



CHANGING THE STORY

Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP): Youth and Participatory Arts in Rwanda

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Chapter Seven

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Introduction

This chapter will explore the notion of youth and participatory arts in the context of post-genocide Rwanda twenty-five years after the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. Tropes such as youth, participation, justice, reconciliation, education and empowerment are often used transnationally without considering the relevance of these terms within a particular cultural and linguistic framework. I seek to address some of these omissions and debates concerning how, when and why the participatory arts might be used with and for young people in post-genocide Rwanda through a practice-as-research project entitled Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) designed to develop safe, inclusive and progressive spaces for young people. The use of participatory arts by young people holds immense potential to foster people-to-people approaches to peacebuilding initiatives in Rwanda. The research has been conducted in partnership with the Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) including ten cultural organisations, twenty-five educators, five schools and ten youth from the Eastern Province of Rwanda. The initial pilot phase of activities from March 2018 to December 2018 included a scoping visit and curriculum workshop (March 2018), training of trainers (August 2018) and youth camp (Nov-Dec 2018). Pilot activities involved an additional sixty adult trainers through subsequent training of trainer activities led by adult trainers in their schools and five hundred young people who participated in weekly MAP activities. Methodologically, I used a

triangulation approach: first, I observed the value of using various interdisciplinary arts practices within practical workshop sessions, noting and recording behavioural and social responses to the workshop experiences; second, I used existing scholarship on mental health awareness and consultation with partner organisation Sana Initiative to consider how post-genocide trauma may influence participants' behaviour, responses and engagement with project activities; and third, I collected quantitative and qualitative data through interviews, participant observation, surveys and workshops to establish participants' own perspectives on the gains and challenges of the project activities. My main argument is two-fold. First, that participatory arts can help communities and individuals to forge peace-building initiatives. Second, that engaging youth participants in these processes is particularly effective, due to their ability to approach issues from new perspectives as change makers. Thus, youth are well-placed to be trained as facilitators and youth leaders for ongoing participatory arts workshops related to peace-building initiatives. In this chapter, I will further critique the concepts of 'youth' and 'participatory arts' in relation to the contexts of peace-building initiatives in Rwanda. I consider the Rwandan context within which I have been working, noting in particular the currency of participatory arts and the engagement of and with young people in arts-based practices that seek to address issues arising from the history of genocide in the country. Then, I outline the MAP project, offering three examples of participatory arts practice drawn from practical workshops designed to engage young people in dialogue. I conclude with the finding that further mental health awareness and participatory methods of engagement are needed to create a space for open dialogue and debate with and for young people in Rwanda, and I end the chapter with further recommendations for follow-on research activities.

Context: Youth as Change Makers, *Itorero* and Arts for Peace

Young people serve as change makers through their artistry, strength, perseverance and ability to alter social norms. The Rwandan folktale of Ndabaga evidences these traits and the retelling of the story in modern times serves as a testament to its application as a symbol for the shifting cultural landscape in Rwanda. The folktale of Ndabaga tells the story of a young woman who released her father from forced service to the *Mwami* (King) by disguising herself as a man and serving the *itorero* (cultural and military school) in the royal court through the demonstration of her exemplary skills in culture and combat as an elite *intore* warrior. Some of the remarkable elements of the story include the courage and wilfulness of Ndabaga to go against custom to serve in the *itorero* as a woman who disguised herself as a man. When her fellow *intore* eventually grew suspicious of the fact that Ndabaga would dress and bath separately, the *Mwami* posed several challenges to test her warrior skills, but she excelled in them all. Eventually, the *Mwami* asked her point blank whether or not she was a woman. Instead of punishing her for not adhering to cultural or political norms and for deceiving him, the *Mwami* pronounced her a part of the royal court. The retelling of Ndabaga in contemporary times evidences the potential for young people to create cultures of their own making in order to effect social change.



Fig. 7.1 Young People Perform Scene from *Ndabaga*. (Photograph by Kurtis Dennison)

Young people in Rwanda played a prominent role during the genocide: *interahamwe* or young thugs who ‘acted together’ were largely responsible for the slaughter; however, they have also served as agents for social, cultural and political change in the liberation and rebuilding of Rwanda post-genocide. In terms of childhood statistics, Kirrily Pells notes:

Estimates suggest that 10% of children aged 0–18 years old lost one or both parents, 110,000 children are living in child-headed households due to parental death or imprisonment, 7000 children live on the streets and 19,000 children under 14 years old are infected by HIV/AIDS (Pells 2012, p.428).

