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Youth Connekt Dialogue:

Unwanted Legacies, Responsibility and Nation-building in Rwanda

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About the author

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Abstract

Youth Connekt Dialogue (YCD) is a series of youth events that took place in 15 of the 30 districts of Rwanda (May-June 2013). The initiative originated from Art for Peace, an association of young Rwandan artists whose mission is to promote truth and reconciliation. Organisers have described YCD as a move from a 'rear-view mirror' perspective to a 'windshield' perspective by shifting the focus from exclusivity of survivors to alternative stories. The political significance of the issues raised in these dialogues led to important decisions at the level of national policy making. The most significant was the transformation of YCD from a state-sponsored private initiative into Ndi Umunyarwanda, a revised policy on national identity. This article provides a constructive analysis of YCD as an encounter between two heirs (Children of Perpetrators, or CPs, and the Rwandan Government) of 'unwanted legacies' and their attempt to forge a partnership of rehabilitating political responsibility out of genocide's legacy. It will reveal how children of perpetrators participate in post-genocide reconstruction through both involvement in, and subversion of, state-sponsored processes.

Introduction: Public narrative of national reconstruction in post-genocide Rwanda

Over the last two decades, an increasingly rich and diverse scholarly literature has provided insight into the levels and nature of brokenness visited upon Rwanda by the Genocide against the Tutsi between April and July 1994. Since 1994, Rwanda has embarked on an unprecedented process of recovery, reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. Rebuilding a nation shattered by genocide requires not only a synergy of well-coordinated action but more importantly, a powerful public narrative of national reconstruction to 'power' this action. This action and, underlying narrative have generally been attributed to successive Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)-led governments.

The model that has emerged out of this combination of action and narrative has divided opinion both within and beyond the academic world. In their recent edited volume, Straus and Waldorf (2011) among others have captured a one-sided account of this division. In this book – which is reminiscent of Pottier's *Re-Imagining Rwanda* (2002) – different contributors emphasise the temporal and substantial aspects of the contrasting evaluations of the RPF's handling of Rwanda's recovery and reconstruction. There seems to be a generally shared opinion that until 2010, the RPF's performance and underpinning narrative were viewed positively in light of evident economic growth, political stability and public order. However, since 2010, these achievements have increasingly come under scrutiny and concerns have been voiced regarding the cost of this success, especially in human rights terms.

Clark frames this emerging dichotomy between the 'developmentalist' and 'human rights activist' camps, finding both reductionist through their failure to acknowledge the 'complex ways in which Rwandan citizens engage with the state and participate in government-initiated community level processes...' (Clark, 2014, p. 193). Palmer (2015) echoes this view, suggesting that this dualistic diagnosis runs the risk of blurring the lines of historical contestation and subversion between the centre and the periphery as far as the exercise of power is concerned (p. 44). Even those staunchly entrenched in the human rights camp point out that the divisions hinge less on the empirical data and description of issues and more on the theoretical and normative understanding and evaluation of the recovery (Straus & Waldorf, 2011).

With this in mind, and for the purpose of this research, I engage with Rwanda's model of post-conflict reconstruction and recovery described by Straus and Waldorf. They represent this model as a top-down, Kigali elite-driven, donor-supported vision, which combines social engineering with sophisticated and transformative authoritarianism. Social engineering, they argue, happens in four specific arenas which encompass the totality of public life in post-genocide Rwanda, namely behavioural and social, spatial, economic and political (pp.13-15). Authoritarianism is experienced, among others, through the exclusivity of control that state elites exert over the public narrative of national reconstruction (Thomson, 2011).

Scope, structure and main argument

This article is based on my research project on the Youth Connekt Dialogue (YCD) – Phase One, a series of youth events that took place in fifteen of Rwanda's thirty districts between May and June 2013. The initiative originated from Art for Peace, an association of young Rwandan artists whose mission is to promote truth and reconciliation. Officially, YCD fell under the tutelage of the Ministry of Youth and ICT (MYICT) and fit within its broader Youth Connekt programme. The First Lady's Imbuto Foundation financed the dialogues because they fell within the Foundation's existing youth forums (Imbuto Foundation, 2015).

Organisers have described the YCDs as a move from a 'rear-view mirror' to a 'windshield' perspective (Marcel, YCD Gatsibo, June 2013), which shifts the focus from exclusivity of survivors to alternative stories (Teta, YCD Kicukiro, May 2013). In other words, even though all young Rwandans between the ages of 18 and 35 were invited to YCDs, the implicit agenda was to create a platform where children of perpetrators (CPs) also known as 'children of killers' or 'young Hutu' (Hall, 2011; YCD-Kicukiro, 2013), could publicly tell their stories.

This paper focuses on young Hutu of the emerging and second generation whose stories have gone largely unheard. In this contribution, 'emerging generation' refers to young Rwandans who were aged between nought (including children born during the genocide) and 12 years in April 1994. 'Second generation' comprises young Rwandans born after the official end of the Rwandan genocide, which I consider to be 19 July 1994. This paper will show how CPs shoulder the 'burden inheritance' (Krauss, 2010) and how the legacy of genocide shapes their place and identity in post-genocide Rwanda and the narrative of national reconstruction. It argues that by giving attention to the narratives of CPs and analysing their interactions with state policies, one gains a more comprehensive appreciation of the complex legacy of genocide on emerging and second generations. It reveals how CPs participate in post-genocide reconstruction through both involvement in, and subversion of, state-sponsored processes.

This article engages critically with the dominant discourse on post-genocide reconstruction narratives. It problematises the currently predominant view among scholars who are critical of the Rwandan regime (Straus & Waldorf, 2011) that RPF-led governments are the exclusive source and custodians of the vision for a new Rwandan society and a reformed national identity. Research findings suggest that this political monopoly is contested by, among others, non-elite CPs. It is argued that the organisation of YCD as a perpetrator-focused public initiative from below constituted an instance of such contestation and a momentous political event. It marked a perceptible shift in transitional politics by making CPs' stories central to a new narrative of national identity through Ndi Umunyarwanda (in Kinyarwanda, 'I am Rwandan').

This paper is organised in three main sections. The first describes YCD as an identity-based and reconstruction-oriented public event from below, which must be critically analysed within the wider context of post-genocide reconstruction metanarrative. The second section offers a narrative analysis of the process of CPs' identity formation, using Edouard's paradigmatic story. The last section offers an initial evaluation of YCD's outcomes through the examination of its public perception by various stakeholders and, most crucially, its impact on a revised narrative of national identity embodied by Ndi Umunyarwanda.

This study contributes to the literature on reconciliation and post-genocide reconstruction narratives 'from below'. It does this through a multidisciplinary analysis of YCD as a group event and narrative analysis of CPs' life stories. It also offers a seminal exploration of the issue of intergenerational guilt and responsibility within the 'in-group', i.e. the Hutu perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide.

