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Capstone Issue Vol. 16 2021



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The Amsterdam University College (AUC) Undergraduate Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences is a biannual, interdisciplinary publication showcasing outstanding undergraduate academic papers. The Journal aims to demonstrate the strength of undergraduate scholarship at AUC, to reflect the intellectual diversity of its academic programme, to encourage best research and writing practices, to facilitate collaboration between students and faculty across the curriculum, and to provide students with opportunities to gain experience in academic reviewing, editing and publishing. The Editorial of the Journal is composed of members of the InPrint board, a registered AUCSA committee.

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Foreword

It is my great pleasure and privilege to introduce the 16th volume of Amsterdam University Colleges's (AUC) Undergraduate Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The articles in this Issue are selected from AUC students' Capstone thesis - the final independent research undertaken by the undergraduate students. With three distinct departments: Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities, the Issue presents two of the most remarkable Capstones from each department. This Issue begins with Gesa Mueller's detailed primary research into the diel variation of macroinvertebrate assemblages in the coasts of Greece. Following that, Karla M. Rojas's compelling discussion of the recently-discovered galaxy NGC1052-DF2, and its implications in re-sparking the modified gravity debate. Then, Carolina Resigotti's illuminating thesis on the role of Rwandan youth in the diffusion of reconciliation norms. Next, Salomé Petit-Siemen's fascinating exploration into the socio-political implications of algorithmic power in social media. Following this, Lisa Philippo's ingenious paper that deconstructs the gentrification of online sexuality through analyzing OnlyFans. And finally, Miglė Gerčaitė's intricate case of counter-monumentality in Soviet Lithuania. While the research focus runs the gamut, all these papers are all tied together by their depth of critical analysis and innovation of thought.

The Issue would not be possible without the efforts of all the editors, who rigorously collaborate with the authors to continually raise the bar of excellence in the Issue. Special thanks go to the Head Editors of each department, Aada Kallio, Céline Paré, and Casey Ansara for their meticulous and tireless contributions. I would also like to express heartfelt thanks to the authors for their continued engagement and revision of their research. Finally, I would like to thank the continual support of all the AUC staff, specifically Wade Geary the Capstone Coordinator, and the Academic Writing Skills and Advanced Research Writing teams, whose support we are grateful for.

I am humbled by the level of academic excellence in this Issue. It is my sincere hope that you, the reader, will come away from this Issue inspired by the thought-provoking analysis presented by each of the theses, and perhaps feel inclined to contribute to our next Issue!

Aditi Rai Sia, Editor-in-Chief

A note from the photographers

InPrint has a long-standing collaboration with RAW to take cover photographs for each paper. The abstracts of all six papers published in this issue were sent to the photographers as inspiration for their photographs. The captions below give a short explanation of the artists' thought process and interpretation of their work.

***Diel Fade* by Stef Deuring** for Gesa Mueller's *A quantitative analysis of diel variation in macroinvertebrate assemblages in the coastal waters of Lipsi island, Greece*. In order to visually represent the night and day cycle, the picture fades from the dark blue of murky nocturnal waters to the brightness of full daylight. The macroinvertebrates loom larger than they are in real life, trying to visualise their often underestimated importance for the marine environment.

***Homemade Galactic Development* by Iacob Postavaru** for Karla M. Rojas's *NGC 1052–DF2: The galaxy re-sparking the modified gravity debate*. This diffuse galaxy lacks more than half of its expected dark matter. This means that the galaxy would not have formed through the traditional hierarchical process of galaxy formation. However, this is very different from NGC1052–DF2's case since its dynamics can be explained without studying outer space but instead with the fluid mechanics of oil and water.

***Beyond Here* by Richard Essink** for Carolina Resigotti's *Young Entrepreneurs of Reconciliation*. The burned out husk of a tree represents the collective trauma of the Rwandan Genocide. Candles burn in mourning vigil and collective reappraisal of this tragic event. Finally, leaving the desolateness of this tragedy behind, the young entrepreneur climbs upwards, towards hope.

***Erased* by Richard Essink** for Salomé Petit-Siemens's *Social Media Platforms and a New Regime of (In)visibility*. Blurred, stuck between this reality and their digital presence, the figure in the picture loses their identity. Unidentifiable, maligned, he is supposed to represent the potential of social media to effectively erase the voices of suppressed communities.

***Moulin Rouge* by Daria Roman** for Lisa Philippo's *Digital Whores Doing Pay-Per-View Chores*. Elements that are commonly associated with sex workers, seduction, and aestheticism are combined. In order to achieve a mysterious, seductive aesthetic, decisions about the lighting, exposure, and composition were made. I incorporated a deep red light, minimized the exposure, and decided to only focus on a part of the leg being touched by the hand in a sensual manner instead of photographing someone and including a face. I believe this helped achieve a picture that is more about beauty and aestheticism rather than promoting the same ideas and image that people usually associate with sex workers.

***Dissolution of Victory* by Daria Roman and Richard Essink** for Miglė Gerčaitė's *Remembering Soviet Lithuania in Grūtas Park*. Under Soviet rule, Soviet realist sculptures served to underline the clear superiority of the communist political system. Now, in the post-communist era, guided by sites of remembrance and reevaluation, like Grūtas Park, these statues lose that clarity. It dissolves into a more nuanced evaluation of their meaning. This is mirrored in the visual dissolution of the victory statue.

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Social Sciences

Young Entrepreneurs of Reconciliation

The Role of Rwandan Youth in the Diffusion of Reconciliation Norms

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Reader

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Photographer: Richard Essink

Abstract

This research expands on existing literature merging norm diffusion and reconciliation, by exploring the role of young people as norm entrepreneurs spreading norms of reconciliation. In order to do so, it examines the post-genocide context of Rwanda, and analyzes data drawn from semi-structured interviews with young Rwandans involved in the reconciliation process. The paper provides an overview of the globally recognized norms of reconciliation advanced by the Rwandan state, with the purpose of understanding the ways in which the new Rwandan generation engages in national and international norm promotion. Findings illustrate that youth actors localize norms of truth and memory, and internalize unity and a common identity. In line with global youth trends, they advance a stronger focus on a shared future marked by a “never again” narrative, and they also encourage empathy, critical thinking, and responsibility. By using innovative methods like art, dialogue, and media, the youth actors increasingly interact with the state’s transitional justice institutions and the education system, as they stand between norm emergence and cascade. Their impact is also visible between cascade and internalization, as they form networks of norm entrepreneurs beyond national boundaries. Such results implicate the relevant agency of young people within the norm diffusion cycle, by virtue of their ability to reconstruct post-conflict societies. Lastly, findings contribute to emphasizing their essential role during reconciliation processes.

Keywords: *Norm diffusion, reconciliation, youth actors, norm entrepreneurs, Rwanda*

Suggested citation:

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Abbreviations

CNLG	National Commission for the Fight against Genocide
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
PLP	Peace and Love Proclaimers
SD	Sustained Dialogue
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOY	United Network of Young Peacebuilders
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

1 Introduction

Reconciliation is an indispensable requirement for the reconstruction of society in the aftermath of a violent conflict. By virtue of its power to restore social relationships and modify societal beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and emotions (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; 2015; 2017), reconciliation is internationally viewed as an essential condition for the attainment of stable peace (Rosoux, 2017). This global consensus around the significance of reconciliation hints at its association with norm diffusion.

The latter indeed relates to the emergence, propagation, and internalization of “standards of appropriate behavior” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 891) within the international realm. According to Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) norm life cycle, norms are created by norm entrepreneurs, “cascade” across nation-states through the work of international organizations and networks and are internalized within national and local social discourses. In order to explain how norms can be dynamically negotiated between the global and the local, existing literature has analyzed processes of norm contestation (Stimmer, 2019; Wiener, 2004; Wiener, 2017), and norm localization (Acharya, 2004; Capie, 2008; Groß, 2015; Tholens & Groß, 2015).

The link between norm diffusion and reconciliation becomes clear through the acknowledgement of seemingly internationally agreed-upon norms of reconciliation, or standards for its effectiveness, such as justice (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; Staub, 2013; Weinstein & Stover, 2004), truth and collective memory (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Kelman, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; Staub, 2013), and forgiveness (Auerbach, 2004; Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rosoux & Brudholm, 2009; Rosoux, 2009; 2015). These normative elements are reinforced through the process of transitional justice, which itself is globally considered a post-conflict norm (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014; Boesenecker & Vinjamuri, 2011; Kostovicova & Biquelet, 2017; MacKenzie & Sesay, 2012; Ottendörfer, 2013; Sikkink & Kim, 2013; Subotic, 2015). Evidence for this global conception is offered by the establishment of international tribunals in order to ensure legal justice (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014; Sikkink & Kim, 2013), the institutionalization of truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) for the exposure of truth and the necessity to forgive (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014; Rosoux & Brudholm, 2009, p. 34), and the implementation of museums and memorial sites for the propagation of collective memory (Sikkink & Kim, 2013, p. 270).

