

## **Commanders as Big-men - A Study of Political Order and Postwar Patronage-networks in Contemporary Sierra Leone**

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Based on a fieldwork among ex-combatants in Makeni, Sierra Leone, this article intends to explore the relationship between the creation of political order and patronage-networks that have evolved as a direct consequence of the civil-war in Sierra Leone. It shows that the frequent examined channels of agency expressed through institutionalized and legal processes in social science only have minor impact on the creation of political order in contemporary Sierra Leone. Accordingly, the political order observed in the post-war Sierra Leone society primarily must be understood and examined through alternative processes. This article argues that post-war patronage-networks are important in shaping short-term political order in a post-war setting. They do so in the midst of everyday life by providing a certain extent of predictability, stability and social security and by offering a platform for obtaining short-term social and political agency and sustaining hope for a better future in a local setting. However, at the same time the article argues that the same patronage-networks also have the potential to generate long-term political disorder due to their temporality and labile characteristic as well as their lack of potential in generating broader and more radical political impact and changes. Empirical findings indicate that these networks simply carry too little sociopolitical changes in the society at large and in the long run might end up accumulating frustration in different levels of the patronage-networks which may lead to political disorder.

This article assigns a high priority to anthropological descriptions. And taking its point of departure in the empirical findings of new types of patronage-networks the paper intends to extrapolate the everyday practice of social and political agency outside established institutions and to shed light on the complexity and ambiguity of these practices.