Methodology, material and analytical integration with theory

Methodology

The first phase of YCD coincided with my presence in Rwanda. Being aware of my research interest in post-genocide political reconstruction through life stories/histories, the Chairperson of Art for Peace and the Minister of Youth and ICT invited me to participate in these dialogues. This research, and the data on which it is based, emerged from my participation in YCD as an invited researcher-observer. I was as much a participant observer as a listening participant. It follows from this that most of the oral material used in this study was 'collected' through hearing stories told at the occasion of a series of open and public events. They are supplemented by a limited amount of oral material that I actively collected through conversations and unstructured interviews.

From my doctoral research (Benda, 2013), I developed a keen interest in the use of life histories and the use of oral history methodologies (Perks & Thomson, 2006) to study political interactions in post-genocide Rwanda. Most recent studies on genocide from social sciences have privileged oral history methods to gain a better understanding of post-genocide society from the perpetrator's perspective (Hatzfeld, 2005; Straus & Lyons, 2006; Palmer, 2014). Cheney (2007) has shown the importance of life histories methodologies in researching youth and childhood in Africa as a means to reclaim the political voices and agency of the people being researched, while challenging the anthropological neglect of this group as cultural actors. The choice made in this study to focus my observation, listening and conversations on CPs places it within these existing methodological and theoretical frameworks.

Sources and material

I attended YCD events in 15 districts, travelling mostly on the Art for Peace bus. This allowed me, as observer and listener, to gain a more rounded understanding of the genealogy of YCD and the layers of its budding narrative. YCD events are the principal source of the data used in this research and the current article. All these events were recorded, providing more than 120 hours of invaluable visual narrative, based on the calculation that one YCD event lasted at least eight hours from start to finish, and taking into account that there were 15 YCT events. Organisers had agreed that this video material will be archived at Rwanda's National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG), which was also tasked with producing the final report on the outcomes of the YCD.

As part of my participation, I was verbally granted access to this material after the conclusion of YCDs (meeting with MYICT and Art for Peace, Kicukiro, May 2013). Completing this category of data and similarly archived at CNLG were 'ad hoc diaries' written by young participants in YCDs who were unable to tell their stories or preferred to offer their personal account in writing.

The initial intention in my research was to access this archive and to use a sample of 24 hours and respective diaries from three districts. Unfortunately, immigration matters made it impossible to travel to Rwanda from the UK, and to this date, there is no online repository for the recordings. However, a significant portion of this material is presented in this paper under the form of the narrative inception of YCD, which also serves as the dominant or preferred paradigmatic narrative of post-genocide children of perpetrators, Edouard's story. This paradigmatic story, lasting an average of one hour, was repeated in all 15 YCD events, allowing me to familiarise myself with its overall arc, although each version was slightly different. The narrative analysis of this story within the wider context of YCDs and national reconstruction forms the core of this article. Other primary sources used include extensive field notes, documentary material such as minutes and reports from the organisers.

The question of anonymity was considered in this research. Since all participants in YCDs were adults and events were held in public, anonymity was not technically necessary. Besides, some participants did not give their names before speaking. However, where they gave their name, I chose to present the name alongside their story. However, for private conversations, interviews and other personal narratives, anonymity was the norm unless the interviewee gave express authorisation for disclosure.

Theoretical analysis

This article examines very diverse material and requires various analytical approaches. My main theoretical approach is narrative analysis. In particular I use the Zoom model, a dynamic framework for the analysis of life histories developed by Pamphilon (1999). The model allows the researcher to examine life stories from at least four perspectives in order to capture their full complexities: the macro, meso, micro and interactional perspective (Pamphilon, 1999). The model has inspired important research on key moments of personal narratives such as the concept of 'resonance' and its role in the transformative learning journey of the narrator (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014). This concept of resonance is akin to that of 'critical junctures' expertly applied to the interpretive analysis of life stories of resistance in Rwanda by Palmer (2014).

Yet, YCD was not a single person's account but an imperfect agora where a diversity of individual stories of variable length, thrust and elaboration came into contact. Similarly, personal accounts interacted with the official metanarrative represented by government-vetted historians and state officials such as cabinet ministers and majors of district. As far as individual life narratives are concerned, Edouard's story adopted as the 'paradigmatic narrative' for children of perpetrators has to be evaluated alongside the less elaborate and fragmented narratives heard in the course of the YCD.

Ganz's three-stages theory on the construction of public narrative story of self, us and now (Ganz, 2007) is used to analyse the ways in which this 'preferred narrative' was constructed, how the other more 'subsidiary' narratives fit within its political intentionality, and how all these stories combined with the official metanarrative to create a public common narrative for renewed identity and action. The significance of this resulting narrative of political responsibility for the future will be assessed through the lens of Mezirow's transformative learning theory as well as its affective extension suggested by Gilpin-Jackson (2014).

YCD, genealogy of a public narrative from below

A narrative preamble

This study comes out of a wider research project, which started with the kind of serendipity not so unusual in academic circles. It began in April 2013 with a phone call and a coffee in Bourbon Café, another familiar feature for researchers in Rwanda. I was meeting a former classmate and current Minister of Youth, Culture and Sport in Rwanda. After reciprocal congratulations on ministerial appointment and doctoral graduation, my friend asked me what was in store for my future. 'I am interested in the children of *génocidaires* and their life stories,' I replied. 'Then there is a young man you should meet', my friend said. 'He has a story to tell and we are trying to help him to reach other young people throughout the country.' The young man in question turned out to be 'Edouard', and he was far from a stranger. In fact he was a close friend of two of my younger siblings. However, while I knew Edouard the person, I did not know his 'story' and what could give it nationwide gravitas. The following morning I was on the bus to my first YCD.

My fieldwork relates to the first phase of YCD which started on 10 May 2013 and consisted of 15 dialogues in the districts of Ngororero, Burera, Rubavu, Nyabihu, Gisagara, Nyamagabe, Nyaruguru, Kamonyi, Bugesera, Kicukiro, Gasabo, Nyarugenge, Kayonza, Gatsibo and Kirehe, as well as Iwawa Youth Rehabilitation centre. The slogan of the event was evocative, '*Youth Connekt Dialogue: Promise of a post-genocide generation.*' The Kinyarwanda word for 'promise' in this context is *umuhigo* (plural: *imihigo*). It carries the meaning of a binding promise for which one's honour and social status are at stake. Traditionally, *Aho imfura zaseraniye niho zihurira* meant that a *Munyarwanda* of real standing, an *imfura,* could not renege on a promise made to other *imfura*. This is why *Imihigo* have become a key incentive and a driving force behind development efforts at national and local level (Chemouni, 2014).

To fully appreciate the significance of YCD, it is important to first place it within the wider context of post-genocide reconstruction politics. More concretely, it is useful to analyse the dialogues in light of how state-sponsored public events are used to disseminate the government's narrative on reconstruction. Second, the role of children and young people in this narrative is worth exploring, alongside the particular situation of different generations of CPs.