Bearing the connection between reconciliation and norm diffusion in mind, this research aims at more thoroughly exploring the role of local actors, specifically the youth. Even though youth agency is often disregarded in the national and international spheres (De Graaf, 2014; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Mengistu, 2017), their role has proven to be crucial in post-conflict areas, during peacebuilding and reconciliation pro-

cesses (De Graaf, 2014; Dragija, 2020; Kasherwa, 2019; Kasic & Tauber, 2010; Kurze, 2016; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Nguyen-Marshall, 2015; Prisca et al., 2012; Shipler, 2008; Thapa, 2009; Wienand, 2013; Wollentz et al., 2019). By examining youth action within norm diffusion, it is possible to acknowledge the impact of bottom-up youth initiatives in diffusing specific norms of reconciliation, namely unity and inclusivity across difference, social justice and human rights preservation, and an orientation towards a shared future. These norms are advocated by youth actors across the globe through the use of innovative tools, such as art (Dragija, 2020; Kasic & Tauber, 2010; Kurze, 2016; Peace Direct, 2019; Wollentz et al., 2019), sustained dialogue (Life & Peace Institute, 2017), and peace education (Kasherwa, 2019; Peace Direct, 2019). Their impact is visible at different stages of the norm diffusion cycle: at the national level, governments are adopting youth-related policies and including youth in representative bodies (Mengistu, 2017), as well as implementing peace education programs in educational systems (UNESCO, 2013); at the transnational level, youth transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and youth NGOs are becoming prominent and influential in promoting norms engineered by youth actors; at the international level, influence of the youth is observable in the adoption of the UNSCR 2550 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) of 2015, which has contributed to producing a normative shift on a global scale, enabling extensive youth participation and increasing young people’s effect in diffusing their norms.

Within the norm diffusion framework, little has been done to trace the role of young people involved in reconciliation. Therefore, this research aims to illustrate the ways in which youth actors contribute to diffuse norms for the promotion of reconciliation. In other words, it seeks to delineate young people’s norm entrepreneurship. In doing so, it examines the post-genocide context of Rwanda, and draws its data from 10 semi-structured interviews conducted with young Rwandans involved in the reconciliation process. The study specifically focuses on exploring the norms they promote and the strategies they use, and on evaluating their impact within and beyond national borders. The first part of the paper is dedicated to the analysis of existing norms of reconciliation in the country, as well as the methods employed by the state to promote such norms. In conformity with international norms aimed at reconciliation, Rwanda has advanced justice, truth, forgiveness, and collective memory, and additionally, unity and a common identity, through the implementation of transitional justice institutions, namely the ICTR (Des Forges & Longman, 2004; Tiemessen, 2004), the Gacaca courts (Tiemessen, 2004; Meyerstein, 2007; Rettig, 2008), the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) (Clark, 2010; Mgbako, 2005), and the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) (Korman, 2014), along with the use of the education system (Russell, 2015; 2018; 2019). The second part relies upon data obtained through qualitative interviewing, and serves to identify the work of Rwandan youth as norm entrepreneurs within the

present context. First, it looks into the preconditions that determine their influential action: being the majority, having the resources, being innocents and victims at the same time, and having different, more open mindsets and perspectives. Second, it dives into the norms they promote. Here, it emerges that youth-led norms mainly pertain to two overlapping categories: the analysis of the past and the focus on the future. The former includes norms of acknowledgement (of the past) and acceptance (of the truth), while the latter involves norms of unity, a common identity, and a “never again” narrative. In between these two groups, young Rwandans also emphasize critical thinking, empathy, and responsibility. To different extents, such norms are a result of norm localization by the hands of the Rwandan new generation. Third, the research offers an overview of the methods used by youth to advance such norms. These approaches, which are clearly connected to global patterns of youth-initiated methods, are categorized into three groups: dialogue, conversation, and debate; art, writing, and storytelling; and media and technology. Fourth, the last section seeks to illustrate the concrete impact of Rwandan youth as norm entrepreneurs at national, transnational, and international levels: between norm emergence and cascade, youth-led initiatives are widely recognized within Rwandan society, especially through their extensive interaction with the state’s institutions aimed at norm promotion; between cascade and internalization, youth actors are expanding their communities and forming webs of norm entrepreneurs across the globe.

This research contributes to the scholarship on norm diffusion and reconciliation. On the one hand, it sheds light on the under-recognized agency of youth actors in norm diffusion, as it permits conceiving them as norm entrepreneurs; on the other hand, it enlarges existing knowledge surrounding the role of young people in contexts of reconciliation. In terms of social relevance, this paper emphasizes the youth’s ability to (re)construct social discourses in post-conflict societies, and to go beyond national borders. Consequently, it seeks to encourage the inclusion and recognition of youth agency at a national level, where young people should be equipped with the physical spaces and means to be able to achieve meaningful outcomes. Given the rising acknowledgment of youth action and potential in Rwanda, the Rwandan case serves as an example for the world.

2 Research Context

2.1 Norm Diffusion

Norm diffusion in international relations has been extensively explored on the basis of a constructivist theoretical framework offered by Finnemore and Sikkink in 1998. According to these scholars, norms, which they define as “standard[s] of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (p. 891), undergo a three-stage process characterized

by “norm emergence,” “norm cascade,” and “norm internalization” (p. 895). In the first phase, norms are built by norm entrepreneurs, who persuade their community to adopt new principles of appropriateness, with the help of organizational platforms (e.g., NGOs); in the second phase, other countries or regions are pressured to adopt these new legitimate norms, notably through the work of international organizations and networks; in the final phase, norms are accepted and internalized by the international community, thus achieving a “taken-for-granted” character (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Of particular significance is the notion of norm entrepreneurs. Such individuals are often described as “meaning managers” or “meaning architects” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 897), because of their ability to reshape social meaning within broader society. In the latter, norm entrepreneurs usually encounter initial contestation, considering their use of non-normative approaches to diffuse norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 897). Nonetheless, such inappropriateness is employed to ensure that their voices are heard, with the greater aim to divulge their ideas among a wider public. Finally, the motivations behind the action of norm entrepreneurs range from altruism and empathy to ideational commitment (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 898).

Other scholars have problematized the norm life cycle by analyzing norm contestation (Stimmer, 2019; Wiener, 2004; 2017). In particular, Wiener (2004) focuses on instances of “contested compliance,” while Stimmer (2019) complicates the binary understanding of contestation and acceptance by offering four distinct contestation outcomes, namely norm clarification, norm recognition, norm neglect and norm impasse.

Another substantial body of research examines norm localization (Acharya, 2004; Capie, 2008; Groß, 2015; Tholens & Groß, 2015), defined by Acharya (2004) as a process through which “norm-takers build congruence between transnational norms [...] and local beliefs and practices” (p. 241). Most significantly, Acharya (2004) expands on existing literature around norm diffusion by emphasizing the agency of local actors in reinterpreting and adapting outside norms to their social contexts. Groß (2015), who analyzes the construction of local meaning regarding international norms of democracy and minority rights in Kosovo, provides an example of such local agency. Finally, the role of local actors is taken forward by Acharya (2011), who develops the concept of “norm subsidiarity” in Third World countries. Here, local actors create norms with the aim of maintaining local autonomy.

Lastly, a wide range of literature concentrates on contextualizing norm diffusion, contestation, and localization, as well as exploring the role of specific norm entrepreneurs and norm-takers (Acharya, 2013; Björkdahl, 2006; Boesenecker & Vinjamuri, 2011; De Almagro, 2018; Vuković, 2020; Williams, 2009). On the one hand, Björkdahl (2006) and Vuković (2020) focus on external norm entrepreneurs, re-

spectively the UN and EU mediators. On the other hand, Acharya (2013), De Almagro (2018), Williams (2009), and Boesenecker and Vinjamuri (2011) examine internal dynamics of norm diffusion and the agency of norm-takers in shaping and localizing external norms. For instance, Williams (2009) and Acharya (2013) investigate the circulation of the “Responsibility to Protect”-norm in Africa.

2.2 Reconciliation

Reconciliation, which Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004) claim is “the necessary condition for stable and lasting peace” (p. 17), has been largely conceived as “an agreed upon norm of conflict resolution” (Rosoux, 2015, p. 48). In other words, reconciliation is internationally viewed as an essential requirement for the successful settlement of violent conflicts and the achievement of peace and stability.

Reconciliation is broadly defined by Rosoux (2017) on the basis of three levels: structural, psycho-social, and spiritual. The first indicates the development of political and economic collaboration between two parties; the second relates to the improvement of emotional understandings between the two; the last one refers to the rehabilitation of ruptured spiritual connections between victims and perpetrators.

Another significant aspect of an effective reconciliation process consists in the simultaneous mobilization of top-down and bottom-up approaches (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; 2015; 2017). As Rosoux describes (2009; 2015; 2017), reconciliation must involve political leaders at a macro level, local institutions and NGOs at a meso level, and individuals at a micro level. Only through this threefold, comprehensive involvement of society can an effective reconciliation process take place.

A substantial amount of research focuses on the social, psychological, and spiritual level of reconciliation through the identification and problematization of the following key components: justice (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; Staub, 2013; Weinstein & Stover, 2004), truth and collective memory (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Kelman, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; Staub, 2013), and forgiveness (Auerbach, 2004; Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Rosoux, 2009; 2015; Rosoux & Brudholm, 2009).

2.3 Merging Norm Diffusion and Reconciliation

The link between components of reconciliation and norm diffusion can be perceived especially in the international normative significance attributed to justice, truth, forgiveness, and collective memory. These elements, which are generally included in the process of transitional justice, are considered as the appropriate standards of reconciliation.

