions of your subjects are subscribed to by the researcher. For instance, subscribing to either the positivist stance or Interpretivist stance implies a change in the definition of “nationalism” as a *social construct (positivist)* or *social action (Interpretivist)* – and thus, would force me to subscribe to one meaning or the other, and ultimately one paradigm or approach. The ethno-symbolist approach, however, is recognized as a middle-ground between modernism and primordialism, but overall subscribes to the Interpretivist stance and the subjective elements of nationalism.

## Research Design

The research is qualitative in nature and the lens of ethno-symbolism requires a design that views the research question holistically in its “natural” setting without manipulating variables, and overall refrains from having a firm hypothesis as characteristic in inductive inquiry. Qualitative knowledge is based on weaving back and forth between local context and contextualization as opposed to the de-contextualization of information (Padgett 2004:4). With a topic that deals with the subjectivity of youth perceptions, to do quantitative research would be denying the complexity and nuances of human relationships (ibid).

To better understand nationalism and national identity as it is culturally entrenched, one must turn to key documents and interpretations of the subject. Thus, the research design is lightly based on the phenomenology strategy to sociological study. In order to understand a subject’s reality, the approach investigates the perception of reality as it is constructed; in this case, the reality is nationhood and the perceptions are by youth. It stresses that social reality should not be conceived as a fixed and objective external reality. Therefore, interview transcripts are reviewed to locate meaningful units of text, and link these units to themes and patterns. The analysis will be cautious in its inferences, as this research design lacks an experimental component and thus, lends itself to ambiguity of casual influence.

## Data Collection and Sampling

Different methods of data collection were used to expand understanding of the situation and to facilitate insights. The data collection methods used include: self-completion questionnaires<sup>1</sup>, semi-structured interviews, semi-structured focus group discussions, and a literature review.

The “qualitative interview” or semi-structured interview and group interview (Bryman 2008: 436) was the predominant method of data collection. Qualitative interviews anticipate variation in the research questions and the study wished to best generalize the research ideas. To study how these topics are perceived by youth, a focus was placed on their interpretation and point of view, and delving further into certain items if necessary; this flexibility would not have been possible in structured interviewing. The challenge came in forming appropriate questions with words such subjective terms such as culture, identity, and nationalism (See Annex 1: Interview Guide). A translator was always on hand at every interview and helped me formulate after formulating my

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<sup>1</sup> The method was employed prior to a change in research question and afterwards, was largely rendered useless for the purposes of this thesis.

questionnaires and interview guide. However, 9 out of the 21 valid interviewees spoke and preferred to speak English.

The research sample was predominantly based on youth from the national university in Dili – the *Universidade Nasional Timor Lorosa'e* (UNTL) – through a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. While those chosen were relevant to questions posed, respondents were chosen through convenience considering the time, monetary, and mobility constraints of the interviewer. The convenience sampling method was not the ideal path although the university was originally targeted as a primary source. It was not intended for most of my data to be gathered from UNTL as it poses issues in representativeness but limitations were taken into account.

Generalizability is also a perennial worry of qualitative researchers (Silverman, 2000:102). The snowball sampling method was also employed to gain more responses. In regards to sample size, qualitative research permits a certain level of flexibility (Silverman 2000:108). In the case of my research, issues concerning sampling would include being unrepresentative of rural, uneducated, and 'younger' youth (most responses were from older youths aged 18 to 24) and thus not fully depicting a sample of Timorese society. However most respondents (n=15) were from rural Timor-Leste, and they provided insight into differing perspectives between rural and urban youth.

For the questionnaires, access was gained through a meeting with an administrator at the university who acted as the local gatekeeper for the respondents (Silverman 2000: 110). The role played by myself as the researcher was largely overt wherein access was based on informing my subjects and gaining consent (ibid). Since I was a researcher aiming to gain a greater understanding of perspectives of youth, the overt role allowed me to obtain access at all levels, from the gatekeeper to the subjects, and establish a rapport. However, it must be explained that most of the responses to the questionnaires were rendered useless when I shifted my focus away from migration.

History plays a large component as all conceptions of a nation emphasize a link to the past and traditions (Kumar in Delanty & Kumar 2006: 7). A **literature review** was conducted that involved an analysis of how the national identity is presented in literature to provide a baseline to which responses will be compared. The **self completion questionnaires** were intended to frame the questions for the semi-structured interviews but they were largely based on questions regarding opinions on migration and thus were omitted.

Questions for the **interviews (group and individual)** were primarily influenced by Smith's definition of a nation stressing the influence of a common public culture, shared history, and common duties of members – the first two are indicative of the ethno-symbolic approach, and the latter applies to one's

sense of obligation and how it is rooted. They are also influenced by the International Social Survey (ISS) on National Identity 2003 in how borders (psychological) are constructed and how one interprets their local/regional/national ties. Interviews lasted on average 1 hour, group interviews 1.5 hours and refreshments were provided at all. The categories were kept broad in understanding that “national identity is a function of emotional attachment and value-laden interpretations, and any study of the phenomenon should allow individuals to express their ties without restrictive categories imposed by the researcher” (Davis 1999: 32). Responses were therefore analysed by their content, taking into account the subjects that dominate discussion in each case, observations of how the respondent replies, and anomalies. Gradation in strength of national attachment was gauged broadly through scalar questions regarding pride, trust (in government) and progress but due to difficulties in translation, there was not enough consistency in how the questions were posed and interpreted, so this relied on observation as well.

The interviews were recorded with a simple voice recorder with the exception of some ad-hoc individual interviews; all interviews were supplemented with written notes and reflections. Transcription was done to pick up on the general impressions after the interviews and to make notes along the side, which helped to improve the delivery of questions in following interviews and pick up on reoccurring themes while avoiding the mistake of creating too many codes (Bryman 2008: 552).

## **ETHICAL AND QUALITY CONSIDERATIONS**

Issues related to ethics in social research can be categorized into four areas by Diener and Crandall (1978, in Bryman 2008: 118):

- whether there is harm to participants;
- whether there is lack of informed consent;
- whether there is invasion of privacy;
- whether deception is involved.

In considering these ethical issues relating to my study, I feel I made the necessary precautions in establishing a rapport with my subjects and flexibility in my interviews by fully disclosing the purpose of the research and use of data, the anonymity, freedom to refuse, and my availability for questions. The impact of the focus group discussion was a concern as I brought up topics (such as politics, trust, conflict, and national pride) which created debate that might not have otherwise been there. Silverman (2000) notes that questioning how you are viewed by your participants can help you to understand what you may learn from your relations with the subjects (206). Thus, my role as a

researcher and graduate student while being in the same age group might have been perceived as intimidating or unapproachable. Although I cannot rid myself of complete subjectivity, I believe the confirmability of my research practices is high and have acted in good faith without overtly allowing personal values or inclinations to affect the research findings (Bryman 2008: 379).

The validity is the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers (Hammersley, 1990 in Silverman, 2000: 175), and can be counted on two levels: internal or external. The former refers to whether the observations match the theories being developed, and the latter refers to whether the findings can be generalized (Bryman 2008: 376). The complaint of “anecdotalism” questions the validity of research (Silverman 2000: 177) and while there is no ‘golden key’ to validity for qualitative researchers (ibid) the validity of the theories garnered can be strengthened through triangulation and respondent validation, entailing combining different methods to look at the findings and also cross-checking them with reactions from previous respondents. While the latter may not be possible to the fullest extent, I will triangulate once a solid theory has been built (considering the inductive approach), and employing the “constant comparability method”, if available, will attempt to find another case through which to test out these provisional hypotheses (ibid: 179).