Reconstruction narrative and state-sponsored events

The preferred means through which the Rwandan state has proceeded to 'engineer' a new Rwandan society to ensure the control of the reconstruction narrative is the use of public state-sponsored events such as *ingando*, *ubudehe*, *gacaca* trials, *umuganda* and the genocide mourning week. Thomson (2011) suggests that within the broader policy of national unity and reconciliation, *ingando* have to be seen as a means of consolidating state control. Like similar state-sanctioned settings, they serve as a preferential forum for the engineering of a new identity through re-education. Put simply, in these settings, Rwandans - elites and ordinary folks alike - are taught by state-vetted instructors what it means to be a good Rwandan citizen (Mclean-Hilker, 2011).

There is more to this 'learning', however, since participants not only learn what action or agency is expected from them, but they also quickly learn the rhetoric of this vision; the 'great deeds' and 'mighty words' that make up the metanarrative of national rebirth. Therefore these events are *sites of political experience* not totally dissimilar in their outward configuration to the Athenian agora, the public space where free citizens met to discuss the political matters of the city (Arendt, 2005). Of course, the level of freedom and equality in these spatial constructs might be questioned as many researchers have rightly pointed out. This negative reading of state-sponsored events in state-monitored spaces hinders a more positive view of these as sites *of* political transformative learning and political contestation as will be argued in the body of this research.

Within their overall general objectives of communicating and learning reconstruction narrative, state-sponsored events exhibit important variations, at times subtle, at times highly marked. Some target specific groups of participants or audiences. For instance, based on her research and experience of *ingando,* Thomson makes a helpful distinction between *ingando solidarity* camps, which targeted elite groups including judges, politicians and university students, and *ingando re-education* camps that host the more 'problematic' segments of society such as confessed *génocidaires*, released prisoners and ex-soldiers (Thomson, 2011). This subtle difference can carry a greater strategic emphasis in the government's recovery vision. Other state-sponsored narratives

are aimed at other segments of the Rwandan population, particularly children and young people.

Childhood, youth and nationhood reconstruction

Children and young people in general figure prominently in post-conflict narratives of reconstruction and recovery. This has factual pertinence with Rwanda in particular where, as of 2012, between 65% and 70% of the Rwandan population are young people –Tutsi and Hutu – of thirty years of age or under (Pells, Pontalti, &Williams, 2014). It follows from this that policies that have any real ambition to succeed must consider this population carefully, given their relevance for the present and the future of Rwanda.

More importantly, 50% of this young population were born after the genocide of 1994 (Permanent Secretary of MYICT, 2013). According to Burman (2008), periods of uncertainty and transition are marked by an increased tendency to symbolically position children in nation-building narratives. In her study of post-war Uganda, Cheney (2007) noted intriguing conceptual links between childhood and nationhood. She suggests that children's connection to the nation both strengthens their position as agents of social change and points to their subservience to adult ideals about both childhood and nationhood. In this context, children are cast in metaphors that romanticise them such as 'pillars of the nation', 'children as the future', while they still embody an idyllic past in the minds of adults (Cheney, 2008, p.10).

Cheney's work has inspired scholars researching the situation and agency of children in Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction narrative. Some have established parallels between the RPF's narrative of commitment to children's rights and the National Resistance Movement's (NRM) discourse in 1990s Uganda (Pells, Pontalti, Williams, 2014). In her research on the National Summit for Children, Pells (2011) sees Rwanda as a paradigmatic case 'where language and symbolism around children are central to a new narrative of national rebirth.' While proverbs from traditional high morality such as '*Umwana ni umutware*' (in Kinyarwanda, 'a child is a chief')ˑ point to children's agency as 'leaders', metaphors of 'bent saplings' and 'spoilt babes' (Benda, 2013)[1] are a reminder of their subservience to adults in attaining full citizenship. This leads Pells to conclude, regarding Rwanda's reconstruction metanarrative, that discourses of children rights are used by the government to consolidate historical narratives and to project moral authority upward towards the international community, and downwards towards the Rwandan population (Pells, 2011, p. 78).

This theme of children's rights and citizenship is central to the metanarrative of national rebirth propagated by Rwanda's RPF-led government, which charts a development trajectory for children and young people to be leaders of tomorrow (Pells et al., 2014). Two factors are key to this 'promised development'. The first is *agaciro,* which in this context refers to freedom from parents' past and achieving independence and self-worth through governmental provision and guidance. The second factor is the government's commitment to education, where primary and secondary education is considered to be basic and free in theory.

Researchers have presented evidence of the positive reception of this narrative by children and young people while highlighting the major gap between 'promised development' and 'perceived benefits'(Pells et al., 2014). They have also pointed to historical instances of family rupture and intergenerational tensions whenever Rwandan governments have interfered in family dynamics (p. 299). Finally, these researchers have alluded to the despair that children and young people felt, both as a result of falling short of government's expectations on them as pillars and builders of the future, and because of the unfulfilled promises of a narrative that promises much but delivers little, especially to those living in rural areas (p. 307).

On the other hand, children and young people are not passive consumers of these discourses. Through the lenses of local realities and lived experience, they engage in a process of reframing the state's narrative (Pells, 2011). Maclean-Hilker (2011) extends this subversive reframing to the government's dominant narrative of history, which is increasingly challenged by young people who draw upon everyday hardships and other counter narratives to develop alternative views of their own. This desire by young people to 'intrude' on the government's narrative hegemony in the public sphere played out several times during YCD, especially on issues of identity, history and accountability for genocide.

Children of perpetrators: legacy, identity and reconstruction

As suggested at the beginning, research into the Rwandan crisis on all three segments of its timeline –

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[1] These two metaphors are taken from two proverbs 'Igiti kigororwa kikiri gito' and 'umwana apfira mu iterura'.

before, during and after April-July 1994 – has come a long way in the last two decades as evidenced by an increasingly elaborate and specialised literature. Yet, academic research on the legacy of the Rwandan genocide for subsequent generations has been dominated by victim-centred approaches (Rakita, 2003; Reider & Elbert, 2013; Sydor & Philippot, 1996). Despite bringing much needed insight on important themes such as physical and mental health as well as socioeconomic adjustment, these studies have failed to attend to the experience of the 'children of perpetrators' in post-genocide Rwanda.

Post-genocide Rwandan society has also been described as a 'dualist' post-conflict society (Drumbl, 2008); one where surviving victims and perpetrators live side by side, raising questions about what kind of justice is appropriate in this type of society. It is estimated that after the genocide, close to 120,000 adult Hutu genocide suspects were detained. After the gacaca process identified all suspects, the number of genocide suspects prosecuted reached 400,000, including a small number of Tutsi (Clark, 2012). After the monumental effort undertaken during gacaca to bring closure to the imperative of justice, attention has turned to the plight of emerging and second generations.

The ever-increasing literature on the Rwandan genocide has seen inescapable comparisons drawn between the events in Rwanda and the Shoah (Levene, 1999; Lemarchand, 2002). Theoretical parallels on the transgenerational transmissibility of guilt can be established between emerging and second generations in Rwanda and the progenies of different parties involved in the Shoah. For instance, Krauss (2010) speaks of the 'burden of inheritance' understood as the features that parents pass down to their children, knowingly or unknowingly. In the same register but closer to the matter that concerns this study, Berger and Berger (2001) have shown the contrasting fortunes of children of survivors and children of perpetrators as far as their narratives are concerned.