Transitional justice has come to be internationally viewed as a norm of reconciliation (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014; Boesenecker & Vinjamuri, 2011; Kostovicova & Biquelet, 2017; MacKenzie & Sesay, 2012; Ottendörfer, 2013; Sikkink & Kim, 2013; Subotic, 2015). Post-conflict states are expected to implement justice through the institution of different mechanisms which ensure legal accountability, with regard to individuals engaging in substantial human rights violations (Sikkink & Kim, 2013). This “individual criminal accountability model” (Sikkink & Kim, 2013, p. 276) first emerged with the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, due to an ideological change stemming from the human rights movement (Sikkink & Kim, 2013). Indeed, these post-World War II trials laid the foundations for the so-called “justice cascade” (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014; Sikkink & Kim, 2013), which involved the establishment of international tribunals, such as the ICTY, the ICTR, and ultimately the ICC, for a global and decentralized prosecution of perpetrators. The justice cascade then influenced national policies across the globe, particularly through the work of TANs and peer pressure (Sikkink & Kim, 2013).

Truth is also viewed as an inherent, indispensable component of the path to reconciliation (Rosoux, 2009, p. 555). The normative and systematic relationship between reconciliation and truth can be observed in the institutionalization of truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs), which act as transitional justice tools to expose the truth and shame perpetrators. TRCs originated in Latin America in the 1980s, and later acquired international recognition as a means to generate effective reconciliation and social reconstruction (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014).

Other than diffusing the norm of truth, TRCs also encourage forgiveness by hands of ‘the victim’ towards ‘the perpetrator’ (Rosoux & Brudholm, 2009, p. 34). The emergence of forgiveness as a norm is underlined by Auerbach (2004), who associates it with the influence of Christianity and Western cultures (p. 153). Today, forgiveness is advocated by governments, NGOs, religious leaders, and mediators (Rosoux & Brudholm, 2009, p. 34), and the forgiver has acquired a privileged image, considered a model of humanity and morality. (Rosoux & Brudholm, 2009).

Finally, implementing collective memory is also regarded as a crucial requirement of a successful reconciliation process. Lemarchand (2006) hints at the understanding of memory as a norm by mentioning the universal popularity of the phrase “the duty to remember” (p. 21). The diffusion of collective memory as a norm of reconciliation is especially visible in the institutionalization of museums and memory sites in post-conflict states (Sikkink & Kim, 2013, p. 270).

Nonetheless, scholars have shown how these norms, included in the transitional justice process, have encountered contestation, reinterpretation, and localization (Boesenecker & Vinjamuri, 2011; Kostovicova & Biquelet, 2017; MacKenzie & Sesay, 2012; Ottendörfer, 2013; Subotic, 2015). Con-

testation refers to the resistance and tension created by the application of a norm in a given state (Stimmer, 2019); reinterpretation, which occurs as a consequence of contestation, implies the association of a new norm with a pre-existing norm (Acharya, 2004); localization, which also settles norm contestation practices, involves an adaptation process between international norms and local understandings (Acharya, 2004). In particular, contestation, resistance, and normative divergence have occurred in the Balkans (Kostovicova & Biquelet, 2017; Subotic, 2015), in Sierra Leone (MacKenzie & Sesay, 2012), and in Timor Leste (Ottendörfer, 2013), where agreed-upon international norms and tools of reconciliation were inconsistent with their mindsets (Ottendörfer, 2013, p. 25).

2.4 Youth Actors

In post-conflict areas undergoing processes of reconciliation and peacebuilding, youth actors are often “othered,” labeled as “dangerous subjects” (Kasherwa, 2019, p. 2), “perpetrators of violence,” and “problematic” individuals (Life & Peace Institute, 2017, p. 4), and youth action is dismissed, seen as irrelevant. For this reason, the youth faces multiple challenges in exercising its agency within global and national political discourses (De Graaf, 2014; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Mengistu, 2017). Nonetheless, youth actors are gaining momentum in the context of international norms of reconciliation, as they are increasingly acting as norm entrepreneurs. Scholars have widely explored the significant role of young people in post-conflict areas (De Graaf, 2014; Dragija, 2020; Kasherwa, 2019; Kosic & Tauber, 2010; Kurze, 2016; McEvoy-Levy, 2006; Nguyen-Marshall, 2015; Prisca et al., 2012; Shipler, 2008; Thapa, 2009; Wienand, 2013; Wollett et al., 2019). In particular, McEvoy-Levy (2006) highlights youth actors’ potential by describing them as “peace resources” (p. 12) and stresses their effectiveness in promoting healing and reconciliation by virtue of their desire “to do good, to make contributions, to change systems, and to redress wrongs” (p. 21). Similarly, De Graaf (2014) underlines the importance of giving a voice and providing agency to youth actors in order to build peace and transform entire societies. The following sections serve to illustrate the concrete role of young women and men within the norm diffusion cycle elaborated by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), in relation to reconciliation practices (see Figure 1).

2.4.1 Bottom-Up Youth Initiatives

At a local level, youth actors are increasingly contributing to the promotion of new norms of reconciliation by spreading innovative ideas and values. Early signs of youth involvement aimed at reconciliation, as well as their capacity to positively influence post-conflict discourses, were apparent during the 1960s and the 1970s, in the contexts of the German-Israeli

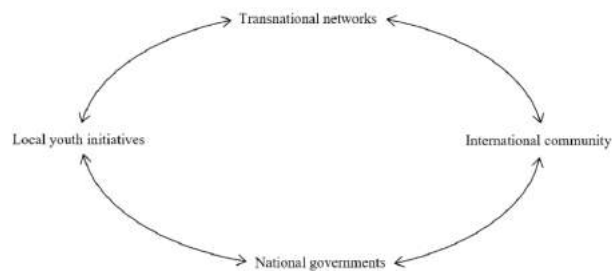


Figure 1: The role of youth within the norm diffusion cycle.

relations (Wienand, 2013) and the Vietnam War (Nguyen-Marshall, 2015). In the former, German university students initiated German-Israeli study groups; they intended to overcome prejudices, modify the conception of the “other” and envision “a joint future by means of reconciliation” (Wienand, 2013, p. 207). In the second case, students in Vietnam formed associations and organized peaceful protests to achieve social justice, fight for religious freedom, and uphold freedom of speech (Nguyen-Marshall, 2015, p. 53). In both contexts, diverse youth actors assembled and cooperated despite their differences in nationality, political affiliation, or religion, for the promotion of core ideas and values, namely unity and inclusivity, justice and human rights preservation, and an orientation towards a shared future. These three principles, in particular, acquired the character of norms as they began to be prioritized and advanced by youth actors in different contexts of reconciliation, through the use of hands-on and ingenious methods. The reasons behind a common focus on these three norms in particular are threefold. Firstly, unity across difference is emphasized as young people in post-conflict societies are often not involved in past atrocities, unlike older generations, and thus feel equipped and qualified to accept and include the “other” (Wienand, 2013, p. 206-207). Secondly, the commitment for social justice, which appears to be closely tied with human rights protection, is viewed as a priority as youth activists “are the product of a global spillover effect of international human rights practices” (Kurze, 2016, p. 2). Finally, a common commitment towards a shared future is advocated as young people see themselves as builders of a new world (UNOY, n.d.), and, by learning from the older generation’s mistakes, are more prone to strive for a better future.

In the Balkans, the youth pioneered the use of artistic performances and installations as an alternative to the traditional transitional justice mechanisms (Kurze, 2016). These bottom-up initiatives, initially implemented in Bosnia-Herzegovina, were aimed at creating spaces for victim confrontation, denouncing human rights violations, and commemorating the past (Kurze, 2016). In doing so, young people in the Balkans have acted as “insider proponents” (Acharya, 2004, p. 248) of an alternative norm to the existing transitional justice norm and its implications. They attempted to “localize a normative order” (Acharya, 2004, p. 249), namely transitional justice and its tools (e.g., TRCs), by using artistic means as the alternative. This practice was

consequently amplified to the region: for instance, Wollentz et al. (2019) illustrate how young people in the divided city of Mostar have creatively rebuilt a monument dedicated to workers' rights, in which everyone could participate, thus using art to minimize ethnic divides, create a sense of togetherness, and conceive a shared future. Similarly, NGOs in Vukovar, Croatia have contributed to legitimize this practice by bringing young Serbs and Croats together through creative and artistic activities like painting and dancing (Kosic & Tauber, 2010, p. 87). The use of art within reconciliation processes soon spread to other post-conflict contexts, especially through online platforms and social media, and Balkan youth became "a role model for other youth movements across the globe" (Dragija, 2020, p. 65) For example, the Colombian youth-led organization BogotArt promotes unity and acceptance between ex-combatants and civilians in the aftermath of the 2016 peace agreement (Peace Direct, 2019, p. 22). In all these cases, youth actors prioritized the advancement of the same core values, namely unity, justice, and the visualization of a shared future, through the use of art as an original reconciliation medium.

Another innovative tool of reconciliation used by youth actors to encourage, above all, unity and inclusivity across ethnocultural barriers, is the use of peer-to-peer dialogues and interactions. An example would be the Ethiopian "Sustained Dialogue" (SD) initiative, a method of post-conflict social transformation which enabled participants to "systematically probe and gradually deal with the causes of deep-rooted human conflict" (Saunders, 2011, p. 1). The SD practice was initially applied to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace process of the 1970s (Saunders, 2011), and was later extended to Ethiopian youth in 2009. Once extended to other states of the Horn of Africa, namely Sudan and Kenya, it became a tool for reconciliation among youths of the region (Life & Peace Institute, 2017, p. 10). Here, young women and men started to engage in SDs to build and improve social relationships beyond identity markers of ethnicity, religion, gender, or economic status (Life & Peace Institute, 2017, p. 8). In doing so, Ethiopian, Sudanese and Kenyan youths were able to develop mutual trust and learn to cooperate in unity despite diverse ethnic boundaries (Life & Peace Institute, 2017, p. 10-11).