These statistics emphasise both the role of young people as heads of household and, at the same time, their vulnerability. In one report concerning youth in Burundi and Rwanda, Marc Sommers and Peter Uvin claim that youth are especially vulnerable to apathy and hopelessness due to a lack of training and education opportunities, stating:

The Rwanda research strongly suggests that demand for education and training is low among what might be assumed is the primary target group: the

lesser-educated youth majority [...who] accept one's fate, including the reality (for them) that entrance into a secondary school, a vocational school, or even a training programme, was never going to happen (Summers and Uvin 2011, pp.5-6).

However, this claim is no longer valid given the introduction of 'Rwanda's constitution of 2003 and its revision of 2015, Article 20, [that] stipulates that primary education is compulsory and free in public schools, and the 12-Year Basic Education Programme (12YBE), established in 2012, guarantees free education for 12 years, including primary and secondary levels' (UNICEF 2017b, p.4). Although education might be available for the general population, there are still varied underpinning social, cultural and economic factors that may impede the engagement of young people (Pontalti 2018) and a larger number of children who do not have access to secondary education (UNICEF 2017b, p.9). Ongoing challenges includes high pupil to teacher ratios (59:1), school dropouts, lack of resources, and the need for early childhood access in rural areas. Additionally, the UNICEF 2017 report notes that key issues for adolescents include child protection, health, education and participation. In terms of education, noted issues include poor quality of education, high drop outs and low motivation, and gender inequalities in education. Regarding participation, it was reported that there was low access to information and limited opportunities to participate in decision-making (UNICEF 2017a, p.5).

The MAP project addresses the need for informal and formal education through the training of young people as facilitators and leaders within their schools and communities. In an interview with a twelve-year old youth participant of MAP, she stated:

People consider us [youth] as people who go to school and can't provide any assistance at all. Our job is to go to school. I don't agree with that. They

shouldn't think that we can't make decisions. Grown ups don't talk to us like we have the ability to contribute. With MAP, I have confidence to sing with people and can be a good singer. I think I already had confidence, but was never given a space to speak my mind. With MAP, I'm asked to speak my mind. I'd have the ideas, but not able to express them. One big difference is that the MAP trainers ask us [...]. You value us and give us a sense of worth, which allows us to speak freely. The biggest problem is about confidence. With MAP, we have confidence to act and contribute. Not only has it influenced me as a person, but by applying the techniques, I've been able to realise that I'm empowered. I learned through MAP that the more that I voice my opinion, the more I'm understood.

Additionally, adult educators noted that the MAP methodology had provided a space for expression. A thirty-four year old adult educator stated:

Arts help in communication. It dictates communication and makes it easier to share ideas with others. Since arts involve fun and enjoyment, people understand more than if delivering in a traditional way. When using arts, people understand and get message in an easier way through fun and you can even become aware of highlighting those things that may bring a dangerous thing if you say it openly.

This quotation illustrates the potential for arts-based approaches to communicate information about difficult topics. The next section explores the use of arts-based approaches through an analysis of government youth campaigns.

Post-genocide, the Government of National Unity has aimed to include young people in nation-building campaigns through the enforcement of *itorero* residential camps to instil the values of patriotism, integrity, honesty and morality. Sylvestre Nzahabwanayo states: 'This program was officially launched on the 16 November 2007, and in 2013 it became presided over by the National *Itorero* Commission (NIC), as per Law N° 41/2013 determining its mission, organization and functioning (GoR 2013)' (Nzahabwanayo 2017, p.227). Critics have argued that the *itorero* (and a previous version of *itorero* called *ingando*) serve primarily as a tool for indoctrination, particularly based on the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) version of history and the events leading up to the genocide (Thompson 2013; Strauss and

Waldorf 2011). Nzahabwanayo argues that the three to eight week *itorero* camps enforce a top-down model of instruction and that without the impartment of critical thinking and analytical skills, the *itorero* does little more than evidence the government script (Nzahabwanayo 2017). Although I have previously argued for the possibility of participatory arts to achieve education and social justice aims, particularly in relation to MAP, clearly there are counter arguments concerning the situatedness of participatory arts practices within the context of *itorero* and justice and reconciliation campaigns in Rwanda more generally and historically.

The notion of participatory arts in post-genocide Rwanda prompts questions concerning the ethics and problematisation of participation in a country that has been both lauded and criticised for its nation-wide participatory justice and reconciliation campaigns, such as the *gacaca* courts and *itorero*. During the evolution of *gacaca* from 2004 until 2012, every citizen was required by law to participate in the reimagined indigenous mediation system for crimes based on the genocide. In this way, the function of participation was framed and implemented in relation to narratives during the genocide in a way that was ordained by the government. The former Hutu-led government had also required the mass participation of the population to participate in the killing of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. Thus, participation has an association with violence alongside redress.