The reliability of the data refers to the extent to which the study can be replicated (*external reliability*) and members of the research team agree on what they see and hear (*internal reliability*) (Bryman 2008: 376). The former is difficult to meet in qualitative research and is certainly the case for my research; while the methods may be replicated they cannot be replicated in the same delivery or subjects, considering the semi-structured interview method and changing subjects. The research will certainly place the theory with sensitive consideration of the context; the ethno-symbolist approach to part one (content analysis) does not aim to be reductionist in its recounting but instead offer an alternative culture-centered perspective.

## **SETTING THE SCENE: THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT**

The early years since independence saw the greatest amount of change. The UN mission and transitional administration have greatly impacted the infrastructure, governance institutions and improved the security situation all in a relatively short period of time. Persistent poverty and a lack in human resources present challenges that will test these institutions beyond the presidential and parliamentary elections as well as the withdrawal of the UN in 2012. The current development context shows the condition of the state. It is evident that UN intervention, even full scale administration, is not a magic bullet to development.

Timor-Leste became a sovereign state on 20 May 2002, making it one of the youngest countries in the world at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The initial state of the country prior to international intervention can be characterized by centuries of neglect during Portuguese colonial occupation followed by a quarter of a century of violent Indonesian rule; the country was extremely poor with per capita income of approximately US\$300 (Hill & Saldanha 2001:3), no legal system or constitution, nor high-level bureaucratic capacity. Disruption during the 1999 conflict caused commercial companies to flee and large-scale displacement of Timorese to occur, with over 70% of the buildings destroyed (ibid).

From a demographic perspective, the population faces an annual rate of 3.2% growth and the entire population is likely to double in the next 17 years. Timor-Leste is predominantly young with over 43% being under the age of 15 years and characterized by a low-life expectancy by regional standards (60.5 years for females and 58.6 years for males) (UNFPA 2009a:1). The rate of child mortality is often used to describe the wider social and economic conditions of a country and as such, Timor-Leste faces one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in Southeast Asia at 660 deaths per 100,000 births (UNFPA 2009a:4). Three quarters of women state problems in access to health services and the 2003 DHS reported that 90% of all births took place at home.

Disease is a continuing problem, among the most common being gastrointestinal and respiratory infections, often caused by limited access to health services. There is a high dependency ratio as only 36.6% of the population comprise the labour force (2004 Census). The majority of the population in Timor-Leste depend upon the agricultural sector as their main source of income, however, with such a low level of productivity, actual revenue from the agricultural sector is very little due to lack of access to local markets, financial services, and the low price of agriculture products causing them to eat what they grow (UNDP 2009a: 20). In the face of these challenges, there is a wide angle of opportunity through the presence of key political/religious figures that provide a unifying force as well as lessons that can be learned from the experiences of other newly independent states. When beginning from scratch, it is hoped that Timor-Leste can only move forward.

In the initial years after independence the country saw marked improvement: free and fair elections were held, a Constitution was drafted and almost all of the mandated institutions were created by 2005 (UNDP 2011:5). The conflicts in 2006 caused great setbacks to the progress in Timor-Leste, but this has managed to recover due to increasing oil prices, particularly in 2007-2008 (UNDP 2011: 17). The economy had expanded rapidly in both industry, services, and government spending, particularly on initiatives focused on increasing social cohesion and understanding, such as assistance to returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and addressing the grievances of disaffected groups and

vulnerable households (ibid). Most recently, at the UN Security Council Meeting in November 2011, Timor-Leste was described as being a “very different place today” (UN Security Council, 2011) with continued peace and stability and a responsive national police force, which with international assistance, will support the elections. Timor-Leste is also considering applying to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the full support of Indonesia, and has a bolstering Petroleum Fund reaching approximately \$8.3 billion dollars (ibid).

The Human Development Index (HDI) that measures the long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development – a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living – has shown marked improvement between 2005 and 2010 with values of 0.428 and 0.502 (respectively), moving Timor-Leste from the low human development category to medium human development category. By contrast after independence in 2002, its HDI value was 0.375 (UNDP 2011: 30). It is now ranked higher than most Sub-Saharan African countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Angola and Mozambique and other countries in the Southeast Asian region (ibid).

The development of the country is on the road to progress. With goals detailed in the National Development Plan 2010-2030, some of the main elements include a “democratic country with vibrant traditional culture [...] People will be literate knowledgeable and skilled. They will be healthy and live a long and productive life [...] The economy and finances of the state will be managed efficiently, transparently, and will be free from corruption; and the state will be based on the rule of law” (Planning Commission 2002<sup>2</sup> in UNDP 2011: 12). It was widely agreed at the UN Security Council Meeting (November 2011) that Timor-Leste was on its way to long-term peace, stability and development. Paulo Portas, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Portugal, stated in the meeting that: “the necessary conditions were now in place for the presidential and parliamentary elections” and echoed the thoughts of many when he added that although the country is a success story, it still has a long way to go before achieving its goals for economic development (UN Security Council Meeting, November 2011).

Currently, plans are underway to ensure the transition and departure of the United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) and the improvements made with the national police force to ensure continued peace and security have been heralded as an example to other post-conflict countries and a success story for the UN. The population of Timor-Leste is confident in its ability to take back ownership of the state, however how can the government of Timor-Leste ensure that society does not revert back to the previous ethnic- and economic- rifts that currently pose a threat to their national identity. Development continues to favour the urban areas, particularly Dili, while the majority of the

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<sup>2</sup> East Timor Development Plan – Planning Commission Meeting

population reside with limited access to services such as clean water and health care. Additionally, the hybrid governance system which aims to retain Timor's ethnic integrity by integrating pre-UN political systems continues to face challenges at the local administration level. How will Timor-Leste maintain its social cohesion in light of the social and economic divides? What is the state of national identity now?

## NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONSTITUTION AND POLICY ON CULTURE

The founding document of Timor-Leste, the *Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor* (GoTL 2002) not only outlines the rights and values of the new country but also encases the basis of the national identity as articulated by the governing body. The Constitution attempts to enshrine a common understanding of the identity, history and heritage. Leach (2002) details the elements of the Constitution best in his article<sup>3</sup>, among the defining features: valorisation of the resistance, use of the term Maubere, the Catholic Church and the issue of language. I wish to simply mention evident issue of identity in the Constitution and its further implications, as Leach foresaw the identity struggle in his 2002 article and is now a relevant topic a decade later.

The “valorisation of resistance” clause in section 11 (1) states: “*The Democratic Republic of East Timor acknowledges the historical resistance of the Maubere People against foreign domination and the contribution of all those who fought for national independence.*” The word Maubere was originally a derogatory term coined by the Portuguese colonialists to label poor, uneducated peasant farmers but it was adopted by the FRETILIN party in the 1970s. The party guarded the original meaning of the term and then used as an umbrella term of national pride to overcome the divisional titles. The reference to the Catholic Church in section 11.2 acknowledges its importance in the resistance. Prior to 1970, most Timorese were animists and less than one third were Catholics (Archer in Carey & Bentley 1995:121) but with the invasion by Indonesia, many priests and religious missionaries were not able to leave and were forced to reconstruct their church during the occupation. As a Timorese institution connected to an international structure, it was able to independently connect with the outside world and served as a haven for Timorese; the Church condemned the corruption, human rights abuses and defended local values. Their use of Tetum during masses while Indonesian was spoken in every other institution helped to unify the Timorese and solidify the Church's position as a promoter of Timorese self-determination (ibid: 127-128).