For Rwandan CPs, the metanarrative of reconstruction comes with a poignant and burdensome legacy. YCD became the forum where for the first time the psycho-political ramifications of this legacy were made public. Attentive listening, display of raw emotions and intense discussions revealed a complex and traumatic relationship between this specific group and genocide. More importantly, YCD conveyed a desperate desire by CPs to be 'liberated' from the repressive association with an event that was not of their making. There was a palpable longing to be seen as willing and able stakeholders in the project of post-genocide reconstruction. Gilbert (2002), Forrest (2008) and Christensen (2013) have shown that these feelings are not uncommon within CP groups. In this context, YCD's slogan was more than a mere catchy motto; it is a generational political manifesto, the seriousness of which is encoded in the word *umuhigo,* meaning 'promise'.

YCD*, the promise of a post-genocide generation*

The founders of Art for Peace intended it to be an association of Rwandan artists working for peace and reconciliation (Dida, Kicukiro, May 2013). They initiated YCD with the stated aim of helping Rwandan young people face their past and move towards their future, using group discussions, personal testimonies, music and other art forms (Art for Peace, 2013). Another member of Art for Peace saw the events as a new paradigm for truth and reconciliation that shifts the focus from reaction to change (Teta, YCD Kicukiro, May 2013); hence Marcel's metaphor of 'rear-view mirror' versus 'windshield' perspective.

All YCD events followed a clearly pre-planned and well-rehearsed routine; a result of the pilot visits in Ngororero and Iwawa. Before I attended the first YCD, a participant member of Art for Peace gave me a succinct run-through:

> The 'dialogue' starts with 'animation' [entertainment] led by different entertainers, mostly from Art for Peace. Young people and local leaders are invited to join in the singing and dancing. Then, the senior representative of the local authority welcomes youths and guests, followed by a young player of '*Inanga*'[2]. After that, 'Mzee Rugano'[3] gives a talk on history, focusing on ethnic identities before colonialism and how their manipulation led to genocide. He is followed by Edouard, the key speaker who uses his powerful testimony to invite young people in the audience to open up and engage in conversation. Those who are unable to speak in public are given notebooks to write down their thoughts. This slot is the most important and takes as long as necessary. After the dialogue, I [Teta] sing followed by a

2 A stringed instrument traditionally played by older Rwandans.
3 Kalisa Rugano is not officially a 'historian'. He is an artist, theatre director and a storyteller. During YCD, he took on the role of 'historian' because of his seniority – he is in his late 60s –and perceived wisdom.

performance by Masamba and his *Intore*. Finally, the guest of honour, normally a government official in a ministerial position, takes to the floor. They typically respond to issues raised by young people in the audience, based on the government's policy on national identity, reconciliation and rebuilding. He concludes by asking the young people in the audience to provide and write down '*Imihigo*'. The dialogue concludes with more singing and dancing. At the same time, Edouard holds one-on-one chats with young people who did not get the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue or those whose stories are more complex or too painful to express in public. In addition, small book notes are provided for those who wish to express their opinion in writing. (Teta, Kigali, 13 May 2013)

Witnessing the first dialogue as a participant observer and listener left me with a strong sense of 'surrealism' which is not uncommon among researchers in post-genocide Rwanda. Moving from riotous music to heart-breaking testimonies and back to more raucous entertainment, one questioned whether they had been to a highly charged political event or an unconventional street concert. Obviously, the organisers of the events had devised a methodology capable of yielding maximum psychological impact interspersed with softening or cushioning interludes. It was also self-evident that the approach had been chosen with a young audience in mind.

However, sometimes meetings threatened to get out of hand, and on two occasions the organisers lost control of the proceedings (Kicukiro, 29 May 2013; Gatsibo, 1 June 2013). In both instances, a number of participants experienced what is commonly known as *ihahamuka,* an extreme psychosomatic response which is often experienced during the mourning period in Rwanda (Taylor, 2015). Proceedings had to be halted for nearly two hours. In each occasion, local authorities asked that YCD be stopped, arguing that it was 'insensitive' (Kicukiro) or 'untimely for our region' (Gatsibo). Nevertheless, both times YCD resumed after intervention from high-ranking central government officials. This sort of intervention showed the determination of the central government to see YCD succeed. The latter might have started as an initiative from below, but at this stage it had become a 'hybrid' venture where group and national interests converged.

Beyond the initial shock, there was no mistaking the organisers' intention to frame YCD as a forum for national reconstruction. The words of the entertainment-icebreaker (*animasiyo*) were telling:

Leader : *Abajeni*!/ the young![4]

Audience: *Imbaraga z'igihugu kandi zubaka*/ The building force of the nation

And the songs

Jenga jenga taifa lako, jenga taifa lako (Swahili)/ Build, build your nation (by Masamba)

Or

Rwanda itajengwa na sisi wenyewe, Rwanda itajengwa na sisi vijana (swahili)/ Rwanda will be built by ourselves, Rwanda will be built by us the young people (Gatsibo district music group)

It is possible to argue that the organisers sought to create a single-minded focus on the theme of nation rebuilding from the outset. This gave a direction and framework for young participants, who, as it transpired in my conversations with the leaders of Art for Peace, did not always know why they had come to the meetings (meeting on 31 May 2013 and on-bus self-evaluation 1 June 2013). A more constructive way of understanding these musical and dance interludes is to frame YCDs as 'celebration', defined by Ganz as a 'way that members of a community come together to honour who they are, what they have done, and where they are going.' (Ganz, 2011, 288).

The remark about participants' ignorance of YCD's aims as well as the interventions by officials described above might lead to the conclusion that YCD did not differ from other state-sanctioned forums and was therefore open to the same criticisms (Thomson, 2011; Pells, 2011). Yet, this generalisation would be inaccurate. To understand what sets YCD apart, it is more appropriate to locate it within a narrative continuity that requires analysing its genealogy. Ganz suggests that it is particularly important to celebrate beginnings as a way of acknowledging the start of a new common identity (Ganz, 2011, p. 288). This, going back to the beginning, reveals layered stories in which YCD is but a new departure, a 'resonance moment' (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014) that is neither the beginning nor the end. In other words, it requires an archaeological approach in the

4 From French 'Jeunes'. This is one of many subversive aspects of YCD –using French freely in what is now officially an English speaking country

Foucauldian sense of visiting the beginnings or inception of the event. There, one discovers the birth of Art for Peace, itself a progeny of the public emergence of Edouard, the 'young man with a story'.

Edouard's story: narrative construction of post-genocide CP identity.

Ganz stated that 'narrative should be understood as the discursive means we use to access values that equip us with the courage to make choices under conditions of uncertainty, to exercise agency' (2011, p. 274). In this case, Edouard's story carries great significance for any relevant study about Rwanda's reconstruction narrative that takes the agency of the youth seriously. This story was 'adopted' by YCD as the paradigm for CPs' condition and identity. The author himself has become the national embodiment of the CP generation, affectionately known as 'Umuhutu muto', the young Muhutu.