The *intore* (the chosen ones) in Rwanda, were primarily Tutsi and displayed numerous warrior dances that illustrated the power of the *Mwami* and maintained dynastic legends that often elevated the Tutsi to a supreme status. The reinvention of *intore* within the *itorero* programme aimed to use dance, music and poetry to instil

strength, power and pride in the young people who attended *itorero* camps as secondary students. According to Erika Dahlmann, the *itorero* programme promoted ‘a collective “mind-set change” through an orientation toward traditional values with the aim to foster development promoting attitudes in the population’ (Dahlmann 2015, p.118). The strategic plan 2009-2012 of *Itorero ry’Igihugu* (the National Itorero Commission) noted the ambition of *itorero* to use pre-colonial cultural forms in order to instil Rwandan cultural values, including: ‘patriotism and love for citizens; promoting the Rwandan spirit; fair behaviour; heroism; and eliminate taboos’ (NURC 2009, p.11). Although one of the noted intentions of the *itorero* programme is to mentor Rwandan citizens to become positive change makers, critics of *itorero* have noted varied limitations to achieving this goal. A longitudinal cross-sectional study conducted by Nzahabwanayo, for example, claims: ‘the overreliance on character education within the *itorero* raises serious concerns, particularly because the aim of the values education, as it is done in *itorero*, seems to be the cultivation of supportive behaviour towards the government in office. Its content focuses on understanding what the government wants and the crafting of dispositions required for the implementation of defined policies’ (Nzahabwanayo 2017, p.1). Nzahabwanayo claims that the *itorero* programme instils a top-down model of governance that does not allow for open debate, and warns that the limitation of free speech in this regard may impede the overarching objectives to change the cultural mindset of participants.

Nzahabwanayo calls for an emphasis on citizenship education ‘as the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable young people to participate meaningfully in the community of which they are part, locally, nationally, and globally’

(Arthur, Davies and Hahn 2008, pp.5-6). In his study of *itorero*, Nzahabwanayo explores citizenship education in relation to care ethics, emphasising a proposed cognitive and moral development approach for 'the establishment, maintenance and enhancement of caring relations' (Nzahabwanayo 2017, p.14). The suggested alternatives to *itorero* training incorporate the inclusion of caring as a relational practice, emphasising a horizontal people-to-people approach to influence civic and moral education versus the top-down model of delivery.

An example of another government youth campaign is the 'We are all Rwandan' or *Ndi Umunyarwanda* project. According to Richard Benda (2017), *Ndi Umunyarwanda* developed out of a youth-based initiative called Arts for Peace, directed by Edouard Bamporiki, who is the current Chairperson of the National Itorero Commission. The initiative was based on the experience of Bamporiki as a Hutu child during the genocide who used poetry and art as a tool to explore his own feelings of remorse, empathy and guilt following the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi. Following the invitation to present his poems during commemoration events, he developed a campaign to elicit stories and testimonies from the children of perpetrators. During a national tour in 2013, Bamporiki was accompanied by playwright and dramatist Kalisa Rugano to deliver his own personal testimony and then to provide a space for children of perpetrators to provide their testimonies and to write poems based on their own experiences. Benda writes about the evolution of the Youth Connekt Dialogue (YCD), of which Arts for Peace was central, as a series of youth events that toured thirty districts between May and June 2013. Benda notes that counter to scholarship that evidences a top-down enforcement of social reconstruction (Straus and Waldorf 2011), the YCD influenced policy-makers from a local to national level. There are

some examples concerning the integration of questions alongside testimonies during the events that evidence variations to the predominant government discourse: 'Q1: Did President Habyarimana's plane crash by accident?; Q2: Did colonisation really bring the different ethnicities to Rwanda or did they exist prior to this?; Q3: Did Rwanda have a leadership structure before colonisation, and if so, why did they let the colonisers take over when they arrived?; Q4: Prior to colonisation did Rwanda have borders? If so, how did others so easily enter?' (Benda 2017, p.12). Here, there is some indication that YCD provided a platform for free speech and debate. Benda states: 'YCD became the forum where for the first time the psycho-political ramifications of this legacy were made public. Active listening, display of raw emotions and intense discussions revealed a complex and traumatic relationship between this specific group and genocide' (Benda 2017, p.7). Some of the (significant) limitations of YCD included re-traumatisation of attendees and presenters during the events, safety issues, criticism from the Hutu diaspora and power dynamics between the centre (Kigali) and local authorities. Benda emphasises how the individual experiences and memories evidenced through Arts for Peace turned into government policy, stating:

Further analysis indicates that official narratives emerge as a number of these initiatives from below are carefully engaged with and points of convergence or alignment with national interests are found. These initiatives are subsequently — although not always — 'absorbed' within the government's vision through various policy 'innovations' (RBD 2015). It is this formative process of convergence assessment and subsequent incorporation in national policy to which current scholarship has so far failed to attend. Instead, it has tended to focus exclusively on the political 'end product' without an analytical distinction between the whole and the parts, the process and the outcome. (Benda 2017, pp.11-12)

Benda illustrates the evolution of YCD from an individual testimony to a platform that elicited and performed testimonies from the children of perpetrators that led to the policy of *Ndi Umunyarwanda* based on the sharing of suffering between the children

of perpetrators and survivors of genocide. Although there are some examples of how the YCD provided a platform for children of perpetrators to portray their own experiences, these experiences and testimonies climaxed in a national iteration of Hutu guilt during the closing ceremony of YCD on 30 June 2013 presided over by President Paul Kagame. The curation of children of perpetrator testimonies to illustrate collective Hutu guilt undercut the ability for RPF-driven discourses to support the emergence of more nuanced narratives about the recent Rwandan past. Currently, the *Ndi Umunyarwanda* project has been halted due to growing concerns about the possible ramifications of enforcing collective guilt on the children of perpetrators. Nonetheless, in the process of developing the *Ndi Umunyarwanda* project, the potential for arts-based approaches to develop spaces for expression and dialogue also clearly emerged and has led to subsequent projects by other organisations that remain convinced of the value of participatory arts as a potential pathway towards future peace-building initiatives.

Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP): Participatory Arts with and for Young People

This section will provide empirical research conducted by the author based on an initial scoping visit and needs assessment, followed by a training of trainers and critical analysis of the use of participatory arts with and for young people between March and December 2018 through engagement with cultural artists, educators, civil society organisations (CSOs) and government institutions. Hope Azeda, from Mashirika Performing Arts and Media Company stated:

The need for the Mobile Arts for Peace project in Rwanda includes capacity building and training in arts and arts education. Rwanda has a need to create platforms for free expression. There is an observable gap in access to the arts for young people, but we believe, through artistic expression, we can tap into

social issues and create positive change. Challenges include: professionalism; lack of skills in performance; education and facilitation management skills; infrastructure; lack of space; lack of national budget for the arts; no organizations or understanding to support theatre; lack of theatre curriculum.

The national competence-based curriculum in Rwanda from primary to upper secondary (2015) includes Music, Dance and Drama as a subject, although at the time of writing there is no provision of curriculum nor training available:

Music, dance and drama are performing arts that provide a valuable channel for human expression and experience. Responses to musical experiences span sensory, gross motor, cognitive, communicative and social skills. Music, dance and drama teach about life and living, about thoughts and feelings, and about self and others, as well as providing opportunities for students to be creative and to understand, enjoy and appreciate them for life (Ministry of Education 2015, p.61).

In addition to integrating Music, Dance and Drama into the curriculum, the competence-based curriculum promotes participative and interactive methods stating:

Teachers need to shift from traditional methods of instruction and adopt participatory and interactive methods that engage young people in the learning process, both in groups and as individuals. This ensures that learning is active, participative and engaging rather than passive, and that it is personalised, addressing learners' individual needs and expectations (Ministry of Education 2015, p.73).

Based on the preliminary scoping visit (March 2018) with relevant stakeholders who use participatory arts with young people and baseline survey feedback, the noted competence-based curriculum and pedagogic aims were supported, but feedback derived from interviews and surveys illustrated the gap between the aims and framework of the competence-based curriculum and how the subject was taught on a local to national level. Informants noted that although time was allotted within each week to deliver the subject of Music, Dance and Drama, there was little to no training in this subject area, and that it was often not taught, or replaced with other subjects. Additionally, there were concerns regarding the best methods, techniques and tools

for curriculum delivery for large class sizes. Teachers were often faced with class sizes of 60+, making participatory, interactive teaching very challenging. The MAP project aimed to address some of these issues through: 1) a scoping visit with relevant stakeholders, including CSOs serving young people and cultural organisations; 2) a curriculum workshop with cultural artists (discussed in more detail in the next section); 3) the creation of a manual or 'toolkit' to support the teaching of Performing Arts within the national curriculum; 4) the training of trainers, including cultural artists and educators to deliver the MAP methodology within a one week residential workshop; and 5) a youth camp involving youth leaders and lead MAP adult trainers from each of the five schools in the Eastern Province. In so doing, the MAP project focused on using a practice-based approach to capture the cultural specificity of the arts within the context of peacebuilding practices working with young people in Rwanda.