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, see Leach, Michael (2002) “Valorising the Resistance: National Identity and Collective Memory in East Timor's Constitution”. *Social Alternatives*. Vol. 21. No. 32 (Winter 2002). pp. 43-47

The Constitution is heavily laden with references to the resistance, from the *resistance* clause to its national symbols. The flag as well is steeped in wartime values: “yellow – the traces of colonialism; black – the obscurantism that needs to be overcome; red – the struggle for national liberation; white – peace” (GoTL 2002, Section 5(2)). The national anthem as well highlights the boundaries to be overcome by “vanquishing imperialism, the enemy of the people” and “no to exploitation.”

International relations for Timor-Leste were outlined in the Constitution as maintaining “privileged ties” with Portuguese speaking countries and “special ties of cooperation and friendship” countries in the region (section 8.1 to 8.4). The language debate continues in the Constitution as Tetum and Portuguese are made the official languages with English and Indonesian the working languages for “as long as deemed necessary” (GoTL 2002, Section 13, Section 159). Certainly, the nation’s transition and attempt at forging a national identity beyond the resistance is apparent in the catch-all policy towards language and other countries. Leach (2002) claims that the Constitution describes a truly Timorese identity to arise only from the collective of the Indonesian occupation (44) which poses difficulty in describing an identity beyond independence.

Additionally, the political platform of the FRETILIN is apparent in many cases and while they represented the interests of the people at wartime, their policies may not be reflective of the people’s interests in the future, for example, the privileged ties with Portugal is also a FRETILIN party platform. The Constitution also lays out provisions for parts of Timor-Leste to enjoy differing economic and administrative status, such as Atauro (a small island off the coast of Dili) and Oecussi (an enclave province in West Timor that belongs to Timor-Leste) (Article 71). The dichotomy within the Constitution to both preserve local identities and yet build a national identity (the “personality and cultural heritage of East Timorese”) is evident in the text.

The Constitution enshrines an identity of Timor based heavily within the context of struggle and wartime, including the social-democratic principles, symbols, and terminology akin to the revolutionary group agenda. Certainly, national identities are moulded from events of the past but the Timorese Constitution is written with little foresight into a united identity in the context of peace. Looking at this as the benchmark to contrast, the Policy on Culture (2009) sheds light on possible changes between 2002 and 2009. The policy was created with the presumption that social tensions are less likely to occur if the country’s diversity is better understood and thus “making it possible to build a state that is truly multicultural, developed and peaceful” (GoTL 2009: 4). The document outlines strategies that can be grouped broadly under: institutionalizing culture, legislation, and partnerships.

The institutionalization of culture according to the policy entails disseminating cultural knowledge through infrastructure such as libraries, museums, regional culture centers and most importantly, educational institutions. The educational component of this policy is prominent, as the policy emphasizes the lack of capacity within social and cultural areas such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, and so forth, and the lack of employment opportunities available to absorb such knowledge. Thus, the institutionalisation of culture goes beyond the creation of infrastructure but also a new curriculum to education allowing and promoting the study of cultural content in Timor-Leste. It also recognizes the contemporary forms of cultural expression such as the arts and music.

The policy document also recognizes legislation to regulate the cultural sector in Timor-Leste, such as the Heritage Law with the State Secretariat of Environment, conventions with UNESCO and ways to manage the new cultural infrastructure and best decentralize cultural knowledge. The partnerships include international organizations (particularly UNESCO), development organizations and civil society. Portugal does play an indirect role in the formation of a national identity in Timor-Leste, particularly through the Portuguese Language Community of Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, CPLP). As the only Asian country to be a member of the CPLP, the language becomes important in order for Timor-Leste to differentiate itself from other countries in the region. This partnership through the CPLP aims to “strengthen the linguistic and cultural ties with those countries, which are fundamental elements in the history and national identity of East Timor” (GoTL 2002: s.8,2), and aside from the CPLP, no other country has a mention in the cultural policy.

The government recognizes the importance of culture and its link to national identity: “An indispensable instrument (...), culture and the promotion of cultural knowledge (...) will lead to the consolidation of the democratic process and growing social cohesion.” (GoTL 2009: s.6.3). Since the document’s conception in 2009 and as a government priority, the State Secretariat of Culture has strengthened its implementation to soon bring the first museums, national library and archives, cultural centres, and Academy of Arts to Timor-Leste. Training courses for the implementation of libraries are being held (Secretario de Estado da Cultura, n.d). Other than the introduction, the violence in the past was neither valorised nor mentioned within the context of culture; in the introduction, the Indonesian occupation was mentioned as an organized resistance that “reinforced the feeling of belonging to a reality with specific physical, linguistic, and cultural characteristics” (GoTL 2009: 2). With the government responding to the need for a public culture, two dimensions of values are created; the first enshrines the physical symbols and traditions of culture and the second is in the promotion of a present culture of sharing and tolerance amongst diversity.

These two key documents showcase an advance in the creation, and prioritization, of a national identity. Wherein the Constitution described an identity forged through struggle and a common

enemy, the Policy on Culture outlines a national identity that is relevant and potentially self-sustaining. At the time of writing much of what was instigated in the Policy of Culture has yet to be completed; the infrastructure is in its beginning stages with a main priority being the national library and archives and the first museum and cultural centre (Secretario de Estado da Cultura, n.d). These projects have been labeled “fundamental (...) to affirm Timor-Leste’s cultural identity” (ibid) but neither will be completed in the near future but the efforts and soon-to-be fulfilled measures seem to be widely acknowledged through my observations. The Constitution and the Policy on Culture reflect the state of national identity at the time, with the latter focusing on an approach in line with establishing common ethnic ties and alluding to cultural symbols. In order to understand the national identity holistically, however, it is necessary to ask the population.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following discussions and interviews aim to provide insight into how the nation is conceptualized in the collective imagination of Timorese youth. Interviews were semi-structured and through reviewing the transcripts, patterns to responses emerged which were relevant to understanding youth’s perceptions of national identity through culture. Furthermore, and not to dismiss the inextricable link between the nation and the state, it is important to know how they situate themselves within the state in this critical time of nation-building. Due to the subjective nature of the responses, it was necessary to contextualise the issues that arose as it provides further depth to the responses.

Naturally it cannot be assumed that post-secondary students are representative of the wider population but they are a part of the larger youth population (which is a high percentage of the total population) and the important voting cohort, which means they have a claim in the composition of the government and thus more likely to follow government happenings. Access to post-secondary school may be a marker of relative privilege but not to such an extent that their opinions should be negligible; UNTL is highly subsidised and many of the students interviewed come from rural Timor-Leste and express their regional interests. The questions are based on the definition of nation by Smith and the concept of maintaining the social contract. The open-ended questions are aimed to understand what constitutes Timorese culture and identity, whether the government/state upholding its obligations, and what are the common rights and duties as youth.

### Timorese Culture

Nation-building is the constructing and structuring of a national identity through the state. This section asks the open-ended question of how **Timorese youth describe or qualify their culture** and

also whether they feel that Timor-Leste has a **strong and/or unique culture**, in aiming to reflect the progress made on nation-building because a common culture binds the social formation of an imagined community. The following respondent describes how Timorese culture is strong because of its uniqueness and refers to cultural artefacts that can only be found in Timor-Leste:

*“Yeah I think Timor-Leste has a strong culture, like tais, and traditional house and language because in Timor-Leste we have many dialects – some districts have many dialects – and that is why Timor-Leste has a strong culture. It is a unique culture in the world, like tais and traditional house. Some traditional houses from Timor-Leste become national symbols, like that from Los Palos, it is so unique.”* (Respondent 13, Interview Group 5).