Additionally, young people usher the visualization of a shared future of peace and cooperation through peace education activities. The purpose of peace education is to "promote understanding, respect, and tolerance toward yesterday's enemies" (Salomon, 2002, p. 4), as well as advancing human rights, spreading a culture of peace, and providing skills for managing and preventing violence and conflict in the future (Salomon, 2002, p. 5). Peace education programs were created and implemented in multiple contexts of intractable conflict and/or interethnic tension, but also during periods of experienced tranquility (Salomon, 2002, p. 5-6). Inspired by these programs, young people in post-conflict areas have taken it upon themselves to organize workshops

and activities of peace education. This is occurring extensively across African regions: in Burundi and DRC, a myriad of youth organizations are promulgating a culture of long-lasting peace and overcoming ethnic and political divides (Kasherwa, 2019, p. 19), while in Madagascar, the youth peacebuilding organization "Act in Solidarity" has launched the program "Youth Students for Peace," which provides peace training and mentoring to university students (Peace Direct, 2019, p. 33). Through these peace education-related activities, youths across Africa and the rest of the world are divulging the importance of envisioning a shared peaceful future, marked by unity across difference and human rights protection.

2.4.2 Top-down Approaches: National, Transnational and International Levels

At the national level, governments are increasingly pressured to recognize the role of young actors in peacebuilding and reconciliation, and to involve them in social and political decision-making. In several African countries, these efforts are evident in the adoption of national youth policies and the establishment of national youth representative bodies (Mengistu, 2017, p. 3), such as the Youth and Sports Ministry (Prisca et al., 2012, p. 188). As such, youth initiatives for reconciliation are gaining ground, paving the way for new principles and methods of reconciliation to spread as national and international norms. The assimilation of such norms at a national level is particularly visible in the institutionalization of peace education in educational systems across Africa (UNESCO, 2013). Propagated simultaneously by local youths and the UN, reconciliation norms (i.e., unity and tolerance, human rights preservation, culture of peace for the future) are thus cascading to national governments, the latter increasingly persuaded to adopt these norms through the inclusion of peace education in school curricula. At the same time, the growing national attention towards youth actors enlarges young people's opportunities to reinforce the emergence and diffusion of such norms.

Youth TANs and regional NGOs are largely contributing to the circulation of norms for reconciliation developed by local youth initiatives. These organizations take the "new norms," along with innovative tools and methods, out of the national sphere and gradually push for their international recognition and incorporation into global policies as well as national governments. The United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), a TAN of 128 youth organizations operating in 71 countries (UNOY, n.d.), promotes core values like inclusivity and creativity, thus illustrating once again how norms engineered by youth actors enter norm cascade processes. In turn, this network, among many others, influences international policies.

Thanks to the extensive work of youth TANs and NGOs, the international community is pressured to recognize the po-

tential and willingness of youth actors with regard to building peace and reconciliation through the elaboration and circulation of inventive norms and tools. One of the greatest achievements at a global level is the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2550 on YPS in 2015, which states that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security” (UNSC, 2015). This resolution has contributed to increase young people’s visibility in the context of reconciliation and consequently, facilitated the promotion of norms engineered by youth actors across the globe. Additionally, it has resulted in a normative shift within the international realm, as it pushes member states to enable youth participation at local, national, regional, and international levels (UNSC, 2015).

3 Methodology

The methodological approach used in this research is twofold: it consists of a case study analysis and qualitative interviewing.

The first approach is used to apply the norm diffusion framework to the context of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda, with the purpose of exploring which norms of reconciliation have been promoted at a national level and how the state has advanced them. In particular, the section examines the establishment of transitional justice institutions aimed at the propagation of justice, truth, forgiveness, collective memory, unity, and a common identity, as well as the use of the education system to promote a common identity, citizenship, and human rights. The analysis of these governmental mechanisms for reconciliation sheds light on the extent to which Rwanda has internalized, localized, or contested specific norms.

The second approach is employed to examine the role of youth within the norm diffusion framework of Rwanda. For this purpose, the findings of this research are based on 10 semi-structured interviews with youth actors involved in reconciliation in Rwanda. The definition of youth taken into consideration by this research derives from the National Youth Policy, according to which Rwandan youth ranges from 15 to 35 years old (Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports, 2005). In accordance with this criterion, participants’ age varies between 21 and 33 years old. Respondents, who were chosen through snowball sampling, are included in the following categories: eight of them are founders, directors, or members of youth NGOs (i.e. Peace and Love Proclaimers (PLP), Global Radiant Youth, Youth Literacy Organization, iDebate Rwanda, Iteka Youth Organization, Seven United for the Needy, and the Aegis Youth Champions program, which is part of the international NGO Aegis Trust); two of them are artists involved in artistic initiatives (i.e. Yan Events, Generation 25, African Artists for Peace Initiative); two are university students; and one is the founder of the online journal *The Kigalian*. All participants have a Rwandan national-

ity and live in Kigali, the Rwandan capital, except for two of them, who are studying abroad. The interviews took place virtually within a period of two months, and were each approximately 20 minutes long. Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding, and findings were grouped according to the following classification: preconditions for youth influence, youth norms, youth methods, and youth impact. The first part of the findings section illustrates the reasons which render them effective norm entrepreneurs of reconciliation; the second part offers an overview of the variety of norms promoted by youth actors; the third part shows the innovative ways in which young people are able to advance such norms; and the last part demonstrates the concrete impact of Rwandan youth at national, transnational, and international levels.

4 Findings/Analysis

4.1 Case Study – Norms of Reconciliation in Rwanda

In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, where 800,000 Tutsis were massacred in just a hundred days, Rwanda embarked on a long-lasting and intricate journey of reconciliation. In line with the international norms of reconciliation, the state initiated a process of transitional justice, seeking to promote justice, truth, forgiveness, and collective memory. Additionally, the promotion of unity and a common identity was also viewed as a priority in the Rwandan context. All these norms were implemented in the country through the establishment of various institutions, namely the ICTR for retributive justice (Des Forges & Longman, 2004; Tiemessen, 2004), the Gacaca courts for truth, restorative justice, and forgiveness (Meyerstein, 2007; Rettig, 2008; Tiemessen, 2004), the NURC and the Ingando camps for unity, a common identity, and forgiveness (Clark, 2010; Mg-bako, 2005), and the CNLG and memorial sites for the consolidation of an official collective memory (Korman, 2014). Another significant institution used by the Rwandan government as a tool for reconciliation is the education system, which primarily serves to propagate a common identity, citizenship, and human rights (Russell, 2015; 2018; 2019).

4.1.1 Transitional Justice Institutions

As a result of the “justice cascade” (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2014; Sikkink & Kim, 2013), the international community pressured for the establishment of the ICTR in 1994, as a way to administer transitional retributive justice and denounce human rights violations. The ICTR, which was modeled on the basis of the already existing ICTY (Des Forges & Longman, 2004, p. 52), illustrates how the Rwandan state has internalized the process of transitional justice as an interna-

tional norm of reconciliation. Nonetheless, the tribunal faced multiple institutional challenges and turned out to be quite ineffective in its reconciliatory action (Des Forges & Longman, 2004; Tiemessen, 2004). Since it was architected by the international community, its work was not recognized by Rwandans (Des Forges & Longman, 2004, p. 62), due to widespread skepticism derived by the country's colonial past. Most notably, the main purpose of the tribunal was not in line with the need to reconcile: in compliance with the global human rights regime, the international community principally sought to "end a culture of impunity" (Tiemessen, 2004, p. 60). In turn, the focus on punishing the key criminals of the genocide overshadowed the priorities of restorative justice and healing among Rwandan society.

Another transitional justice mechanism implemented in Rwanda consisted in the local initiative of the Gacaca courts. Established by the Rwandan government in 2001 as a "uniquely Rwandan solution to a Rwandan problem" (Meyerstein, 2007, p. 503) and facing the shortcomings of the ICTR, the Gacaca courts were mainly intended to determine the truth about genocide accountability (Tiemessen, 2004, p. 62), to blend retributive and restorative justice (Meyerstein, 2007, p. 468), and to emphasize forgiveness (Rettig, 2008, p. 44). The Gacaca system was a "community event" (Rettig, 2008, p. 25), inspired by a precolonial method of dispute resolution (Karekezi et al., 2004, p. 69): a great part of Rwandan citizens were engaged as judges or witnesses in the trials. While the ICTR contributed to the internalization of the norm of transitional justice, the Gacaca courts represented a way to localize this norm to the national context, as a consequence of the ICTR failures. The Gacaca mechanism was effective as it accelerated the trial process of imprisoned perpetrators, allowing for the participation and inclusivity of Rwandan citizens, but it also presented drawbacks and criticisms. Most significantly, the Gacaca courts received international disapproval regarding its procedures, which did not comply with normative human rights laws (Meyerstein, 2007, p. 503), as well as being accused of exercising victor's justice (Rettig, 2008, p. 26). The latter refers to the wrongful prosecution of the losing party in favor of the winning party. The truth promoted through the Gacaca courts was one-sided (Des Forges & Longman, 2004, p. 63), as it was indeed based on the assumption of Hutu guilt and Tutsi innocence (Tiemessen, 2004), thus undermining impartial judgment and fostering disputes. Moreover, research has shown that a large part of Rwandans expressed concerns regarding Gacaca's competence to foster reconciliation (Zorbas, 2009; Rettig, 2008).