Fig. 7.2. Training of Trainers conducted by Educators in their Schools (Photograph by Kurtis Dennison)

The national curriculum framework is broad based, in order to allow young people and teachers to plan in a way that best reflects the particular needs of the school and community. Thus, the MAP project looks to work alongside the curriculum framework to provide a pedagogic approach to teaching and learning that addresses some of the stated needs within the Rwandan education system, including the fostering of facilitation skills to develop student-centred learning; subject content to enable instruction of Music, Dance and Drama within the curriculum; and integration of local and regional responses to culturally informed needs and issues. MAP provides a participatory, student-centred methodology that encourages young people to be active in their learning, to learn collaboratively, and to be empowered by how that learning takes place. Thus far, MAP has produced a 250 page manual with cultural artists and educators that has been translated into Kinyarwanda, aimed at helping MAP adult trainers to create exercises tailored to their local cultural context. All of the participatory arts activities are divided into sections entitled 'warm-up', 'lead-in', 'main activity', 'energiser' and 'reflection'. These are not pre-scripted lesson plans, but rather exercises that can build on a trajectory of learning towards an overarching lesson objective or theme. In terms of sustainability, there is also a section in the manual that includes information concerning: a) how to use materials in schools or communities; b) adapting to regional contexts; c) research methodologies; d) community asset mapping; e) engaging community leaders; f) building and sustaining networks; g) drama clubs and theatre tours; and h) action planning. Additional sections in the manual explore facilitation skills, group dynamics, experiential learning and curriculum planning.

During the pilot phase, MAP adult trainers were interviewed by an external researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the MAP methodology. Interviewees reported that the MAP manual provided the necessary training and resources for the instruction of Music, Dance and Drama within the curriculum. Additionally, they suggested that MAP was useful in enabling the training of additional educators within their school as well as in the creation of drama clubs. One adult trainer stated:

After the training of trainers, we worked with the children so they got motivated and had enough skills. Among the teachers, we have a drama team. We teachers are capable so that we train the children in drama. The impact of MAP in our schools is seen through what we are doing. The drama that we are doing, you can really appreciate. I assure you that the students are doing so well. We invited parents to the school and they say, 'Wow, what is this?!' MAP helped to promote my confidence. When I was teaching before, I thought that students underrated me because I didn't do well. Now, even the students say, wow! Myself and my fellow work mates see me as a big man, even if I am young. They trust me and see that I am skilled. They call me 'King'. My age doesn't matter, because of my skills with MAP.

Due to the context of mental health in post-genocide Rwanda, the training of trainers and youth camp included a resident psychologist, Laure Iyaga, from partner organisation Sana Initiative. The resident psychologist provided one-to-one and group counselling during sessions as needed. In addition, the Sana Initiative provided exercises related to peer-to-peer counselling, identifying emotions, and raising awareness about symptoms related to trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. MAP activities purposefully integrated the following mechanisms to deepen support and trust between participants: building trust; active listening; being present; being non-judgemental; self-awareness, motivation and coaching. During the training of trainers, Iyaga conducted a workshop exploring how mental health could be incorporated into the MAP activities. Additionally, Iyaga practiced participant observation during all sessions in order to monitor group dynamics and to address any symptoms that might indicate concerns regarding health and wellbeing.

There have been numerous publications that have explored the correlation between trauma and the arts in Rwanda and East Africa more broadly (Blair and Fletcher 2010; Montei 2011; McFarren 2011; Rovit 2013), but few that examine the role of children as ontological subjects engaging with memories through art. Korrily Pells states:

I suggest therefore, that investigating 'threads of memory' (Moss 2010, p.537) might enable a productive reimagining of the ontology of the child and through an examination of the particularities of children's own memories move away from the abstract figure of the child to the more subjective relationship between children and the unfolding of multiple, coexisting temporalities (Pells 2018, p.98).