This section charts a loose chronological development of a CP's story which started as an individual story of 'self' and became the representative story of a generation. Typical of inspirational narratives, Edouard's story was powerful and its narration was skilfully punctuated by key moments known in narrative analysis as 'critical junctures' (Palmer, 2014), 'choice points' (Ganz, 2011) or 'resonance moments' (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014). It found the right balance between entertaining anecdotes and the overall serious biographical narrative (Cohen, 2011). The result was a story which clarified, compelled attention, persuaded or reinforced beliefs, inspired, and influenced an audience's view of the speaker (Lehrman, 2010, p. 102).

Edouard introduces his narrative genealogically and poetically; as '*Bamporiki wa ...*' going back to the fifth generation and refers to himself as '*Umusizi w'Umusinga wo kwa Nyakayaga*', which translates as 'a Musinga poet from the lineage of Nyakayaga' (Kicukiro, May 2013). The emphasis on clan (*umusinga)* and lineage (that of *Nyakayaga*) should not be lost on students of post-genocide reconstruction narrative around the dangerously loaded concept of ethnicity. As Quesenbery and Brooks (2010) point out, stories are created for a purpose and the initial side stepping of ethnic belonging is an intentional narrative device, that Edouard uses later when it serves the right purpose.

The first critical juncture in Edouard's story coincides with the start of the genocide:

> When the genocide broke out in 1994, I was 9 years old and I was in the hospital of Kibogora. My mother was looking after me. There were three other people in the room, a man looking after his daughter and another male patient. We heard noises of bullets outside and disturbances in the hospital. When I asked mum [*mama*] what was happening, she shushed me (…) when I insisted, she told me that she had heard that the Hutu are killing the Tutsi. (Kicukiro, May 2013)

At this juncture, Edouard stops the flow of the story to make two important autobiographical clarifications. The first clarifies that he was being looked after by his mother in hospital because he had lost his father long before the genocide. In fact, the clarification continues: Edouard was the only boy in a family of seven children, and both his mother and father did not have male siblings. The second clarification is even more significant because it touches on ethnicity, of which Edouard had become aware when he started his primary school. He was initially unclear about his ethnicity so he had asked his mother, who gave him an emphatic reply:

> My mother told me 'We are *Abahutu*! If anybody ever asks you, we are *abahutu badafunguye.'*
> What this means is to be a pure Hutu. It means my father's parents were Hutu and my mother's parents were Hutu and my own parents were Hutu!

These two details are critical for the narrative because they highlight important components of in-group transgenerational relations, namely innocent childhood and the offending Hutu group. The audience begins to form the picture of an innocent boy (aged 9), vulnerable (hospitalised) and gentle (raised in a female-dominated family). These elements serve to palliate the undiluted Hutu identity. Edouard continues:

> Armed Hutu men came into our room and …they went straight to the man who was looking after his daughter and cut off his head with a machete. It was beyond frightening. When they left, the child was sitting in his father's blood and looking at his head. The other male patient who was Hutu was eating macaroni throughout the episode…That is why I can never eat macaroni.

This part of the story often generated a very strong emotional response in the audience. However, the nar-

rative intention was not to re-traumatise the audience but rather to highlight the barbarity of the genocide and the responsibility of adult Hutu in a brief but 'charged' passage. It juxtaposes the four elements that frame the genocide more evocatively than any other: (1) Hutu killers, (2) Hutu bystanders, (3) Tutsi atrociously killed and (4) child survivors.

The next stage of the narrative reiterates adult Hutus' guilt and initiates an 'empathetic connection' between the narrator and the 'victim' group:

> When the genocide was over and schools reopened, I was saddened to see that there were no Tutsi kids and teachers in the classrooms. This is when I wrote my first poem '*iyo badatsembwa tuba dutwenga*'[5], in which I question how our people [*bene wacu*] could kill teachers, children, women...I could never comprehend it, even though the killings had been committed by members of our ethnic group.

Seen from the perspective of the current literature on guilt in the Rwandan genocide, this segment of the story seems to render support to the presumed collective guilt of all adult Hutu (Eltringham, 2004; Blair and Stevenson, 2015). It also reinforces the suggestion that a perpetrator's guilt is often mediated by a sense of empathy toward the victim group as opposed to shame, which is mediated by self-pity (Brown and Cehajic, 2008). However, seen from the vantage point of a ten-year-old boy, the words should be read as a lament for a 'stolen' childhood. The poetics of lament expressed in the poem reveals a working through grief that is rarely explored in post-genocide literature, especially among young Hutu.

The second key moment in Edouard's paradigmatic narrative concerns the socio-economic condition of a 'young Hutu' in post-genocide Rwanda (McLean-Hilker, 2011; Doná, 2000). Despite his mother's efforts to ensure the continuation of his studies, life was hard and Edouard dropped out of school in the third year of his secondary studies. He struggled to find a decent job, like many young Hutu in the same situation. Here, the story crystallises an aspect of post-genocide reconstruction that is hardly found in mainstream narratives. There is a feeling among young Hutu that they are discriminated against in comparison to young Tutsi in vital social policies such as access to secondary and tertiary education (Meintjes, 2013; Pells, 2011).

During YCD, many CPs' stories confirmed the reality of this situation. 'John' (Gasabo, May 2013) felt that orphaned CPs were discriminated against by the government because they were denied support through the Fund for Assistance to Genocide Survivors (FARG). 'Emmanuel' (Gisagara, May 2013) spoke of missed opportunities because he was 'lumped' in the same bracket as 'all Hutu'. The subtext of this feeling is that this discrimination results from what their adult *bene wabo,* or relatives in Kinyarwanda, did in 1994; a situation that seems to be accepted with what might be called a stoic resignation, if not self-pity. These feelings further resonate with findings by studies in social psychology on in-groups' (perpetrators') emotional responses to collective guilt (Branscombe and Doosje, 2004, Brown and Cehajic, 2008; Imhoff et al., 2012; Imhoff et al., 2013; Lickel et al., 2005). As will be argued in the final section, it is clear that the RPF government also implicitly recognises the gravity of the situation and YCD was a step in the direction of assessing its extent throughout the country.

The third critical juncture in Edouard's story coincides with an upturn in his fortunes, which he attributes to his talent as a poet and to the current government's willingness to give opportunities to everyone:

> One day as I was cooking…I remember I was frying chicken and my lady boss was screaming at me, 'Edouard, do not burn my pot; it is worth more than you are!' Then I heard an advert on radio calling for poets and musicians to submit works on the importance of taxes! I composed a poem through the night and surprisingly I won the first prize for best poem!

As a winner, Edouard had the privilege of reciting his poem as a prelude to President Kagame's speech during the tenth anniversary of the genocide commemorations. Edouard himself confessed that 'it felt like being in a dream when the President mentioned my name and congratulated me on my talent.' (Conversation with Edouard, Kigali, May 2013).