In addition to the aforementioned judicial mechanisms, the Rwandan government institutionalized the NURC in 1999, as a complementary tool to the justice-focused works of the ICTR and the Gacaca courts (Clark, 2010, p. 139). Through the creation of the NURC, the Rwandan state adapted the traditional model of the TRCs to its own local context, with the intention of refraining from intricate

arguments about the truth (Clark, 2010, p. 141). Instead, the aim of this institution was to advance the new norm of national unity through the creation of a national identity (Clark, 2010). In order to do so, the NURC took over the Ingando initiative, which had started in 1996. The Ingando were solidarity camps in which Rwandans from all walks of life were brought together for weeks or months (Mgbako, 2005, p. 202), to learn about Rwanda's history and issues, and about their rights and duties as Rwandan citizens (Clark, 2010, p. 139). Despite these efforts, the urge to propagate national unity encountered complex problems derived by the impossibility to define oneself in ethnic terms in the aftermath of the genocide (Clark, 2010): ethnic distinctions were indeed legally obliterated by the Rwandan government after the conflict (Clark, 2010). The paradox of internalizing a common identity based on the denial of ethnicity thus resulted in a superficial unity (Clark, 2010), on the basis of a general difficulty to identify oneself. Moreover, the Ingando solidarity camps were criticized for alleged political indoctrination (Mgbako, 2005).

The state also instituted several memorial sites across the country to promote an official collective memory. These memorials were constructed according to the model of those created after the Holocaust (Korman, 2014), thus demonstrating Rwanda's internalization of the norm of memory. The normative character of memory was further authenticated through the establishment of the CNLG in 2008, which took charge of the propagation of memory across the country (Korman, 2014, p. 98). The diffusion of an official collective memory brought about certain difficulties such as the overgeneralization of the history. The possibility of remembering was only granted in relation to the experience of the Tutsi, who qualified as victims, as opposed to the Hutu, who were generalized as perpetrators, and whose memory were then forbidden by law (Lemarchand, 2006). The limitations of the Rwandan official memory are still visible during Kwibuka, the annual commemoration period, where remembrance seems to be legitimate only for Tutsi survivors (Baldwin, 2019).

Lastly, forgiveness was promoted in Rwanda as a necessary norm of reconciliation. Influenced by international NGOs and the Church, government officials, the president, and institutions like the NURC and the Gacaca courts all advocated unconditional forgiveness as an essential requirement to move on (Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009; Rettig, 2008). However, many survivors resist this norm, refusing to forgive and understand perpetrators as they lack energy to express empathy, which is viewed as an unimaginable possibility (Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009, p. 45). Other research shows that forgiveness is not viewed as an indispensable requisite for reconciliation in Rwanda (Zorbas, 2009, p. 134).

4.1.2 Education

The role of education in promoting norms of reconciliation has been widely examined by Russell (2015; 2018; 2019). The scholar examines how the Rwandan government uses the education system to advance a common identity (Russell, 2019), global citizenship (Russell, 2018) and a human rights discourse (Russell, 2015). In addition to these norms, education also acts in line with transitional justice institutions and serves to promote an official truth and an official collective memory (Russell, 2019).

Firstly, the education system is employed to “propagate a new sense of national unity” (Russell, 2019, p. 55), through the diffusion of common identity as a norm. This newly formed national identity excludes ethnicity, which is taught to be “an identity externally imposed on Rwandans, rather than as a precolonial characteristic” (Russell, 2019, p. 73). The complete eradication of ethnic identity, as well as the impossibility to discuss and explore identity in terms of ethnicity, led to the adoption of different identity indicators based on the experience of one’s family during the genocide (Russell, 2019, p. 76). For instance, Rwandan youths started to define themselves as children of *génocidaires* or children of survivors (Russell, 2019, p. 76), thus implying further divisions on a societal level.

Secondly, education also incorporates models of global citizenship for the formation of the Rwandan identity (Russell, 2018). The international influence on the newly developed notion of citizenship in Rwanda is especially noticeable in the civic education curriculum, which involved the help of UNESCO and UNICEF (Russell, 2018, p. 390). As a result, the curriculum includes global norms related to human rights, with an emphasis on gender equality (Russell, 2015). Nonetheless, these norms are not merely internalized, but are edited and adapted at the local level (Russell, 2015). In particular, the human rights discourse is “generally mentioned in reference to gender equality rather than to ethnic groups” (Russell, 2015, p. 608). This strategic modification is contingent to the eradication of ethnic markers in the Rwandan identity.

Finally, the education system is used to promote official narratives of what represents the truth and who should be remembered through collective memory (Russell, 2019). In the teaching of history, truth and memory are molded in a way that leaves no space for discussion and debate of the past. This way, “the state has suppressed critical thinking” (Russell, 2019, p. 25) and the experience of young people coming from a perpetrator background is fully disregarded (Russell, 2019, p. 135). These individuals are consequently denied the chance to reflect on their own experience of pain.

4.2 Interviews – The Role of Youth

In Rwanda, the youth is increasingly affecting the discourse surrounding norms of reconciliation. The following sections, which are based on data collected through 10 semi-structured interviews with youth actors, illustrate the role of youth within the existing framework of norm diffusion in the country. The first part explores the preconditions that allow young people to exert influence, and that inform the kinds of norms that they promote; the second dives into the multitude of norms of reconciliation diffused by Rwandan youth, and shows how these norms are interlaced; the third focuses on the innovative methods and approaches employed by young people to spread such norms; and the last demonstrates the tangible impact of the youth’s actions at the national, transnational, and international levels.

4.2.1 Preconditions for Youth Influence

Before examining the variety of norms of reconciliation promoted by Rwandan youth, it is necessary to explore some of the factors which determine their ability to exert influence. It emerged from the interviews that young people’s power to diffuse norms is induced by the following elements: first, they represent the majority of the population in Rwanda; second, they have more and better resources than the previous generation; third, they are all innocent, by virtue of their non-involvement in the genocide, but at the same time they are all victims of their parents’ heartaches; finally, they offer a different perspective and an open mindset, once again due to their lack of participation in the 1994 atrocities.

When asked about the significance of young people in reconciliation, most participants mentioned the youth’s percentage of the population in the country. Rwandans below the age of 25 make up 67% of the total population (Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports, 2005), reaching almost 80% if considering Rwandans between the age of 25 and 35. This aspect enhances young people’s potential to have an impact on society, while also giving the incentives, at a national level, to include them in the political sphere and to support their programs. In Rwanda, there is a strong awareness related to the plurality of young people and their intrinsic importance for the country:

“Youth in Rwanda are the majority of the country. So, leaving them behind would actually mean leaving the country behind.”

– Shema, PLP executive director

Another precondition is the abundance of resources. In terms of material resources, young people are more exposed to the Internet, which grants them the possibility to carry out more research. They have the ability to gather information, but also to discuss it with their peers in a language

that they can all understand. These resources indeed enable young people to better connect to each other and engage in dialogue, thus fostering the diffusion of ideas:

“For example, there are kids in their house that are told that all of these things [genocide events] are a lie, from the beginning. [...] When young people are saying these things, they are telling them to their peers, and peers have the ability to question. They’re like, okay, this is not what I heard, this is what’s been happening. And then you know, it creates those spaces. [...] And they can actually speak a language more young people can understand. And for things like reconciliation to work, it needs to be understood.”

– Yannick, professional dancer

In addition, the youth has the energy to initiate, explore, debate, and understand. This resource places them in a favorable position to develop empathy and engage in conversation. On the contrary, the previous generation of survivors is conditioned by an “immense fatigue” (Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009, p. 45), which prevents them from listening to and comprehending the ‘other’.

Since they were not involved in the genocide, young people ascribe to themselves a condition of innocence, which in turn, determines the fact that they carry less emotional weight than their parents’ generation:

“The new generation are innocent. Because they never participated in the in the politics or ideology which led to the genocide.”

– Dieudonné, Global Radiant Youth founder

“We are in a unique position where we know the wounds and the pain that history has caused, but we don’t feel it as deeply as our parents do, which means that we have a chance to also do the work that [...] allows us to create new knowledge for other people, in a way in which some of these ideas affect people.”

– Jean Michel, iDebate and PLP founder

Nonetheless, they also consider themselves as victims of a legacy they did not create. This shared circumstance allows them to acknowledge that everyone, despite their identification as children of survivors or perpetrators, carries on their parents’ traumas in different ways. In doing so, they are able to overcome the binary division between the survivor identity and the génocidaire identity which usually evolves in schools (Russell, 2019, p. 76), and which undermines unity.

Finally, their detachment from the wounds of the past allows them to offer a different perspective and a generally more open mindset. On the one hand, the fact that young

people have mostly experienced a peaceful environment gives them the advantageous possibility to provide fresh ideas, as well as more positive and liberal perspectives. On the other hand, the distance between them and the genocide events leads them to acquire an unbiased, open mindset which is free of stereotypes and “us vs them” narratives. In turn, this allows them to analyze the past and question assumptions in a critical and objective way:

“We have an opportunity, we have a negative past and now, we have to compare, and then we’ll have the opportunity of making a choice. I think there’s a previous generation who never had this opportunity because they could only see a single side, a single story of thinking of reality, of the history, a single way to look at things.”

– Dieudonné, Global Radiant Youth founder

“When you didn’t go through it live, there’s a lot of things you can question. [...] And younger people are more open to that, younger people are more open to be like, okay, what’s happening? What is this? How did it start? Why did you guys do this?”