The notion of 'unfolding coexisting temporalities' supports the ontological development of identity formations that are often in relation to existing social, cultural and political frameworks. Although MAP did not aim to explicitly consider issues concerning memory or trauma, there was awareness that often painful and difficult stories might emerge within the process of sharing personal narratives. The initial curriculum workshop conducted in March 2018 with ten cultural organisations tested some of these concerns while exploring the development of an arts-based curriculum to create platforms of expression in Rwanda. Cultural artists (including visual artists, musicians, filmmakers, photographers, performing artists, acrobats, dancers and poets) were invited to deliver a two-hour workshop that explored how their discipline could be adapted for dialogic purposes with young people. I will analyse three workshop sessions: workshop one used drama exercises to address issues of trauma and pain; workshop two used physical acrobatics to engage participants working together; and workshop three used fine art practices to access personal insights and new discoveries. All workshops focused on the adaptation of cultural

forms for dialogue. In this way, I aim to think through some of the challenges and opportunities concerning the use of participatory arts with and for youth in Rwanda.

Curriculum Workshop One

During her session, Hope Azeda commented: 'Memory and pain — you cannot separate them. How do you create the artistry by connecting to the pain that we're trying to talk about?' Azeda noted that one of the problems in our world is that we cannot feel each other. In order to feel each other, she suggested, we need to share our wounds, that we all carry wounds like an abscess, and that we need to open our wounds, so that they can ooze, so that they can heal, so that we can feel one another's wounds and then, we can see each other. After the disclosure of our wounds, we were asked to breathe out our wounds. Then, we were asked to lay on the floor with our wounds and with musical accompaniment, to rise up from the floor to a standing position. Following the sharing and carrying of our wounds, we were asked to perform the wounds of others. Azeda shared a true story about a young Hutu girl named Grace who, when fleeing the Rwandan Patriotic Front, saw an infant suckling the breast of her dead Tutsi mother. Grace took the Tutsi infant and raised her as her own. After being continuously threatened, Grace distanced herself from the rest of the fleeing Hutu refugees by placing herself at the rear of the exodus. After Azeda provided this scenario and showed us video footage that documented this extraordinary relationship, Azeda asked a participant to read a passage that portrayed the dead Tutsi mother speaking to her surviving daughter. Then, Azeda asked the participant to put themselves in the shoes of the other. This workshop illustrated some of the nuanced artistic and cultural responses related to conflict,

pain and reconstruction to consider the affect of participatory arts in relation to painful pasts.

In an interview with me on 11 April 2006 in Kigali, Rwanda, Jeanne Mukamusoni, who was at that point the psychosocial and medical programme officer of the Association of Genocide Widows Agahozo (AVEGA) stated that ‘the psychological state referred to as trauma was in Rwandan culture prior to the genocide’. Treatment has traditionally been administered by the *abavuzi ba gihanga* (Rwandan healers), who are called upon to mediate between the physical and spiritual realms. Here, I note some of the underlying tensions concerning cultural and artistic variances related to the exploration and representation of pain and trauma which was eventually addressed through the partnership with Sana Initiative, through which we were able to integrate mental health concerns into the overall MAP methodology within the Rwandan context.



Fig. 7.3 Curriculum workshop with Future Vision Acrobats. (Photograph by Deus Kwizera from Kwetu)

Curriculum Workshop Two

Now, I will provide an overview of another session, conducted by acrobat Elisee Niyonsenga, and the potential for art to bring forth alternative spatial, discursive and relational contexts through *Ubwuzu* (great joy or zeal). Niyonsenga focused on stretching our sense of possibility through juggling and forming human pyramids. The emphasis was to encourage us to stretch beyond our perceived limitations and fears. Erika Fischer-Lichte states: 'By seeing aesthetic experience as liminal experience, we lay the foundation for the possibility of spectators undergoing certain transformations while participating in such performances' (Fischer Lichte 2014, p.12). In an interview with Niyonsenga, he stated that he had initially developed his practice (Future Vision Acrobats) as a homeless youth, and that when he practiced his acrobatic art, he forgot that he was hungry. This example turns to the importance of affect and the possibility for art to engage with participants through a kind of alternative space. Likewise, Seigworth and Gregg state: 'Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon [...] affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves' (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, p.1 emphasis in original). Although Niyonsenga refers to 'forgetting' through the arts, new research in 'neuroaesthetics' notes that art stimulates our desire to experience intense emotions collectively (*The Washington Post*, 9 October, 2017). Thus, perhaps instead of 'forgetting', the use of arts potentially creates a 'neural rush' that rewrites or allows for new neurological pathways. This discovery links to the widespread phenomena of grassroots arts organisations in Rwanda that evolved post-genocide. Over 300

grassroots associations were tracked by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) that were launched by survivors and perpetrators who were trying to create a new kind of space to live with one another. The then Minister of Culture referred to this phenomenon as a kind of *Kugangahura* or cleansing of a bad event (Breed 2014). This next section will discuss the use of visual arts during the curriculum workshop to explore varied metaphorical and methodological applications of participatory arts to 'make visible' alternative narratives.