As exemplified by the following statement, this respondent recognized the cultural artefacts that are cross-culturally applicable to all of Timor, such as tais, the sacred house, and dancing:

*“Timor-Leste has many cultures; each district has its own. Like in Ainaro, it’s different from Viqueque district; it’s different from Same district. Like, in tais each district is a different colour. And also the culture for the district house, when we build the house not everyone is the same. It’s different – the dancing, the tais, the stories, the sacred house.”* (Respondent 8, Interview Group 3)

Almost all of the respondents referred to the official national symbols as what encapsulate Timorese culture, particularly the traditional/sacred house or *Uma Lulik*, which is a thatch-roofed conical house at the center of spirituality and tradition, and the second are *tais*, a traditional woven cloth that varies by region in design, color and style and is used in ceremonial adornment or apparel. Additionally, many respondents to an extent stated that the differences in cultures are an overarching quality of Timorese culture and identity. The link that that is made with traditional dance, tais, sacred houses, and dowry – all of which differ regionally – are based on a common understanding of the importance of these traditions as grounded in a common ancestry and a respect for its preservation. A few respondents referred to the language of Tetum as being uniquely Timorese and only one respondent referred to Indonesian or Portuguese influence on culture causing Timorese culture to be “mixed and less strong”.

In following-up to these questions I asked **whether they felt their culture changed and what changed the most**. The following respondent replied that there have been changes to her culture but not in reference to national symbols or artefacts, but instead to her way of life:

“My culture is still strong, still the same but now I can go to university and there are jobs here in Dili. Fifteen years ago, it was very different. My culture does not change, people still live the old ways and I am always proud of local culture, but the outside [of the local community] changes.” (Respondent 1, Interview Group 1).

Overall, the responses varied from relating to no/better change, and references to institutions or businesses that have impacted their daily life such as going to university, grocery stores, better roads, and less Indonesian businesspersons. I left this question open although my original intent was to know whether their cultural symbols had undergone change over time. The result was, when thinking about culture and change, there was the overwhelming agreement that their traditional way of life was the biggest change. The above quotation typifies what I observed as an inner dialogue between several identities (the national, local, student, and employee identity) as the respondent was trying to reconcile her value for the traditional ways while living the urban lifestyle as a student. For those that replied with the cultural symbols in mind, they said that there was no change or change for the better – such as the government initiative to help restore the *Uma Lulik* in several districts. Certainly, I learned that in asking whether a cultural symbol undergoes change over time, one can expect the answer that it does not.

Nationalism demands the rediscovery and restoration of the nation’s unique cultural identities, and to this end, it is evident that the *tais* and *Uma Lulik* are ingrained as national symbols, which I believe is in large part due to their cross-regional applicability. The nation entails members who are conscious of their cultural unity and history and are devoted to cultivating their national individuality in vernacular languages, customs, arts and landscapes, through national education and institutions (Smith 2001: 34). However, membership in a nation that is experiencing a strong transition also entails struggle with competing identities and values. The responses might have been different had it not been a multi-ethnic country like Timor-Leste where the regional cultures vary so widely from each other, and thus become dangerous ground for building a national identity. Symbols of unity can become symbols of marginalisation, or reminders of local customs lost. Certainly, Timor-Leste has the difficult responsibility of navigating nation-building in a way that is inclusive and preservative.

## The Dowry and State Responsibilities

This topic was brought up during the discussion of the previous topic concerning conceptualizing Timorese culture and it was interesting to see how respondents commented on the integration of the government into the lives of the people. As the below comment describes, it was suggested often that certain costly traditions should be regulated by the government, such as the *koremotan*:

*“One thing I suggest to the government is to limit people to do the koremetan because every year our community in the rural places do koremetan<sup>4</sup> and like, sometimes in one village they have three or four ceremonies. There are two or three buffalos killed for these events and it spends a lot of money.”* (Respondent 1, Interview Group 1)

The following respondent links nationality and identity to being the responsibility of the government, and the fact that the tradition is not regulated is due to the government’s preoccupation with the economy:

*“Our culture is our nationality and our identity. But I do not think they [the government] care for our traditions like they care for economy. Do they not see it is hard? To pay for dowry when we ourselves have little money?”* (Interview 21)

It is also understandable in discussing with youth at this age that the traditions relating to marriage and the traditional dowry were of great concern. It is important to clarify that the “dowry” is conventionally a price paid by the bride’s family to the groom’s, but their use of the term *dowry* or *barlake* in these discussions was actually in conjunction to the definition of *bride price*, wherein it is the male’s responsibility to pay a sum to the woman’s family, as explained in the statement below:

*“The dowry is how we show how much we love the woman and that she belongs to us. But the money is difficult, and many must live with their wife’s family anyway because they cannot pay. I probably will not be able to pay. We do it because it is our culture and we have been doing this for years and we must respect that and our traditions.”* (Interview 19)

The impact of the dowry spreads into different areas of life as well, as one respondent mentioned:

*“Once we talk about culture, it is the identity of the country or the nation. But sometimes I have an opposite idea. Sometimes culture can be bad for the people, like the dowry. Actually, economically speaking, once we do the dowry and we get married to someone, it impacts the people. If they have money, why not use it to send their sons to school instead of paying the dowry. Sometimes there are parts of Timorese culture that I am proud, but some I would want to change”* (Respondent 12, Interview Group 5).

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<sup>4</sup> *Koremetan* or “removing of the black” is a celebration of departure which takes place after the year of a deceased relative. A large feast which can last up to a week is held to celebrate the departed and symbolically repay any final debts which the deceased owes to others.

It can be inferred from these males' responses that their views on the dowry are coming to terms with the current context. I was very surprised at the males' preoccupation with the dowry, as it seemed to be very divisive. Upon further research, the dowry itself is a tradition far detached from its original purpose. As originally a way of giving value to a woman as housewife and mother, the price of the dowry has become very substantial<sup>5</sup> and is usually determined by the uncle of the bride-to-be and not the parents or the woman themselves. The now transactional process has devalued the woman into a possession of the man. Even upon her husband's death, she still belonged to the husband's family (JICA 2011: 7). The larger patriarchal system created a tolerance for domestic violence against women which made the *Law against Domestic Violence* difficult to pass. As one lawmaker addressed, women "should not go running to the police [for] daily violence such as slaps and hits" (IRIN 12 May 2010).

The male responses emphasized economic welfare of the family, the costs that affect availability of education and the perpetuation of poverty. However, when the issue of the dowry was brought up with female respondents (wherein the topic did not come naturally, as with males, but had to be instigated) there was hesitance and much less to be said. At first, it was perceived that perhaps men and women did not share the same concern. A female respondent stated that the dowry can negatively impact the female's family if, for example, her brother gets married then her role through marriage is to retrieve the loss. The idea by male respondents that the custom should be regulated or even forbidden was rooted in economic rationale and not the welfare of women. With one particular group of three males, I asked: "is there any way in which the dowry can be bad for the woman?" The overwhelming response was surprise:

*"How is it bad for the woman? Her family gets all of the money."* (Interview Group 3)

It is evident that, like the dowry, the patriarchal society and treatment of women is an ingrained practice. Although there is strong support through civil society for victims of domestic and gender-based violence (GBV), women continue not to seek help. This lends me to believe that if the dowry tradition was to disappear it would be due to male influence and their aim to avoid unnecessary spending, rather than reflect an authentic change in mindset.