– Yannick, professional dancer

4.2.2 Youth Norms

The norms of reconciliation diffused by Rwandan youth actors can be divided into two overarching and overlapping categories: the analysis of the past and the focus on the future. In relation to the former, young people promote acknowledgement (of the past) and acceptance (of the truth). Included in the latter are the norms of unity, a common identity, and the “never again” narrative. Furthermore, they emphasize critical thinking, empathy, and responsibility, which serve both to examine the past and to shape the future. Figure 2 illustrates the interlaced character of youth norms.

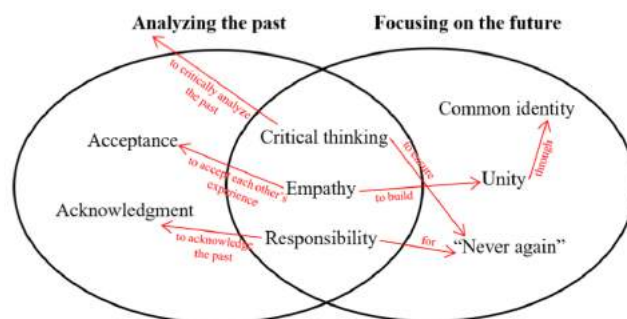


Figure 2: Youth norms

Analyzing the Past

“Priority is on the root of things, not on the leaf of symptoms.”

– Shema, PLP executive director

As illustrated by the quote above, part of the work of the Rwandan youth as norm entrepreneurs consists of analyzing the past. Young people propagate the necessity of learning from past mistakes as an essential requirement to achieve reconciliation:

“When we train people, what we do is we go back into history, and look where things did not go well.”

– Marc, PLP founder and Aegis Youth Champions Program manager

The value attributed to the past is necessarily influenced by norms of truth and memory promoted by the state through the education system (Russell, 2019). In schools, students are taught about the ‘official’ history of Rwanda and the truth about the genocide, and are given an ‘official’ collective memory to uphold, but are not offered the chance to discuss and critically examine these events (Russell, 2019, p. 25). Rwandan youths today are actively exploring and questioning past actions, as they utilize critical thinking to understand the past and to avoid repeating the same mistakes:

“When you look at one of the things that most perpetrators say, is that the reason why they did something is because they were taught by people in leadership to do it. So, we’ve had a culture that is very obedient. [...] We are creating a culture in a way that is the opposite of the kind of culture that was there before. [...] I’m hoping that once we have young people who have the critical thinking skills, [...] they will be able to think for themselves.”

– Jean Michel, iDebate and PLP founder

Nonetheless, the youth is careful in ensuring the acceptance of the truth:

“I think that when you accept what happened, you see the bigger view in front of you, [which allows you] to move on with your life.”

– Sandra, university student

While the norm of truth encounters contestation among the previous generation of survivors and perpetrators, as it is often perceived as single-sided (Des Forges & Longman, 2004; Tiemessen, 2004). However, the youth is more careful in framing it in such a way that involves the recognition of

the experience of the “other.” Thus, on the one hand, they strive for the acceptance of historical facts, in line with the narrative fed by the government through institutions; on the other hand, their acceptance does not only accommodate young people with a survivor background, but also addresses the hardship of youth coming from a perpetrator background:

“We are working with children from all families, so it’s regardless of who is who.”

– Samuel, Seven United for the Needy and Iteka Youth Organization member

In order to do so, young people promote empathy as an essential skill:

“Understanding people’s experience, even though history is there, but people experienced it differently, right? And it hurts each person differently, meaning we don’t see one hurt being bigger than the other. [...] So, it takes humility to accept that history happened to you differently. And then, because history happened to you differently, it allows me to also listen to you.”

– Jean Michel, iDebate and PLP founder

In relation to memory, young people question their responsibility to remember something they did not experience, and instead, they diffuse the responsibility to acknowledge the past, in order to tackle genocide ideology in the country and abroad. This way, the contested “duty to remember” (Lemarchand, 2006), which only applies to the experience of Tutsi survivors, evolves into the responsibility to acknowledge all kinds of experiences, thus overcoming the limits of the existing official collective memory.

“The idea of remembering is also a very key thing that we talk about: how do you remember something you’ve never experienced? [...] There’s a lot of, you know, alternative stories, they say it was not a genocide, it was a double genocide, it was war, it was this, it was that. And the idea of continuously [...] looking back at something you haven’t experienced, because most of us didn’t necessarily see the genocide, but remembering, putting your voice to it, like saying, okay, this is what happened, [...] this is my responsibility towards the country today, the society today, myself today, my family today. And, to be honest, that is it, that is commemoration, that is remembering, to us.”

– Yannick, professional dancer

Focusing on the Future

“We are a bridge between [the older] generation and our children. And if we do not take this responsibility now, that means you’re going to carry on [the violence] in your hearts, and then you’re going to transfer it to our children, which means the circle will never end. So, we need to end the circle of violence now. [...] I take the bitter pill now as a young person, [...] so that my children can live better.”

– Marc, PLP founder and Aegis Youth Champions Program manager

“There is a power I have, to shape the future.”

– Dieudonné, Global Radiant Youth founder

Youth responsibility does not only involve acknowledging the past, but also, and most importantly, committing to a brighter future. All respondents stressed their duty to build a better society for them and for future generations, a society that is free of violence and conflict. In order to do so, they promote a “never again” norm. Here, youth actors seem to have a more powerful word on the subject, as they prioritize their responsibility to shape the future rather than remembering the past, which they acknowledge and analyze with a critical mind, to avoid history repeating itself.

“Our impact is stronger than our parents’ on the “never again” story.”

– Sandra, university student

The prevailing norm advocated by the youth in view of the future is unity:

“I’d say that 70% of the youth in Rwanda is aware and is on the fight for [...] full unity. [Young people] are teaching unity, they’re pressing for unity and reconciliation, they’re into it.”

– Eunice, university student and PLP committee member

This emphasis on unity is clearly induced by the state’s efforts to promote national unification through the propagation of a common identity (Clark, 2010). In particular, young people are taught in school about their pre-colonial, non-ethnic, shared identity (Russell, 2019), and they uphold and diffuse it as a complementary element to the notion of unity. As shown by the following quote, their understanding of ethnicity and identity is in line with what they learn in school, namely that ethnic markers were only social constructions imposed on them by the colonizers (Russell, 2019, p. 73):

“If you look back into the history that led to the genocide, we used to have what became ethnicity, was once social classes, you know, it wasn’t ethnicity, but then the colonizers and the missionaries, because they wanted to divide and rule, converted what was social classes into ethnicity and then started dividing people.”

– Shema, PLP executive director

As a consequence, they push for the recognition and internalization of this pre-colonial common identity, as a way to unify Rwandan society. While endorsement of this norm might have been painful and complicated for a previous generation affected by the “us vs them” narrative (Clark, 2010), today’s young people, influenced by a condition in which ethnicity is meaningless, are more prone to explore the meaning of this newly-developed identity:

“What is our identity? What do we become when you’re born after something like that? How do you identify yourself? From your parents being classified Hutu, Tutsi or Twa or whatnot, then seeing where it led them. Then also understanding that it was all something that they learned, something that they were taught. Now, how do you come back and be Rwandan today? What does it mean? Like, what does it feel like to be Rwandan today? What are the responsibilities? What goes with this new identity? Well, it is not new, because we’ve always been Rwandan. But this is a new way of looking at Rwandanness.”

– Yannick, professional dancer

In consonance with global norms of citizenship and human rights that students learn in school (Russell, 2018), the “new Rwandanness” seems to imply a strong openness and acceptance towards differences. As demonstrated by the following quotes, young Rwandans today consider themselves first as human beings, and view their contrasting backgrounds or characteristics as a positive asset to unity:

“To promote the value of humanity means to treat all human beings with respect, fairness, and dignity, independently of their age, gender, nationality, religion, or background. [...] If you have that, the value of humanity, whatever happened to you, you still have this courage to know that we are still human beings. Yes, we can, [...] we need to remember that we are all humans.”

– Yannick, Iteka Youth Organization and Yan Events founder, professional artist

This way, youth actors are able to move beyond the “fragile, superficial unity” (Clark, 2010, p. 144) propagated by the government and the state’s institutions. Their notion of unity is reframed, as it is not only based on identity, but informed

by the idea of humanity and by their empathic skills. These elements allow young people to disseminate a more sustainable and resistant unity for a future society.

“[Reconciliation happens when] they start developing empathy for one another, when they start looking at each other as a human being more than what they went through in their previous experiences. And then eventually, that builds a bigger community [...] that people can share.”
 – Marc, PLP founder and Aegis Youth Champions Program Manager



Figure 3: Interplay between preexisting norms and youth norms

This section has illustrated that, overall, most of the work of Rwandan young people as norm entrepreneurs consists in the localization of existing international and national norms (see Figure 3). Most notably, “the trajectory of localization” (Acharya, 2004, p. 251) applies to the existing norms of truth and memory, which are redefined respectively as acceptance and acknowledgment. In the “prelocalization” phase (Acharya, 2004, p. 251), local youth actors resist and contest the limited, single-sided normative truth, as it does not account for the experience of those coming from backgrounds other than the ‘survivor’ one. Similarly, they do not fully endorse the norm of memory, as the notion of remembrance is incompatible with a generation that was not directly involved in the genocide events. In the second phase, local actors “frame external norms in ways that establish their value to the local audience” (Acharya, 2004, p. 251). In relation to truth, young Rwandans expand its applicability to the whole of society, through empathy and critical thinking. Similarly, memory is reframed to accommodate the experience of the post-genocide generation. In the “adaptation” phase, youth actors “redefine the external norm” (Acharya, 2004, p. 251): truth is reformulated as acceptance, while memory is redefined as acknowledgment. Moreover, the widely contested norm of forgiveness is not necessarily addressed by the Rwandan youth, who concentrate on spreading empathy instead.