It is clear that at this juncture Edouard's story had already entered a political stage. The next and last critical juncture propelled both the narrator and his story on Rwanda's most sensitive public arena and irreversibly

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5 Lit. *Had they not been exterminated we would be laughing together*

paved the way to YCD. In April 2006, Edouard was invited by a group of survivors in Kimironko to recite poetry as part of their mourning and commemoration rituals:

> As is habitual in such occasions, survivors shared their testimonies and experiences during the genocide. I was so profoundly moved that when they asked me to perform, I felt unable to recite poetry in the presence of such painful memories. Instead, I asked the gathered survivors if I could give my own testimony.

Having received their permission, he proceeded to tell the story summarised above. The audience was so profoundly moved by his story that they passed it on to other groups of survivors who invited him to speak during their wakes as well.

> They had never heard a Hutu so open about the pain, shame and humiliation brought upon them by what they had done. They could not believe that there were Hutu who could actually show empathy for the plight of Tutsi. But you know what amazed me?…Many of them cried with me when they saw the turmoil of young Hutu racked by guilt of actions they had not committed. That night changed me!

This episode had a cathartic and catalytic effect on young Edouard. It convinced him that his story had a contribution to make to the reconciliation and reconstruction of Rwandan society. His initial intention was to encourage adult Hutu, who committed these atrocities in front of their children, to come forward and ask for forgiveness to guarantee a better future between their children and those children who were orphaned by their acts. Unfortunately, he found that for most adult Hutu, 'genocide was like a football game that had come to an end …life should continue and people should move on.' (BBC, Imvo n'imvano 1, 22 July 2013). However, the Hutu youth who had relatives in prison, as well as young Tutsi survivors of the genocide, responded positively to Edouard's message. Young artists like him responded particularly strongly:

> We came to the conclusion that we should come together to form the pact of a generation, a pact for life. This is how 'Art for Peace' was born; to create for ourselves a future of peace without the machetes.[6]

During the 'Youth Week' in 2013, Art for Peace invited the First Lady and briefly shared their vision with her. She suggested that instead of keeping this visionary initiative contained within a limited group, they should take it to all the young people in every district of Rwanda. Thus was born the 'Youth Connekt Dialogue' initiative.

From YCD to Ndi Umunyarwanda: a public narrative of 'us' and 'now'

Narrative convergence and political incorporation

Ganz suggests that 'for a collection of people to become "us" requires a storyteller, an interpreter of shared experiences' (2011, p. 286). It is difficult to determine the 'transition moment' when Edouard's story became a paradigmatic narrative for a generation of CPs. It is clear, however, that the construction of the story followed the same trajectory as the emergence of the narrator's identity. Concretely, one can surmise that both entered the public sphere between 'critical juncture 3' and 'critical juncture 4'. At this point, the poetic of reconstruction collided with the rhetoric of memory and reconciliation, creating an inspiring public narrative that political authorities could not ignore.

It is vital to examine how this narrative converged with the official narratives of national reconstruction in such a way that the trajectory from Edouard's story to YCD and ultimately to Ndi Umunyarwanda appears almost unbroken. Studying this narrative convergence does what this paper set out to do, namely, to interrogate the orthodoxy of current scholarship that posits the post-genocide reconstruction metanarrative as a top-down and RPF-driven discourse (Straus and Waldorf, 2011). Critical narrative analysis finds little validity in positing a pre-existent and monolithic official narrative. Instead it suggests that individual or group lives, experiences and stories from below have the required breadth, depth and quality to begin a social momentum towards effective action on policy change or what Ganz (2011) calls the agency to turn opportunity into purpose.

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6 '*Kwiremera ejo hazaza harimo amahoro azira imihoro*' in Kinyarwanda. Note the alliterative juxtaposition of *amahoro/*peace and *imihoro/*machete.

Further analysis indicates that official narratives emerge as a number of these initiatives from below are carefully engaged with and points of convergence or alignment with national interests are found. These initiatives are subsequently – although not always – 'absorbed' within the government's vision through various policy 'innovations' (RDB, 2015). It is this formative process of convergence assessment and subsequent incorporation in national policy to which current scholarship has so far failed to attend. Instead, it has tended to focus exclusively on the political 'end product' without an analytical distinction between the whole and the parts, the process and the outcome.

This point also reinforces the crucial importance of YCD and similar state-sponsored public forums on the formulation of official narratives and policies. In this case, the transition from Edouard's story to Ndi Umunyarwanda was not a simple case of public performance as some critics, particularly the opposition from the Rwandan diaspora, have suggested (BBC, Imvo n'Imvano 1&2, July 2013). Rather, YCD was the crucial transitional point which acted both as a testing forum and a validation process. The meticulous planning between Art for Peace, MYICT and Imbuto Foundation (Art for Peace, 2013) is evidence that Edouard's story, as important as it was, represented no more than the proverbial tree that does not make the forest. It had to receive public generational validation which, contrary to what critics suggest, was a contingent outcome rather than a foregone conclusion. A brief look at the reactions to YCD during and after the events helps to demonstrate this contingence.

First, the stories that came from assembled CPs did not always align with Edouard's story. They also did not have a homogeneous experience of genocide and a significant number did not agree with the official version of history presented by 'Mzee Rugano'. For instance, there was a noticeable contrast between stories of CPs from the Northern Province and the rest of the country. This province comprises the former prefectures of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, which experienced a high number of killings during the so called '*Intambara y'abacengezi*' between 1995 and 1996. In Burera district (May 2013), most young people distinguish between the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and the war against insurgents. Some young people said openly that they were told that the 'genocide' took place in 1996 and was committed by the RPF because that is when they lost most of their parents and relatives. (Art for Peace, 2013) In the same district, CPs expressed confusion and frustration caused by contradictory versions of 'history' received from their parents, the media and the government.

In Nyabihu District (May, 2013), participants asked questions that clearly indicated that the current government and previous Tutsi leaderships should not be exonerated of all responsibility. Here is a sample:

Q1: Did President Habyarimana's plane crash by accident?

Q2: Did colonisation really bring the different ethnicities to Rwanda or did they exist prior to this?

Q3: Did Rwanda have a leadership structure before colonisation, and if so, why did they let the colonisers take over when they arrived?

Q4: Prior to colonisation did Rwanda have borders? If so, how did others so easily enter?

In this instance, as in many similar cases, government officials were 'invited' to respond. In some cases, their answers reverted to well-rehearsed 'political' answers that fell short of the 'truth' CPs were looking for. Yet, what was important was that the questions had been asked and aspects of the prevalent official narrative openly challenged.

The second factor that made the success of YCD contingent comprised organisational obstacles, mostly human but also logistical in rare cases. I alluded earlier to the disturbances caused by *ihahamuka* (re-traumatisation) reactions and the resulting discomfort of local authorities. This could easily have short-circuited the meetings. Similarly, some of these local authorities saw YCDs as an opportunity to impress the Kigali-based visitors and officials, using their welcome speech to showcase their success at implementing government performance contracts. In the same vein, others tried to boost the numbers of participants by inviting secondary school pupils who were not the intended audience. These attempts to 'hijack' YCD fall within the sphere of power dynamics between the centre (Kigali) and the peripheries (local authorities) where the latter are keen to secure the approval of the former.