Curriculum Workshop Three

Visual artist Rukundo Jean Baptiste initially instructed us to paint a white sheet of paper with ink until the sheet was entirely black. This simple instruction was carried out in a number of ways. After we completed the first task, Jean Baptiste asked us about our method. Some responses included: 'I worked from each side of the paper, until everything was even', 'I scribbled across the paper', 'I worked with the diagonals, working from the outside in.' Then, we were asked to share how our approach might reveal something about ourselves personally. For instance, one participant shared that they worked from each side of the paper; that they liked to find balance in life. After sharing our approach and method, we were asked to use bleach and a wooden stick to etch any images that might relate to 'our world'. Participants were first asked what they saw in the paintings and then the artist was able to share their story, *if they so desired*.

I think this example is illustrative in several ways, encouraging participants to approach any project with a 'blank sheet' of paper, to retrieve the methods, ideas, forms and questions that might drive the project related to the context of that particular time with those particular individuals. In addition, it highlights how 'visual

methods take on the ideals of a participatory framework, a way of releasing control of the research and enabling the diversity of experiences to be represented [...] visual methods are a way that (people) are able to represent experiences unconfined by language and literacy' (Mand 2012, p.156). Due to the limitations of expression evidenced earlier in the chapter, visual arts provides an alternative medium for narratives to emerge. In this way, there is a variance between the workshops described here — a digging into our wounds, on the one hand, and an expanding or stretching through the arts, on the other. Overall, the curriculum workshops provided a practice-as-research framework to interrogate varied artistic responses to trauma and pain in the Rwandan context as employed by Rwandan cultural artists.

The three workshops illustrated some of the varied interdisciplinary approaches to engage young people in dialogue. The exercises explored personal wounds through drama, stretched mental and physical limits through acrobatic arts, and enabled narratives to merge through visual arts. One particular finding in relation to trauma was the need to engage with different artistic forms of expression and to build mental health awareness into how exercises would be conducted to enable active listening and to hold difficult and painful stories within peacebuilding initiatives. The initial scoping visit had also evidenced the need for mental health support across the field more generally.

CSO Partnerships: Friends of the Children International School

Friends of the Children International School is one of five schools in the Eastern Province of Rwanda involved in the MAP project. The school evolved from initially

serving as an NGO organisation for orphaned children of perpetrators and survivors, entitled *Association des Jeunes pour la Promotion du Développement et de la Lutte Contre la Ségrégation* (AJDS). AJDS was created in November 2004 in response to reports of resurgent genocide ideology. In an interview that I conducted with AJDS members in August 2005, the director of the association, Frederick Kabanda, described its conception:

The Parliament and the Ministry of Education did an investigation [revealing] that genocide ideology was [developing] in schools and they broadcast their report over the radio. We thought, 'What can we do as youth and students to stop genocide ideology?' Those of us who are educated know the historical background of this country and that the history taught before the genocide wasn't true, so [we] felt we could make social change [using] theatre and history. We felt that we must participate in rebuilding this country.

The company consists of 15 women and 15 men aged between 20 and 30, several of whom are orphans or the children of survivors and perpetrators. The company office and rehearsal space are located in the orphanage. Recently, the association has included a few adult members. One member was an *inyangamugayo* (person of integrity elected as a judge for *gacaca* court proceedings) in Rwamagana. AJDS provided theatre training to young people and facilitated workshops at the local primary, secondary and trade schools. In 2005, AJDS performed an agitprop production, called *Umurage Ukwiye U Rwanda* (The Real Inheritance of Rwanda), about reconciliation for secondary schools, followed by workshops with the students to create their own poetry, songs and plays. A finale was performed for the community and the NURC, a festival bringing together the various student groups to perform for one another. Other productions staged by AJDS include *Urubyiruko Dushyigikire Gacaca* (Youth Who Support Gacaca Courts) and *Ibyabaye Byarateguwe* (What Happened Was Planned).