Furthermore, this discussion over traditions becoming a responsibility of the government showcases how the two already operate within the same boundaries of understanding. The dowry and *koremotan* are considered a part of Timorese culture, and the government has taken up the responsibility of instilling a sense of Timorese culture. In a policy document by Brandao (n.d), the system of marriage

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<sup>5</sup> The dowry was paid in terms of cattle, buffalo, goats, jewellery or cash. The current price is said to be two heads of cattle (approx. USD\$1 000 to \$1 500) but this varies according to region.

(“*fetosaa-umane*”) is common to all ethno-linguistic groups, but the process varies from community to community, and certain customs excise divisive pressures between inter-familial and communal groups. Aside from the gender disparities that this custom reinforces, the marriage customs have very real economic and social implications, such as lifelong debt and discouraging young men from marriage. The respondents have shown not only acceptance of the government to facilitate traditions but also a desire or need for intervention.

## Languages

Language was a topic of strong discussion amongst the interviewees with the current multi-language policy and challenges. The importance of a unified language is also undeniable for a sense of social cohesion. In an extension to the use of education as a tool of creating cultural homogeneity, Gellner (1964 in Hutchinson & Smith 1994) necessitates language as a medium through which the educational system (and not the family or village) is able to make a full man and citizen (55-57). In Timor-Leste, the issue of languages has been ongoing. The country is highly multi-lingual and this aspect of Timor-Leste has been either ignored or seen as a problem to be eradicated. This is especially true with the Portuguese and Indonesians colonisers, who have tried to impose one language through campaigns of assimilation. Under the Timor-Leste Constitution, Articles 13 and 159 determine that Tetum and Portuguese are the official languages and Indonesian and English are the working languages “for as long as deemed necessary” (GoTL 2002). Certainly, this approach can seem chaotic and the variation within the language policy is indicative of a country in transition. It is commonly observed that Timorese do not speak any one language with great fluency, which may be explained through the differing mediums in which these languages are used. It was explained to me by one of the university students studying English:

*“Portuguese is learned in school but the language at home is Tetum or a local language. The books at school are mixed Indonesian and Portuguese. The television is in Indonesian. And if you work, you must know English”* (Interview 18).

The language of Tetum<sup>6</sup> is not yet standardized and highly inconsistent, often borrowing phrases from Indonesian or Portuguese but there is strong sentiment to preserving and developing the language. When asked, “What about the local dialects within the region?” there were differing opinions but a strong recognition of their right to preserve local culture as well. One respondent explained:

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<sup>6</sup> Tetum, as used in this paper, refers to the dialect *Tetum-Dili*, which is one of the two official languages and the language of the city. Tetum itself has four regional dialects, with two of them considered unintelligible outside of their home territories.

*“Timor-Leste has many languages too and we respect them because we respect their culture as part of our culture. But for schooling, for businesses, I don’t know, one language is better. Maybe they can go home and speak their [local] language (...) I don't know how to speak 30 languages”* (Interview 20).

The opinions regarding language in Timor brought up discussions of other countries that speak English but have only one official language. English in this case was considered a “good language to learn” but Tetum is “number one”. When asked about Portuguese and Indonesian languages, there was no evidence of a residual distaste from the past but instead only discussion purely on the functionality of the languages at the present. This is an important concept; considering the enthusiastic reaction given by respondents to preserving Tetum, it could be inferred that the Indonesian and Portuguese languages would be considered as infringements on Tetum as a national symbol. Most respondents were committed to developing Tetum, the few that opposed were of a business mindset wherein Portuguese should stay as the official language because it was useful as an international connection but represented a token of the past.

When asked whether Portuguese or Indonesian culture could impact Timor-Leste, the dominant reply was: “no, because Timor is different and strong”. However it should be noted that their understanding of Indonesian or Portuguese culture was limited; Indonesians were equated with business owners and Portuguese as the Portuguese National Army (which continues to have a strong presence). Overall, it was observed that there was a much greater distaste towards the English language and influence. Even though it was considered to be more useful, it was believed that once English starts then “all things Timorese will be gone” (Interview 19). English was equated with aid workers and the language of business. The Timorese students that spoke English and were learning the language wished to teach others English as well; the impression gained from these respondents was that English can coincide with Tetum, while the majority felt that English would override the local language. In response to scholars’ assertions that English be implemented as an official language, Jose Ramos-Horta, the past president of Timor-Leste, refuted: “the fact that a particular language has regional or global usage does not necessarily mean we must all automatically dump our historical languages and roots and adopt it as official language” (Ramos-Horta April 2012). It is evident here that the prospect of standardizing the Tetum language is very real and driven by strong local sentiment.

## **Trust in the Government**

Although contested, the notion of the social contract between the state and the people refers to whether they feel the government is fulfilling its obligations to providing security and social systems,

especially despite previous broken obligations to peace and security. The state's ability to carry out its functions is certainly important and crucial but according to this the legitimacy of the government hinges on whether it is believed to represent the general will. The theory of the social contract is used in this case not to assume a relationship between nationalism and the state's provision of services, but instead to understand the extent to which national identification translates into trust in the government, and furthermore the state systems.

Responses to this issue are varied. The term "government" was used because there was no clear translation for the term state. Thus, the definition of government varied with respondents and begged clarification during the interviews, some referring to the actual governing body while others referred to the larger state. The overall responses denoted negative sentiments however were accompanied by rectifying statements. They referred to broken promises, lack of trust of high level authority, deception and not completing projects. However, some respondents were quick to defend the government, pointing out the overall low capacity of the government, the young age of the government, and acknowledging that progress – while slow – is still progress. The following respondent provides an extreme example of distrust in the government:

*“For me, I do not trust the government. The system is centered only on Dili and infrastructure and money and investment but not centralized to the districts. The rural areas don't have basic infrastructure, roads, water, sanitation (...) they promise to the community only for votes but don't realise their promises. My trust in the government is zero.”*  
(Respondent 7, Interview Group 3)

There was an emphasis on greed within political parties but one respondent pointed to the divergences in political parties and the drive for power as reasons for slow development. While government can be divisive but the respondent reasserts the need to recognize the common goal:

*“For me I have problems with this government, there are many parties and all want power. We need to plan more together”* (Interview 19)

At the time of writing, the third Presidential elections since 2002 were to be held in the coming months of March and April 2012, and so the political climate amongst youth (to the extent of discussing the political situation) was observed to be escalating. This also created a complicated atmosphere to navigate considering party politics can be divisive, which was not the aim of the interviews, and so the term "government" was used quite broadly as opposed to referring to the specific political party. The level of trust one has in their government reflects whether they feel the obligations of the social contract were met. According to respondents, the negative sentiments fell

upon the responsibility of the governing bodies, and did not necessarily reflect distrust in the system of governance altogether. The poor performance of the government in terms of implementation or urban bias was seen as a fault of the ruling party – respondents felt betrayed and those that did not vote him into power feel irresponsible. The ruling sentiment was that the governing body was not reflective of the needs of the people.