Third, the success of YCD relied heavily on the dedication of Art for Peace in general and Edouard's

story in particular. However, as YCD progressed, the emotional toll of this time-intensive and politically sensitive project threatened to halt it. On two occasions (YCD Kicukiro, 28 May 2013 and YCD Kayonza, 31 May 2013) Edouard was so distressed after telling his story and witnessing its effects on the audience that he felt unable to carry on. Both times, he managed to continue after a 'pastoral' persuasion by some of the highest ranking officials in the country. At another occasion, members of Art for Peace voiced strong concerns for their own personal security (YCD Gatsibo, 1 June 2013). As YCD Phase One drew to a close, it had become increasingly clear that some people, both inside and outside of Rwanda, were critical of YCD, seeing it as another RPF-engineered ploy to 'criminalise' all generations of Hutu people (Imvo n'imvano 1&2). This was an obvious cause for anxiety for Art for Peace members who travelled day and night in a recognisable bus, without a security detail.

Strong criticism of YCD emanated particularly from Rwandan opposition leaders in the diaspora. This criticism did not publicly crystallise until the end of YCD Phase One on 30 June 2013. The official closing ceremony took place at Serena Hotel. It was attended by 700 young people from all 30 districts of Rwanda, and President Kagame was the main speaker. After a succinct presentation of results yielded by this phase, the dominant sentiment in the audience was that all Hutu, including young people who did not participate, should apologise for the genocide against the Tutsi. President Kagame himself repeatedly suggested that transgenerational apology is necessary, even if it is not easy. A number of CPs and official Hutu in the audience went on to make public apologies.

However, the President's statement and subsequent apologies caused strong negative reactions among Hutu politicians in the diaspora. For instance the party PRM-Abasangizi issued a press release denouncing the Serena Hotel 'pact'. It called it divisive, assigning to it the intent to smear all Hutu people. This view was shared by CNL-Intwari whose chairperson criticised the presidential intervention as a cynical and manipulative ploy to politically sideline all generations of Hutu as well as a hindrance to reconciliation (BBC, Imvo n'imvano 1&2).

These challenges were genuine obstacles to the success of YCD but also necessary for the emergence of CPs' political agency. In other words, the government could have halted YCD or opted to exert tighter control to minimise divergent or subversive stories. The decision of government officials to exercise restraint on both accounts provided CPs with safety and confidence to turn YCD into a useful political platform. These challenges were also significant in demonstrating the alignment of CPs' life stories with relevant national policies on reconciliation and reconstruction. The unfaltering support of the government was proof that officials recognised the potential of YCD to provide a new impetus for a revised and inclusive narrative on national identity.

In this respect, YCD was the 'crucible' in which potential turned into conviction on at least two levels. On one level, an individual story identified as a generational paradigm, was tested against and ultimately validated by similar or complementary stories from the targeted generation. On a second level, the government was convinced that this CP-inspired generational narrative had enough political relevance to mark the beginning of a new narrative on Rwandan identity, i.e. Ndi Umunyarwanda. In Ganz's terminology, YCD was the forum in which stories of CPs' selves mutated into a generational story of 'us', leading ultimately to the emergence of a national story of now (Ganz, 2007).

Contours of a CP-centred narrative from below

At this point it is necessary to summarise salient contours of YCD as a generational story. As discussed above, it uses Edouard's story 'template' or presupposed CP life story. In this officially 'preferred narrative', the CP is seen as an innocent witness wrestling with confusion and guilt, excluded from political opportunities, needing the redemptive hearing of survivors' stories and the guiding hand of the state to find their place in society. This template story was supplemented by Mzee Rugano's lecture on history, which could only be described as the official version of history delivered with a significantly distorting portion of artistic license. His account did not rely so much on historical 'facts' as on anecdotes and legends that underplayed ethnic divisions, blamed colonial rule and overplayed the virtues of traditional *itorero* as sites of youth camaraderie and political apprenticeship. The stories of CPs from fifteen districts contributed the corrective and validating component of YCD's budding narrative.

In general, these stories did not emerge easily or fluently (Art for Peace, 2013). Ganz (2011) has point-

ed to the challenging nature of participating in events, like YCD, where participants' criticality and hope are in dialectical relationship in their desire to bring about social changes. Despite the reticence of a number of young people to speak in big crowds – the lowest attendance was of around 100 young people (Nyarugenge, 30 May 2013) and the highest numbered close to 1,000 people (Kirehe, 3 June 2013) – CPs told their stories in various ways. Some told their stories in the form of short autobiographical testimonies, like microscopic portals opening on to a more complex life. Others did not offer a story but asked pertinent questions, revealing in their own way where they stood with regard to Edouard's paradigmatic account. Still others spoke briefly to thank Edouard for having the courage to say what they could not say, implicitly mirroring their lives into the main story. Others preferred to use songs, poems and anonymously written 'diaries'.

To understand these short, unstructured and at times incoherent narratives, Pamphilon (1999) suggests using the meso-zoom level of life stories analysis which makes it possible to evaluate the narrative process, themes and key phrases. This approach reveals an intriguing contrast between the main narrator's linear construction of self and the more fragmented experiences of young people who responded to his story. In addition, a macro-zoom analysis of the cohort effects – that is to say, the immediate or remote external and historical factors that shaped their experience (Gilpin-Jackson, 2014) – provided an extra dimension for understanding the narratives coming from members of the audience.

The previous section has alluded to other challenges that confronted YCD both within and without. However, very important themes emerged out of these dialogues and were debated with a measure of openness rarely associated with Rwandan public space. The most recurrent themes inevitably included the Rwandan genocide and historical ambiguities, childhood, memory and trauma, intragenerational and intergenerational perceptions of responsibility and guilt, genealogical association and the transmission of liability in Rwandan culture, ethnic versus national identity and the socio-political condition of CPs.

It is most revealing that these themes were discussed in an 'interrogative' form. A significant proportion of these probing reflections centred on three main themes: genocide legacy, identity and history (Art for Peace, 2013). Regarding genocide and its legacy on CPs, YCD participants wondered how they could step out of the shadow cast by the genocidal criminality of their adult relatives. 'Is it possible', they mused 'to turn this legacy of political liability into an asset for reconstruction?' In other words, is there a way for CPs to move from isolating guilt to proactive political responsibility?

On the issue of social and political identity, CPs voiced the anxiety of not knowing who they were since they could no longer be referred to as Hutu, children of Hutu or children of killers. 'Are we to be called 'ex-Hutu (*abitwaga abahutu*)?' one CP asked in Gatsibo. More importantly, YCD participants were unsure about the feasibility of doing away with ethnicity after a genocide which has been officially reframed in ethnic terms as the 'Genocide Against the Tutsi'. Finally, as far as history is concerned, it has been noted above that YCD participants questioned the many contradictory versions of history and debated whether there was a single version of historical truth. In Nyabihu district, CPs were frustrated by the fact that leaders (*abayobozi*) and scholars (*abanyabwenge*) were unable to agree on and teach 'real' history.