AJDS worked with international donors to build Friends of the Children International School, which opened officially in October 2018. The background of AJDS in relation to the current partnership with MAP as well as the evolution of Friends of the Children International School evidences a grassroots and youth-based initiative to use participatory arts as an instrument for dialogue, education and social justice. Currently, all 365 primary school students and 28 students in primary 6 participate in weekly MAP activities. The Head Teacher of Friends of the Children International School was a former member of AJDS, thus illustrating how youth-led participatory arts initiatives can lead to new pedagogical approaches in teaching and learning that can, in turn, influence the development of CSOs alongside national and international partnerships.

Impact

The MAP project included a curriculum workshop (March 2018), training of trainers (August 2018) and youth camp (November 2018) involving ten cultural organisations, twenty-five adult trainers, ten youth trainers and five schools. The follow on impact of the MAP activities included the additional training of sixty adult trainers and the weekly participation of five hundred young people in the Eastern Province of Rwanda. The youth camp was focused on integrating the youth as co-facilitators and youth leaders within their schools and communities, culminating in the design of youth-led drama clubs and the provision of small grants designed to provide necessary resources such as transportation, food and arts materials.

On day one of the youth camp, an exercise entitled Across the Room incorporated a number of statements to evaluate perceptions concerning the use of participatory arts with and for young people. Participants were asked to stand at a location in the room that would correlate with their response to the statement as either 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe'. For example, one statement was: 'Youth should serve as leaders of organisations.' There was variance among attendees concerning whether or not young people could serve in this regard due to biases based on experience, knowledge and cultural norms. Some participants were standing next to the wall marked 'yes', others in the middle of the room marked 'maybe' and others next to the opposite wall marked 'no'. By the end of the workshop, participants (especially the young people involved) noted that they could serve as leaders based on their abilities as 'super facilitators'. Adult trainers stated that their participation in the workshop altered how they engaged with young people. Prior to MAP, trainers noted that they used corporal punishment to discipline students. Following MAP, trainers suggested that they had gained the necessary communication skills to discuss issues and to work with students to create a positive learning environment, avoiding the need to resort to such punishment. Also, that the participatory arts provided an outlet for expression, allowing for concepts and ideas to be communicated beyond the government script. Young people stated that they felt empowered to serve as leaders in their community and to voice their opinions and concerns. Overall, the MAP project integrated a methodological design to incorporate the arts as a tool for self-expression, knowledge about mental health issues and skill development in the performing arts.

In Dorothea von Hantelmann's book *How to Do Things with Art*, a play on John Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, von Hantelmann notes that 'the performative [...] involves outlining a specific level of meaning production that basically exists in every artwork, although it is not always consciously shaped or dealt with — namely its reality-producing dimension. In this sense, a specific methodological orientation goes along with the performative, creating a different perspective on what produces meaning in an artwork [...] Art's performative dimension signifies art's possibilities and limits in generating and changing reality' (von Hantelmann 2010, p.18). The noted emphasis on the objective for young people to create a culture of their own making and examples of how movement and the visual arts could be used to explore varied narratives and experiences were incorporated into the MAP curriculum and methodological design based on its 'reality-producing dimension' for young people. The curriculum workshop promoted the incorporation of Sana Initiative, a mental health organisation, in order to inform and monitor the delivery of MAP. Additionally, five of the cultural artists who participated in the original curriculum workshop served as co-facilitators of the training of trainers (August 2018), thus, illustrating the design and delivery of MAP by Rwandan cultural artists, educators and young people.

Conclusion

National organisations, including the IRDP, have noted that thus far, peace-building initiatives have not successfully been able to establish a horizontal and people-to-people approach for peace-building beyond the kinds of top-down initiatives outlined earlier in the chapter. Our work highlights the possibility for participatory arts to establish a people-to-people approach and the potential to support young people to

create a culture of their own making as a part of peace-building initiatives in post-genocide Rwanda. I close with specific recommendations that emerged from the MAP pilot project in the Eastern Province, interviews and evaluation activities including focus groups and surveys. Thus, we recommend:

- Supplementing the MAP manual with visual aids such as photographs, graphs and online video instruction (particularly for educators who may not have participated in the training of trainers);
- Adapting the MAP methodology to integrate mental health awareness and to potentially design another specific programme focussed on the mental health of providers and users;
- Using MAP as a complementary peace-building initiative alongside IRDP's community dialogue groups and Aegis Trust's peace schools;
- The implementation of MAP across the other four provinces in Rwanda.

These recommendations will be considered alongside data collected from a partner and stakeholder symposium (January 2019) to plan further MAP activities, funded through an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) follow-on impact grant entitled *Ubwuzu: Shaping the National Curriculum in Rwanda*, to be delivered over the course of 2019.

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