There was no blame placed on the system of governance, pointing to an acceptance of institutionalized democracy, despite the history of post-election violence in Timor-Leste. The administrative structure of the state is a hybrid of both the traditional and modern systems but only one respondent referred to local politics when asked about trust in the government:

*“The government is the rulers of all of Timor-Leste, they hold more power, but what do our chefes de sucos do? They are our traditional leaders. We still feel strongly for our traditional cultures, our cultures of the district. But they also do nothing. No improvement in our district, no development from both.”* (Interview 20)

It is necessary at this point to describe the context of the political situation and elections in Timor-Leste which impact current responses. The past governments has been wrought with bouts of violence and societal fractures, as well as continuing party politics that fail in putting the needs of Timorese first. The results of the general elections of 2002 led to the police and military stand-off in 2006 due to alleged discriminatory practices in the army threatened Timor-Leste’s young democracy. The 2007 elections were generally peaceful but an assassination attempt on both the president and prime minister the following year put this into question. So although elections have historically followed through peacefully, the formal institution by itself is insufficient; most parties with the exception of the FRETILIN grapple with organisational discipline and factionalism.

The FRETILIN party, which was the major revolutionary group against Indonesian occupation, assumed they had a unique claim to governance. Although the 2002 elections resulted in a majority government of 57.3%, it was well below the predicted 80-90% support. The then Prime Minister Alkatiri exhibited ‘limited tolerance’ to the opposition of eleven parties (Shoesmith 2011: 9-11). Their way of conducting politics was seen as confrontational and self-preservatory, which led some to fear that the FRETILIN could transform into authoritarian rule (Simonsen, 2006: 577). The 2007 elections proved more factional as the FRETILIN earned 21 seats and the CNRT with charismatic leader and ex-militant Xanana Gusmao with 18 seats but joining into a coalition with four other parties and earning the parliamentary. It was an uncomfortable coalition government and upset both the parties (many of whom have longstanding differences) and their constituents. With the current elections, as of May 2011, twenty-two parties had registered or are seeking registration for the parliamentary

elections in July 2012 (ibid). In order to strengthen social cohesion in the direction best for the people and overcome the fractures between the parties, it is necessary in the 2012 election that the outcome be generally accepted by the population and that the emerging civil society is recognized.

With this in mind, the respondents recognized the problems within the government (i.e. human resource problems, greed) but they did not identify it to be a source of anger or disappointment, which was surprising as I had anticipated the opposite. Interestingly, some found it to be a motivation to become more involved. There were none that I would consider to be disenfranchised by the process, despite the violence and broken promises, which is in contrast to political apathy that seems to pervade youth in Western nations. The system functioned and although many feel they have been betrayed through broken promises and continued lack of progress, they accepted the governing party as the result of a free and fair democratic election, and despite the current lack of progress, respondents stated that the development situation is much better than before. A few respondents took it upon themselves to describe to me how elections are done and [in reference to broken promises and the mandate] *“in five years, they will know that we’re not happy. And we’ll do that again and again until we are happy.”* (Respondent 10, Interview Group 4).

## Role of Youth

Smith’s definition of a nation includes the common duties applicable to all members. The common duties in a nation include and go beyond the civic duties required by a state. How youth perceive their role in the nation also helps in understand how they situate themselves within, or in relation to the nation-state. Certainly, the fact that the respondents are educated has a strong direct impact to their lives as Timorese youth and so the emphasis they place on education cannot be extrapolated to reflect the views of wider society. The following respondent mentioned youth, education and ability to contribute as inextricably linked:

*“There are many youth that do not access education, so how can they contribute to the country? (...) Some youth, they just drink in the streets or do exercises that are not important. That is the problem for me as a youth and Timorese, when I finish my study I really want to develop my future and education in order to guide youth who do not have access”*

(Respondent 4, Interview Group 2).

There is a concern about the growing violence amongst youth, and links to unemployment and lack of education, however, the idea of youth engagement in violent behaviour is not new. During the Indonesian invasion, the resistance encouraged violence as a legitimate form of resistance and

additionally the resistance leadership used young Timorese militia groups to intimidate others in the lead-up to the 1999 referendum (World Bank 2007: 2). The economic situation is also not in favour of youth, where many come to Dili from the rural areas only to become discouraged with the lack of employment opportunities. Gang violence and martial arts groups (MAG) were among the top reasons for negative views of Timor-Leste. For the youth that come from the districts to Dili, the sense of being disconnected from the traditional and religious leaders and networks that supported them leads youth to join MAGs and other armed groups of equally unemployed and disenfranchised youth (ibid). A sense of belonging or community in an otherwise disenfranchising environment is critical, as one respondent points out:

*“It is not easy for Timorese youth. I don’t want to talk bad things about other youth, because one example is when I came to Dili from Viqueque, I was the same like them. You don’t know no-one. Many youth at the university are away from their family. It is not easy and so if I was not in school I can be there [in gangs]” (Interview 19).*

I believe it is important here to describe the situation with MAGs and gang violence in Timor-Leste, as this collective constitutes a substantial problem for authorities, security and from a cultural standpoint, can severely undermine nation-building efforts in the country. Although many members of MAGs are entirely peaceful, a common thread is the high numbers of young, marginalized men. With some 15-20 martial arts groups and registered members estimated at about 20,000 (1.7% of the population<sup>7</sup>) and influence in all 13 districts, many of the groups are hybrids with connections to groups in other categories. They are largely drawn from unemployed youth approximately 13 years old and upward, poor farmers and ex-FALINTIL<sup>8</sup>, ex-militants who now find themselves in an environment with little purpose (Scambary 2006: 3). Especially in Dili, youth unemployment leads to a loss of self-esteem in their social status and these groups offer needed companionship, status and protection (TLAVA 2009: 2). However, there are more than martial arts groups. Armed groups include clandestine groups, disaffected groups, political fronts, village-based gangs, youth collectives and security organizations. Membership also extends to all levels of society, including politicians (TLAVA 2009: 1-2).

The diversification of armed groups is evidence of the array of social tensions in society. Government responses to gang violence include forms of mediation and communication. Attempts by civil society through traditional mediation with community-level authorities has proven effective, however,

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<sup>7</sup> 2010 World Bank statistic.

<sup>8</sup> FALINTIL is the acronym for *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* (the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor). Originally the military wing for the FRETILIN party and it was dissolved in 2001 and replaced by the official armed force of the newly independent Timor-Leste in 2002.

conflict at the gang level was never previously taken into account (only conflict at the community level) and, especially in Dili, migrants continue in their violent ways when outside the authority of their village chief (TVALA 2009: 5). On the level of youth, employment generating programs and youth centres were created with a long term strategy hinged on representation and reconciliation (Scambray 2006: 10). Despite these efforts though, MAGs and gangs persist.

*“Many youth that are unemployed and uneducated are troublemakers. And to reduce problems, they should be paid attention by the government – give them training, jobs, work, in order for them to do those jobs and study at school (...) There are youth and people that think that it is OK if we can’t go to school because we aren’t going to be in a higher position than what it is. We aren’t going to be a president of the future, so why go to school. (...) But these are only comments by people who are not studying or well education.”* (Respondent 1, Interview Group 1)

This response displays the typical viewpoint of respondents; many viewed those youth that are not engaged in education to be “troublemakers” but the reasons as to why these youth are not in school points to a different problem outside of economic, social issues, or problems of access. The prevailing description of troubled youth is that they are disenfranchised by the larger situation, such as “not being able to contribute” or “not making a difference anyway”. While this will certainly need to be supported through interviews of youth in gangs and unemployed/uneducated youth, a report by Scambray (2006) which surveyed youth gangs in Dili show that many youth gangs are “disaffected with some grievance towards the ruling party” and “most would change their behaviour if given the opportunity” (5, 8). It was also reported that gangs believed they served much of the same purposes as youth groups: meeting other youth in their area, unifying local youth, or give local youth something to do to distract them from antisocial behaviour (Scambray 2006: 26).