These and other themes revealed a generation of young people in transition and in search of identity and self-understanding, within a context marked by a particular legacy of genocide as well as the manipulation of history and ethnic identity. They also revealed a generation that is well attuned to the government's policies and underpinning narratives. At the same time, they questioned where and how they fit into these policies, not as the 'children of so and so' but as individual selves who are aware of their connection to Rwanda's tragic past yet remain committed to playing a positive role in its ongoing reconstruction. Ndi Umunyarwanda finds its origin in these embryonic narratives of ambiguous identities.

Ndi Umunyarwanda: finding identity in the Rwandan spirit

As mentioned above, the first phase of YCD was officially closed on 30 June 2013. The political significance of the concerns raised by the dialogues as well as the strong reactions they generated in the Rwandan diaspora led to important decisions at the highest level of Rwandan national politics. They convinced the leaders of the country, the President foremost, that the spirit of YCD should be scaled up to become a national programme overseen by the government. In July 2013, it was decided that this programme would be called Ndi Umunyarwanda (Nsegimana, 2013).

There is no doubt that Ndi Umunyarwanda as the new public narrative on national identity arose from and is seen as a seamless continuation of YCD (President Kagame, 2013). It emerged gradually as MYICT officials, especially Minister Nsengimana, engaged with CPs' questions and promises. It began as a tentative exercise to imagine the best 'identity setting' where all post-genocide identities, legacies, interests and potentials can converge to forge a shared destiny. On 23 October 2013, the council of ministers decreed that Ndi Umunyarwanda would be implemented in all public institutions, civil society, NGOs and religious associations (Umuseke, October 2013). Similarly, ambassadors and high commissioners have the mandate to promote this programme among various Rwandan communities of the diaspora.

Ndi Umunyarwanda is still in its embryonic stage and undergoing an accelerated consolidation process. For this reason, its overall mission and objectives are still being readjusted even as the programme is being implemented. In the initial discussion after YCD, it was suggested that Ndi Umunyarwanda would be structured around four pillars: i) clarifying Rwandan history after its ambiguities and revisionisms were challenged by young people, ii) reclaiming Rwandan identity after questions were raised regarding the reappearance of ethnicity as an important factor in YCD debates, iii) revealing, so far as is possible, the truth on different political events after young people claimed to be confused by competing economies of the truth and, iv) healing and rebuilding (Nsengimana, 2014).

A presidential 'Concept Paper' (Kagame, 2015) provided a more refined précis of Ndi Umunyarwanda both as concept and policy. According to President Kagame, Ndi Umunyarwanda represents the absolute embodiment of *ubunyarwanda* or the Rwandan spirit, understood as the profound relational bond that unites all Rwandans. This bond is the eternal and unbreakable pact between all Rwandans, and between Rwandans and their country. Ndi Umunyarwanda involves the embracing of *ubunyarwanda* as well as the values and taboos that underpin this spirit. These values are i) patriotism geared toward a positive legacy for the future, ii) integrity, iii) a culture of critical dialogue for conflict resolution and iv) the promotion of national and individual progress. Genocide ideology, conspiring against Rwanda and Rwandans as a nation, and putting individual gain before the national interest represent the taboos within *ubunyarwanda*. The paper goes on to provide specific goals, results and the code of conduct during Ndi Umunyarwanda dialogues.

This dialogical aspect reemphasises the continuity between YCD and Ndi Umunyarwanda. Similarly, both initiatives have so far shared aggressive criticism from political opposition in the diaspora. This criticism ranges from extreme rhetoric that views Ndi Umunyarwanda as the RPF's long term policy toward the political or ideological 'extinction' of Hutu people and identity, a concept captured in the Kinyarwanda term *kuzimya inzigo* (Bangamwabo, 2013), to more nuanced analyses that see in it an unnecessary and dangerous dichotomy between 'Tutsi/victims' and 'Hutu/génocidaires' (Rising Continent, 2013). This might explain the intense and disproportionate efforts that state officials have invested in Ndi Umunyarwanda dialogues for diaspora communities.

Conclusion

This study set out to provide a narrative analysis of YCD and to demonstrate how narratives from below shape or contribute to the official metanarrative on post-genocide reconstruction. The findings suggest that YCD contributed directly to the official narrative by giving it grounding and validation. It opened a portal that classic state-sponsored forums could not have unlocked without confronting some ultra-sensitive issues in post-genocide society, namely the thorny and chronic problem of ethnic identity and directly connected to this, the collective criminalisation of all Hutu.

For scholarship on post-genocide reconstruction, this analysis of YCD contributes a unique narrative insight into the condition of CPs in a *sui generis* post-conflict context. It draws the reader into the universe of political, socioeconomic, psychological, moral and legal dilemmas that these young people face daily. Concretely, it explains how CPs understand and conceptualise genocide and its legacy from a transgenerational perspective. It highlights the impact of this legacy on the formation of a complex post-genocide identity, transgenerational tensions around the issues of guilt, responsibility and accountability as well as the perceived and real handicaps of being children of perpetrators. It shows how this generation forges a credible agency to position themselves as partakers in the reconstruction of a nation, the destruction of which weighs heavily on their conscience through a culturally entrenched notion of genealogical transmissibility.

The stories of Edouard and other CPs are framed as a narrative journey from the 'dark side of the mind',

a quest for hope during which denial and repression are worked through, so that knowledge and awareness are not shifted away from consciousness (Bar-On, 1991). When this consciousness is released from the confines of individuality and privacy, it becomes public and political; a public generational narrative. In this respect, the progression from Edouard's individual story to YCD should be seen as an intentional construction of in-group political identity. This in turn makes YCD events genuine sites of political transformative learning. These stories are important for the simple fact of being narrated publicly. Thus, they are in contradistinction to what Schlant (1999) calls the 'language of silence', a form of political mutism that characterises different generations of perpetrators (Oxenberg, 2003; Imhoff et al., 2012; Brown and Cehajic, 2008; Münyas, 2008). They offer a challenging and dialectic narrative in which the strong desire to 'reject' is in tension with the political necessity to 'connect' with a difficult past (Berger and Berger, 2001).

CPs used YCD to challenge ethnic identity narratives (Eltringham, 2011; McLean Hilker, 2011) and offered narratives that should begin to lay foundations for a genuine national Rwandan identity. In this respect, Ndi Umunyarwanda as an outcome of YCD has to be seen as a positive result, but one that has to be taken with mitigated enthusiasm. Discussions around the issue of transgenerational guilt point to a desire to convert 'guilt' as a handicap into political responsibility. Here again, CPs showed that they are prepared to challenge polarising narratives. On the one hand, they insisted that adult Hutu should be accountable for the genocide against the Tutsi. On the other, they refused to exonerate the RPF-led government of all responsibility in Rwanda's history of violence. By staking their claim in the public narrative of national reconciliation, this subgroup showed that in numbers and political intentionality, they are capable of initiating a movement for change. Ndi Umunyarwanda is their stated political intentionality to rebuild a nation for all Rwandans in which *amahoro* (peace), not *imihoro* (machetes), should have the last word.

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