Other norms are internalized with slight modifications. In line with global youth trends regarding an orientation towards a shared future, Rwandan youth internalize the responsibility for a nonviolent future, with a stronger focus on the “never again” norm. Furthermore, the norms of unity and common identity, which are heavily encouraged by the Rwandan government, are not necessarily localized by youth actors, but seem to be propagated “to enhance the legitimacy and authority of their extant institutions and practices” (Acharya, 2004, p. 248). In agreement with the education system

and state’s institutions, the new generation fully upholds the Rwandan identity and the need for unity. Their views are informed both by global citizenship ideals present in Rwandan school curricula and international youth norms of social justice and human rights protection. These young Rwandans’ understanding of unity does not only entail the notion of “Rwandanness,” but a humanistic openness towards differences beyond national boundaries. Thus, in essence, Rwandan youth is largely contributing to shaping global norms of reconciliation into “international-local hybrids” (Tholens & Groß, 2015, p. 251) on the ground.

4.2.3 Youth Methods

When asked about the different kinds of methods they use to foster reconciliation, interviewees revealed a multitude of innovative and original approaches, which might be classified into three groups: dialogue, conversation, and debate; art, writing, and storytelling; and media and technology.

Firstly, these quotes show how youth actors organize dialogues, conversations, and debates, as well as create the spaces to do so:

“We have a voice festival where people just share their ideas, their thoughts, their voices for them to be heard by decision makers and policy makers and also promote their thoughts in rural areas.”
 – Dieudonné, Global Radiant Youth founder

“We use what we call participatory methodology. And this has been really working for us, because when you engage with someone, and they also engage with you, it gives them space, it gives them a feeling that they’re being heard. [...] So, we’re not doing lectures, [...] we would gather around and, you know, bring speakers around as well, but also try to initiate discussions and not lectures. That way, people get to tell you what’s going on in their lives and what’s not going, the issues they have, they are free to talk. We’re trying to create a safe space for young people to talk and have a conversation.”
 – Shema, PLP executive director

By using these techniques, young people stimulate critical thinking and empathy, in order to spread norms of acknowledgement and acceptance. By coming together, discussing, and sharing ideas, the youth is invested in looking back and examining the past, in such a way that everyone gets the chance to learn the truth, to critically reflect, and to recognize and support each other’s experiences:

“I started working with my peers, with people of my age, creating groups of conversation. It has

proven that most of us don't have this type of conversations with our parents. Our parents are literally broken, you know. [...] There's so many things happening that it is easy to think that a lot of things have been covered, and young people really used to look at it from afar. And now, my contribution personally was trying to have more of my people, people of my age, people that were born after the genocide, to really go into thinking about it, having conversations around it."

– Yannick, professional dancer

In this context, a meaningful example is the iDebate organization, which brings debate activities and competitions to Rwandan schools and abroad, thus "encouraging a young generation of critical thinkers" (Queen's Commonwealth Trust, 2018) in view of the future.

Another original category of methods to diffuse reconciliation norms includes the use of art, which involves dance, music, theater, and painting. The Rwandan artistic scene is particularly prolific in addressing reconciliation through the advocacy of unity, empathy, and identity, other than reflections surrounding the past. One example is the Generation 25 initiative of 2019, a youth-led play which represented the experiences and burdens of the post-genocide generation and brought together diverse Rwandan youths (Ikilezi, 2019).

"I have been trying to use art as a tool for humanity and to promote peace around the continent, in the country, and around the world. [...] Art can speak loud. And it can effectively reach as many people as possible."

– Yannick, Iteka Youth Organization and Yan Events founder, professional artist

"Art is the medium, art is the channel. You know, there's a lot of things that will be hard to bring up in a normal conversation, in a speech type of style. But, I mean, art touches not only the brain, but also the heart, you know, and sometimes that's what you need."

– Yannick, professional dancer

However, the use of artistic means is not only reserved for artists themselves: it is also implemented in the programs of other youth-led organizations and initiatives. For instance, PLP offers an artistic arena, the Anda Arts Festival, for free expression and unification, while the Aegis Youth Champions Program also organizes activities regarding painting, acting, and music.

Secondly, writing is encouraged among Rwandan youth as a way to explore different ideas and, above all, to cultivate empathy:

"Literacy and communication breed empathy. And, to me, that's central to the power of literacy, of being able to read, so the more I read, for example, what you've written, it's me trying to put myself in your shoes, looking at the world from your point of view. And literature does that. And the more I do that, the more I see the world from your perspective, it breeds empathy. So, I think it's an important step in getting people to talk to each other, feel for each other, understand each other, [...] and to reconcile."

– Gilbert, Youth Literacy Organization and The Kigalian founder

An example of such writing initiatives is that of the Youth Literacy Organization, which seeks to spread literacy among the youth:

"We are one of the very few pioneers of encouraging, especially young people, to write about the genocide, and write about the experiences, even if you were born after the genocide, but how did you experience it? How did your community experience it, what do you think about this whole commemoration events?"

– Gilbert, Youth Literacy Organization and The Kigalian founder

Thirdly, young people use storytelling as a tool to promote empathy and responsibility towards the future:

"By using these stories, we show them those steps, where people who were different, people who hated one another, take one step, a step of responsibility. And because they've taken the step of responsibility, it opens up all the other things, and eventually leads into a community. So we choose to use the storytelling approach, because people relate to stories, and they can feel the emotions in the story, they can feel the empathy in the story, they can see the critical thinking in the story."

– Marc, PLP founder and Aegis Youth Champions Program manager

The final type of methods through which young people are able to make their voices heard is the use of digital technologies and social media. Within the online realm, they organize virtual dialogues, share their artistic performances, and write their thoughts and ideas. Especially in times of pandemic, young people are taking the lead in finding alternative, digital reconciliation activities. For instance, PLP has weekly virtual conversations, as well as online seminars and conferences, such as the Oath conference, with young people from Rwanda and abroad. In addition, The Kigalian is an independent, youth-led, future-oriented online journal in which

young writers publish articles and stories related to different topics. One final peculiar example is the Aegis Youth Champions Program's interactive voice system, which is explained in the following quote:

"IVR is an interactive voice response system. [...] So what we did was to create those stories, put them on a phone line platform where people can dial in, and then they listen to the stories, and it can ask them questions, and then they interact with it. So that shows us which level people are at, [...] how they understand [reconciliation]. [...] Because I said, it's a process, so people will be at step 10, when others are still at step one. [...] We divide them in groups, we have the content that is for young people, but also we have those who are in school and those who are out of school, so that it can reach their context. But also, we have parents, decision makers, and we also have teachers, and all this is the same content, but delivered differently to these people so that it can reach that context."

– Marc, PLP founder and Aegis Youth Champions Program manager

The results provided in this section highlight the link between methods of reconciliation used by Rwandan youth and global youth-initiated models to bring about peace and reconciliation (see Dragija, 2020; Kosic & Tauber, 2010; Kurze, 2016; Life & Peace Institute, 2017; Peace Direct, 2019; Wol-lentz et al., 2019), thus hinting at the normative character that they have acquired at a global level. In particular, the role of artistic tools and media is increasingly recognized in the country, as they are being utilized both as an alternative to official methods (i.e., transitional justice institutions) and as a complement to them (CNBC Africa, 2019). The potential of such innovative methods has been largely explored in other settings (see Dragija, 2020; Kosic & Tauber, 2010; Kurze, 2016), but is reinforced specifically in the Rwandan context, where media and art played a crucial role in the 1994 genocide. As young people dive into the analysis of the past, they learn about the ways in which perpetrators created music, paintings, and poems, and used radio stations and newspapers to spread hate and incite killings (CNBC Africa, 2019), thus understanding the significance of such tools in their society. On the basis of this knowledge, Rwandan youth is reclaiming these mechanisms for opposite purposes, namely the promotion of norms of reconciliation.

4.2.4 Youth Impact

The impact of Rwandan youth as norm entrepreneurs of reconciliation is especially visible at a national level, where they are gaining increasing recognition by the government,

appearing on national television and other media, and engaging with the education system. PLP are notably influential:

"[Our first campaign] was on radio. It was everywhere. We got support from the government and we got support from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission."

– Marc, PLP founder and Aegis Youth Champion Program manager

"We've been having an impact. In the commemoration period, we have been going from tv stations to tv stations."

– Eunice, PLP committee member and university student

In particular, one of their activities, called Walk to Remember, has been instituted as a national tradition. Conceived in 2009 by the PLP founders, Walk to Remember occurs every year during the commemoration period, and it involves a large deal of Rwandan citizens, decision-makers, politicians, people from abroad, and even the president:

"Walk to Remember is a walk which is done on the occasion of commemorating the victims of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, and basically the lessons that we want to give to young people who attend Walk to Remember, all Rwandans who attend or even foreigners, is that when you walk you have a source and a destination, and we have a past, as Rwandans we have a past, however bad it is, it is ours, but we also have a destination, we also have a future. [...] You have a past, you cannot erase it, but you can learn from it and use that to reach your destination. [...] It has now become a national thing. And it's those things that cannot stop for any reason. [...] [The president] always comes, and we have different conversations with the president."