In accounting for the responses, a stronger link between the education system and local youth centres could help in creating a sense of belonging and purpose, as well as an appreciation for education. Although not to diverge into the issues plaguing Timorese youth today, it should be noted that education, gangs, and youth centres serve a similar purpose. As mentioned in the interviews, several (n=6) respondents mentioned their membership in a youth group:

*“I have a small group ‘Interest for Development for People of Laleno’ [his village], IDPL. The principle program is to capacity [build] other people, especially in education and how to strengthen ourselves. And open the competition like football, volleyball. It is for everybody.”* (Respondent 4, Interview Group 2)

This respondent has shown the initiative of creating a youth group that is centred on organizing sport activities for his village which would not be available otherwise. The following respondent also demonstrates how he perceives the youth to be taking action by sharing experiences and knowledge in districts that are not reached by the government:

*“The young people are progressing. They make small groups, like one group “Klibu Estudante” has people from every district in East Timor making small groups and they go and share their experience and teach them different things to the people who are not in school or do not study. Young people that want to learn will be less into trouble, like in Dili”*  
(Respondent 6, Interview Group 3).

From these responses, it is evident that the social programs have played a strong role in the lives of youth and helped them to define what they believe to be their roles in the larger nation state. From clubs that they have organized themselves, to those that were constructed for the purposes of substituting a service, to internationally recognized clubs such as the Rotary Club and Scouts. The creation of some clubs such as Klibu Estudante and IDPL points to the realization of the marginalization of rural areas that do not see the same development in Dili, and thus have a need to create these services (such as Klibu Estudante teaching in rural districts). While solutions to the problems of youth are multi-faceted and require long term solutions, the responses show that involvement in youth groups are transformative experiences that fill a space that can alternatively be filled by youth gangs. Scambary (2006) goes as far as to say that the youth gangs in Dili are “in many cases elementary, grassroots civil society organizations, which play a crucial role in their own communities in engaging youth (...) as a circuit breaker for youth alienation” (11). Additionally, the World Bank (2007) report states that the links between poverty, low economic growth, youth unemployment and violence are well documented, drawing from literature indicating that civil war is more likely in low-income countries and where growth is slow, or worse, stagnating or declining (9). When placed in this context, it serves as an important realization of how some youth, and persons in general, choose to either operate within the system in cooperation with the state, or against it. Considering all of the respondents believed Timor-Leste to be a country that has “overall progressed” and will keep on progressing, the notion of being a part of this progress may differentiate those who participate in youth groups from those in youth gangs.

Using education as a medium through which a national-identity can be instilled may only further marginalize disaffected groups of youth that do not attend, and thus, are unable to engage in this medium of nation-building. It seems from the literature and responses that instead, certain youth engage in activities and building of a social circle that is in defiance to modern authority. The role of youth as active citizens, it seems, hinges on their belief that they are able to change something or

contribute positively to society; some being driven by strong obligations to their local villages and others to the wider development of the nation.

## DISCUSSION

The following discussion in light of interview responses revolves around nation-building efforts as seen from the perspective of culture, and the impact of what these approaches entail vis à vis what may be needed.

### Ethnic and Civic Nationalism

Despite the overall strong sentiment garnered by respondents of obligation and pride, internal conflicts continue to pervade despite a strong peace-building focus and state institutions that try to foster a sense of national identity. I encountered difficulty in trying to define whether nationalism in Timor-Leste can be seen as ethnic- or civic- based nationalism because depending on the perspective, it may be both. Ethnic nationalism is rooted in the ethnic conception of the nation and defines membership in the nation in terms of descent, whereas civic nationalism defines the nation as people who identify themselves as belonging to a nation, with descent unimportant, and is more akin to a political entity.

The civic- and ethnic- nationalisms can be viewed in terms of their nation-building approaches. There is an outward-looking approach to the development of Timor-Leste which may have an impact on Timorese national identity; Ramos-Horta (2012) described Timorese leaders and people as “very outward looking, open to cultural influences”. The latter part of the statement does not seem possible considering the prolonged Portuguese colonisation and occupation by Indonesians. This outward looking view to development can pose problematic to nation-building and the moulding of a unique identity. Smith (2001) claims that a genuine multiculturalism can only exist within the framework of a “plural” nation: one that celebrates diversity and includes different component cultures within the political institutions and symbols (13). On the national level, the promotion of Timorese symbols which pull from rooted traditions and allude to a common history has been successful, as evident in the responses. However, in addition to national unity, Timor-Leste needs to foster a strong sense of national obligation. Although the promotion of multiculturalism is needed for the diverse regional identities to remain unthreatened and included in state affairs, the idea should be contained within national boundaries. A truly multi-cultural and outward-looking mindset in the absence of a salient national identity can lead to the amplification of external influences and the undermining of current nation-building efforts.

An interesting aspect of nation-building in Timor-Leste is the identifying feature of all Timorese being “cut from the same cloth”. Tying national identity to the land lends itself to an ethnic-nationalism approach, however, not all of Timor-Leste subscribes to the vision of common roots and culture. Perceiving the best route for the country to be alluding to a common ancestry or descent might work to aggravate rather than unify parts of the country. Decolonising Indonesia comes to mind as the internal conflicts were not acts of nationalists or separatists, but a struggle to negotiate the philosophical foundation of the state and reconfiguration of government (Aspinall & Berger 2001). Certainly, the lack of consensus by the people in the direction of the nation-state can cause fault lines to become exposed. This is particularly evident in the East versus West divide and the ignition of internal conflict in 2006<sup>9</sup>. While there are many facets both economic and political for this conflict, it was simultaneously a struggle for identity and recognition in a changing environment, not necessarily of separation. It was reflective of a people who felt that they may be marginalized out of their identity in the formation of a national identity. The 2006 crisis was also reflective of the many identities in play, so much so that it was near impossible to clearly dissect whether some people were fighting in response to familial conflict, martial arts groups, or political reasons. Considering the ethnic minorities in Timor-Leste also feel they represent a unique set of interests, this brings us to the discussion of democracy and nationalism.

## Democracy and Nationalism

The violence that occurs in the transitional period of becoming a democracy is believed to be caused by aggressive nationalism (Simonsen 2006: 577). Due to nationalism being tied to the diffuse notion of identity and the actions one takes to enforce it, nationalism has two faces. The negative side includes: exclusion, xenophobia, fanaticism, expansionism, aggression, ethnic cleansing. Meanwhile the other side is quite positive: community, national sovereignty, independence, self-determination, pluralism. The negative perspective on nationalism has writers asserting it to antithetical to democracy. Nationalism and democracy in this sense are intimately tied yet opposing concepts, as the former is the representation of identity and the latter is the representation of interests.

Political parties and leaders especially in the case of Timor-Leste are still being seen as prototypical identities encapsulating “all the values” of a certain ethnic group, here, mestico, Timorese, or otherwise. An example is the CNRT party which was essentially created as a vehicle for Xanana Gusmão, and from which he operated independently when he was elected. My aim is not to argue how

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed analysis see: Scambary, James. (2009). Anatomy of a Conflict: the 2006-2007 Communal Violence in East Timor. *Conflict, Security, and Development*. Vol. 9, No. 2. pp. 265-288.

a political group should promote themselves, but in how the population should perceive these parties as representatives of their interests. It is foreseeable as the institutions mature that new parties will emerge along the spectrum of representing interests and representing ethnic identities, but it will not be in the near future. The country is still living in the shadows of a violent past and continues to ride on the solidarity gained from the war.

In the argument that a state can operate independently of nationalism, I am of the belief that it can. In the case of Timor-Leste, certainly the formation of state institutions, particularly the electoral system, has improved the capabilities of many and made this population *functional* as a whole. However, the continuity of this functionality over the long term relies on a shared common identity and values, and the achievement of a basic level of consensus (Leach 2002: 46). The ease in which state institution building was undermined by unresolved regional tensions is a point in case for the necessity of nation-building. According to the responses by youth, who represent the future direction and potential change, they have internalized the governing systems as one with Timorese culture, and their acceptance of the core values and common identity described in the Policy of Culture imply a turn towards a form of civic-nationalism that values inclusiveness and participation in the state, and an ethnic-nationalism of common roots. However, this progress in nation building should not ignore the respondents' near constant negotiations between their sense of regional/local identity and national identity, wherein some cases the two reinforce each other (i.e.: going to university to teach in their districts) or contrast each other (i.e.: opinions of preserving local languages in primary education).

Nation-building entails more than its counterpart of state-building because it is neither procedural nor predictable. It works with subjective elements of our individual identity in order to make our values the nation's values and vice versa. Smith (2009) states that once created, national communities take on lives of their own. They have consequences where their members act in certain ways which they did not, or would not, were there to be no nations. A world without nations has profound consequences; it can be said that the idea of 'society' is nothing more or less than that of a nation – with or without a state (13). Timor-Leste has the difficult responsibility to marry two conflicting concepts: respect for Timor-Leste's many cultures and yet the creation of a unique and ethnically-rooted national identity. In the end the choice is the individuals to make.

## AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Certainly, the notion of understanding the perceptions of a collective necessitates research on a grander scale. This research was exploratory in nature and attempts to reify a subject that is highly fluid. The phenomenological strategy permitted the youth to reflect and construct their own themes

and categories, which is in line with the ethno-symbolist approach and approaches to researching identities. One's sense of national identity is only one of many identities we utilise to make sense of ourselves, our surroundings and others. Therefore, data on a larger and demographically representative group over a period of time would be incredibly insightful to understanding and gauging social cohesiveness. It would also be necessary to include the more marginalized of society, such as the unemployed, lesser educated rural youth, elders, and violent gangs who represent different needs and thus a possible underlying fault line to nation building. An ethnographic study of the state of the nation would be beneficial as it would provide in-depth narratives of the impact of nation-building to local cultures.

## CONCLUSION

Timor-Leste's search and reinforcement of a national identity entailed balancing between the need for social cohesion and a responsibility to respect and protect their local cultures. Now with Timor-Leste coming to a decisive point in its young history, a national identity is more valuable and important than ever, as it provides the social glue in which communities neither feel threatened or marginalized by the employment of the state. Timor-Leste is also retaining its traditional systems of authority and language, by trying to tie them into the current system and institutionalizing culture to be shared through museums, libraries, and other infrastructure. While commendable in its attempts to respect the local communities that still subscribe to traditional methods and ways of life, the opening of Timor-Leste to the rest of the world entails an incredible amount of change in the near future, with which the local communities will need to come to terms.

Through the interviews and perspectives of Timorese youth, these inner negotiations were evident and somewhat typical. The topics of discussion in terms of a Timorese identity involved movement and rectification between different social identities and realities (i.e., roles such as student, rural and urban lifestyles, age, gender, and so forth). The state plays a strong role in the formation of a national identity; those interviewed automatically associated "culture" with the national symbols that are applicable across regions, such as the traditional house, tais, and dancing. Concerns in changing certain costly traditions are believed to be within the power of the state as well, and the language policy consistently stirs up debate. Therefore, a collective imagination is certainly present amongst the respondents but divisions still persist. Traditions such as patriarchy and these costly ceremonies are culturally ingrained and difficult to approach and change.

The relationship that respondents have with their state is mixed; while they see the process as legitimate, they do not necessarily view the governing body positively. Some go as far as to say that

they view all high level authorities with distrust. While trust in one's government may not necessitate the strength of nationalism, it helps to understand that youth view themselves as part of the national system and furthermore, with the power to change their realities through the system as well. This holds constant because they view their role as Timorese to be active citizens that must contribute to Timorese development. However, this often led to discussions regarding Timorese youth that do not subscribe to these expectations and thus the existence of MAGs and violent youth gangs. These groups pose a threat to undermining nation-building efforts, and their continued prevalence shows a counter-culture to the civic ideal. Further studies on MAGs and their impact on nation-building efforts are needed, but interview responses suggest a need for tangible results in order for disaffected groups to feel that development is positive.

This study has only scratched the surface of understanding national identity and nationalism in Timor-Leste. Furthermore, the respondents may be representing the civic ideal and it is important to note that this is not meant to be representative of the entire population. Instead, it aims to raise discussion on the nation-building agenda. The slogan "Goodbye Conflict, Hello Development" comes to mind as a catchphrase since Prime Minister Gusmao coined it in his address in 2011, and the conceptualization of Timor-Leste's 'cultural genius' (Smith 2009) entails just this: an emphasis on sharing and tolerance in a multi-cultural society, a deep commitment to preservation of traditions (as seen in traditional administrative systems and old partnerships (particularly Portugal)), and the intolerance of violence. With nation-building becoming a part of the development agenda in Timor-Leste, the government has distanced it from the valorisation of the resistance and towards a concept of Timor-Leste that is deeply culturally engrained. Preservation of culture is certainly important for the approach to nation-building that Timor-Leste is taking, but culture should also be allowed space to change and be dynamic. If not, it may cause problems in the foreseeable future if local communities, so well preserved, are not prepared for the effects of the future.

## **ANNEX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### *Leading Questions for Interviews*

#### **Culture**

1. How would you describe Timorese culture?
2. Do you feel that your culture is specifically unique or solid/special culture? In what way?
3. Are you proud of Timorese culture?

#### **Development in Timor-Leste**

1. How do you feel about the state of development in Timor-Leste?
2. Is it progressing? Slowing down? Progressing quickly? The same as before?
3. Do you feel Timor-Leste has much development potential?
4. Are you overall content with the level of development?

#### **Trust in Government**

1. Do you feel that you trust in your government?
2. How would you describe the government in Timor-Leste?

#### **Role of Youth:**

1. What do you feel is the role/responsibilities of Timorese youth today?
2. Do you consider yourself involved with your community and how?

**ANNEX 2: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Assigned Respondent Number</b>	<b>Group / Single</b>	<b>District or Dili</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Language</b>
1	Group 01	District	Female	Tetum
2		District	Female	Tetum
3	Group 02	District	Male	Tetum
4		Dili	Male	English
5	Single	District	Male	English
6	Group 03	Dili	Male	Tetum
7		District	Male	English
8		District	Male	English
9	Group 04	District	Male	English
10		Dili	Male	English
11		District	Male	Tetum
12	Group 05	District	Male	Tetum
13		District	Male	English
14		Dili	Male	English
15		District	Male	Tetum
16		District	Male	Tetum
17	Single	Dili	Female	Tetum
18	Single	Dili	Female	Tetum
19	Single	District	Male	English
20	Single	District	Male	Tetum
21	Single	District	Male	Tetum

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