– Shema, PLP executive director

Other nationally prominent youth-led initiatives are artistic performances. In 2019, the Generation 25 play was staged multiple times in the country, premiering at the Kigali Genocide Memorial (Opobo, 2019), and acquired momentum online, on social media and virtual newspapers. Finally, youth actors are growingly shaping their national context by implementing their activities in national schools: PLP members are often students who form clubs in their high schools and spread the word. iDebate, which operates within a rising number of national high schools, illustrates how norms and ideas initiated by Rwandan young people are cascading to neighboring countries: the organization has effectively implemented debate programs in schools in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Burundi, and has started an East African debate

competition. Their vision is to create an “iDebate Africa” (Queen’s Commonwealth Trust, 2018). This is only one example of how Rwandan youth is reaching the international level, spreading their ideas to young people all over the world. With an open-minded, global orientation, they are diffusing unity, the “never again” narrative, and genocide acknowledgement across the globe:

“PLP has more than 3000 members in Rwanda and around the world.”

– Eunice, PLP committee member and university student

“We thought, what if we’re able to take the story of Rwanda to the world? So, we went to the US, we spoke for almost 3-4 months, we would go doing a speaking tour and get students to debate against different people.”

– Jean Michel, iDebate and PLP founder

“We now have communities in the US, which is now registered as friends of Seven United. We have a community in China, [...] we have friends of Seven in the UK.”

– Samuel, Seven United for the Needy and Iteka Youth Organization member

As a further example, the Oath conference was a PLP-led online event held during the 2021 commemoration period, which involved several Rwandan and international young people and organizations, as well as representatives of national institutions like the CNLG and the NURC - around 500 people in total. This virtual conversation was open to anyone who had the intention of learning and talking about the past, other than discussing young people’s issues for the future. Multiple projects have been organized by Rwandan youth with the aim of spreading their voices internationally: the Walk to Remember has also become a popular initiative among youths in diverse areas of the world, representing the PLP’s greatest achievement. In 2014, the event was organized in 60 cities across the globe for a total of 60,000 participants (The Independent, 2018). In relation to artistic programs to diffuse youth’s norms, the African Artists for Peace initiative is an African movement invested in spreading a culture of peace and unity through creative means in the whole continent. Generation 25 also went beyond national borders as it was staged in New York and involved international artists (Opobo, 2019).

Findings related to the impact of Rwandan youth at national, transnational, and international levels demonstrate how their norms are entering the normative realm of reconciliation (see Figure 4). Between norm emergence and cascade, youth actors strategically persuade the national government and the state’s institutions to adopt their new standards. Within this “highly contested normative space” (Finnemore

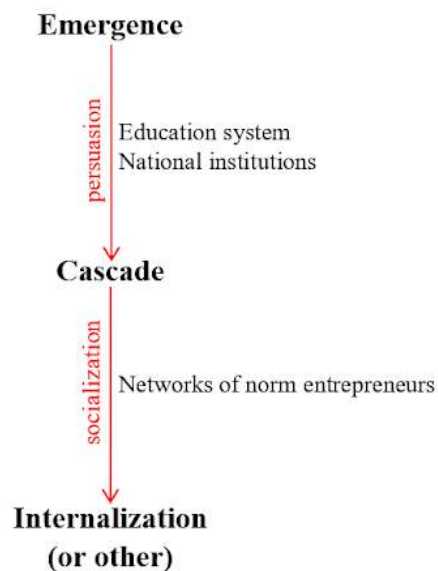


Figure 4: Youth impact within the normative realm of reconciliation

& Sikkink, 1998, p. 897), youth entrepreneurs frame norms and methods of diffusion to render them appropriate in regard to existing standards. For instance, the implementation of debate programs in Rwandan schools was possible as a result of an adaptation process, which served to present those initiatives as if they were in the best interests of the education system and broader society. The following quote explains such adaptation process:

“At first you have a lot of people who are very skeptical, and it is as if you’re training young people to be rebels, or that you’re training them not to listen. [But] when they saw that these young people were more articulate, that they were smarter, and that they were also doing well in university, then I was able to convince them. I call it audience adaptation. Many of them were not really interested in the critical thinking element, but they were really interested in the communication aspect.”

– Jean Michel, iDebate and PLP founder

Through their engagement with the education system, youth actors are increasingly shaping one of the government’s most influential tools for diffusing norms of reconciliation. Additionally, with the purpose of “invoking a logic of appropriateness” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 898), Rwandan youth also acts in conjunction with official national institutions aimed at reconciliation: for example, the Walk to Remember is now annually organized with the help of the CNLG (Peace and Love Proclaimers, n.d.), while the Generation 25 premiere at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in 2019 implies that such institution, whose aim is to advocate official collective memory, has embodied youth-led artistic methods of norm diffusion. This way, youth norms are acquiring legiti-

macy at a state level.

Between norm cascade and internalization, the diffusion of Rwandan youth's norms at a transnational and international level is occurring through a process of "socialization," which is "the dominant mechanism of a norm cascade" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 902). Through this mechanism, young people form "networks of norm entrepreneurs" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 902) as they enlarge their communities to reach multiple countries, as illustrated in the above section. In turn, all these networks strengthen the validity of norms of reconciliation initiated by the new generation of Rwanda, as well as the legitimacy of their innovative methods, thus paving the way for a new normative framework of reconciliation.

5 Conclusion

This research has illustrated the role of youth actors as norm entrepreneurs within the context of reconciliation, through the analysis of the Rwandan case. In post-genocide Rwanda, the state has advanced internationally-recognized norms of reconciliation, namely justice, truth, forgiveness, and collective memory - which may all be included in the overarching norm of transitional justice -, but also prioritized new norms of unity and common identity. Such norms have been promoted through the establishment of transitional justice institutions: the ICTR exemplifies the internalization of retributive justice (Des Forges & Longman, 2004; Tiemessen, 2004); the Gacaca courts were a localized tool for restorative justice, truth, and forgiveness (Meyerstein, 2007; Rettig, 2008; Tiemessen, 2004); the NURC and the Ingando camps emerged to diffuse unity, a common identity, and forgiveness (Clark, 2010; Mgbako, 2005); and the CNLG and memorial sites demonstrate the state's internalization of an official collective memory (Korman, 2014). In addition, the Rwandan government has used the education system as a tool to spread unity, common identity, truth, and collective memory, as well as human rights and global citizenship (Russell, 2015; 2018; 2019). Despite these efforts, norms of reconciliation encountered significant challenges within society: truth and memory were perceived to be one-sided (Baldwin, 2019; Des Forges & Longman, 2004; Lemarchand, 2006; Tiemessen, 2004), the Rwandan identity was dependent on the denial of ethnicity, thus leading to the diffusion of a superficial unity (Clark, 2010), while unconditional forgiveness was seen as an impossible option for an exhausted generation of survivors (Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009).

In this context, data obtained through semi-structured interviews with young Rwandans unveiled how Rwandan youth is progressively engaging with and impacting the national norm diffusion framework aimed at reconciliation. To begin with, their demographic value, their access to resources, and their non-involvement in the genocide place them in a unique position to exert influence, as these preconditions al-

low them to overcome multiple challenges faced by the previous generation. Most importantly, Rwandan youth localizes existing national and international norms of reconciliation. The state's norms of truth and memory are indeed localized, thanks to the promotion of empathy, which substitutes the contested norm of forgiveness, as well as critical thinking. These norms are reframed respectively as acceptance of the truth and acknowledgment of the past, in order to incorporate everyone's experience despite survivor or perpetrator backgrounds. Redefinition of such norms allows for a wider inclusivity and a more effective norm promotion, as opposed to the work of existing institutions. In consonance with broader global youth-led norms, Rwandan youth especially propagates norms aimed at the conceptualization of a shared and peaceful future, marked by a "never again" narrative: they internalize national norms of unity and a common identity, but also incorporate notions of humanity and human rights, thus developing a stronger, more meaningful unity, which appeared to be unattainable by the older generation. Furthermore, findings illustrate diverse innovative methods used by youth actors to promote their norms: influenced by global youth initiatives, they use dialogue, debate, and conversation; art, writing, and storytelling; and media and technology. Such tools are gradually being embedded within traditional mechanisms used by the state, thus acquiring more and more legitimacy with time. Lastly, the impact of Rwandan young people within and beyond national borders highlights their involvement in the norm diffusion cycle. As they integrate their initiatives within the national education system and engage with national institutions aimed at reconciliation, they persuade Rwandan society to adopt new appropriate standards. On top of that, the Rwandan new generation is spreading their norms abroad through the creation of networks, which contribute to enhancing the validity and recognition of youth norms of reconciliation.

In light of these findings, this paper sheds light on the relevance of the youth in post-conflict areas, in which they have the potential to reconstruct and shape societies by engaging in norm diffusion. The case of Rwanda, in which young people are active participants in the reconciliation process, represents a model for other contexts torn by atrocities and divisions. Nonetheless, the present research is based on a restricted amount of data, which was collected remotely. In that regard, it acts as a starting point for broader, on-the-ground analyses of youth actors involved in reconciliation, and on the whole in the framework of norm diffusion. In addition, it relies upon the understanding of youth as a general category, thus obscuring other possible identity markers such as gender and class, which might have repercussions on youth action. With such limitations, future research might consider intersectional differences for greater accuracy, other than using a larger, more comprehensive set of data. In conclusion, this paper calls for a more attentive consideration of young people, who should be placed at the center of societal reconstruction.

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