Symposium

Legacies of genocide in Rwanda and Indonesia
A multigenerational perspective

Organised by the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR)

Date 12 June, 10-17 hour
Location: University of Amsterdam, Roeterseiland, room REC C0.01

Abstracts of the presentations and short biographic information about the chair and presenters

Chair: Eileen Moyer

Eileen Moyer is Associate Professor of urban and medical anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. In 2015, she was awarded an ERC consolidator grant to research the relationship between global health gender equality initiatives and transformations in urban African masculinities over the last quarter century. She is co-editing the journal Medicine Anthropology Theory, which she co-founded with Vinh-Kim Nguyen in 2014. She is personally engaged in research on the life trajectories of a group of Tanzanian men she has followed for nearly two decades, while also working to complete a book on the Kenyan response to HIV since the early 1990s.

Inside Rwanda’s Gacaca Courts: Seeking justice after genocide

Bert Ingelaere

After the 1994 genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda, victims, perpetrators, and the country as a whole struggled to deal with the legacy of the mass violence. Neighbor had attacked neighbor, and once the killing was over, genocide survivors often lived near those who had murdered their family members or friends. Rwanda’s government attempted to deal with this situation by creating a new version of a traditional grassroots justice system called gacaca. This presentation, based on my book on the topic, examines what the gacaca courts set out to do, how they worked, what they achieved, what they did not achieve, and how they affected Rwandan society. Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the Rwandan countryside, I rely on vivid firsthand recollections, interviews, and trial testimony from victims and perpetrators, witnesses and lay judges alike. The findings demonstrate how this grassroots process got rerouted under the weight of the Rwandan state and through the pragmatism of the Rwandan peasantry. By providing rich evidence from the Rwandan grassroots, the aim is to articulate how popular conceptions of what is true and just matter and how localized transitional justice processes change over time and vary in space. It also shows what - at the grassroots and beyond - is at stake for next generations and – also beyond Rwanda - what can make a difference when societies worldwide attempt to deal with the legacies of mass violence and human rights abuses.
Bert Ingelaere is assistant professor (lecturer) at the Institute of Development Policy, University of Antwerp. His research focuses on the legacy of mass violence. He has undertaken over 40 months of fieldwork in Africa’s Great Lakes region. He is the co-editor of Genocide: Risk and Resilience and the author of Inside Rwanda’s Gacaca Courts: Seeking Justice after Genocide.

Reconciliation in the aftermath of genocide in Rwanda
Key challenges currently faced

Aggee Shyaka Mugabe

The genocide against the Tutsi posed on the people of Rwanda immeasurable effects. All sectors of life were affected to the extent that some scholars believe that the greatest challenge following genocide was rebuilding a society. The genocide left behind a community that was torn apart and dispersed due to societal prejudice, hate and grief in an emerging multifactorial social crisis. In the aftermath of genocide, Rwanda was left a society of countless victims with deep wounds needing to be healed, as well as a large number of perpetrators. The society was broken and characterized by distrust and fear between citizens and lack of shared national unity. The sense of a nation had been totally lost. In response, the government initiated from 1994 onwards, an extensive set of transitional justice mechanisms to deal with the legacy of the genocide and promote reconciliation among Rwandans. If one considers the magnitude of consequences of the genocide, outstanding progress has been made in the field of reconciliation. Peaceful coexistence, increasing interactions and, to a lesser extent, joint interest initiatives that bring together people who committed genocide and/or their relatives with genocide survivors are observable. However, the current state of affairs should not overshadow issues that face the process of reconciliation if Rwanda is to achieve sustainable peace. These issues include low involvement of youth, lack of ownership of the process, limited spaces of expression, deficiency of intergenerational dialogue.

Aggee Shyaka Mugabe is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Conflict Management (CCM) of the University of Rwanda. His areas of research interest include transitional justice and reconciliation as well as compliance with regional gender equality commitments. His PhD thesis (2009) examines the scope and limits of transitional justice in post-genocide Rwanda.

Living under the shadow of génocidaire parents in Rwanda
The impact of ambiguous loss on children in relation to their family and community

Theoneste Rutayisire

In Rwanda, following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, many people were found guilty of genocide crimes and imprisoned. Their children, as a result, ended up in a situation of ambiguous loss. This presentation will focus on the multidimensional impact of this loss on the everyday lives of these children and their families according to key themes as they emerged from the findings of an ethnographic study, in which 21 children and their family members participated. Themes include changed family dynamics and family stress, economic deprivation,
incomprehension of the parents’ criminal past, the social stigma of being a child of a génocidaire, and ultimately strategies used to make the loss bearable. The uniqueness of the ambiguous loss as experienced by descendants of perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda compared to perpetrators of the Holocaust or other crimes relates to the context of the gacaca community courts and the severity of genocidal crimes in Rwanda.

Theoneste Rutayisire has an MA in theology (University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa) and an MA in medical anthropology (University of Amsterdam). His PhD thesis (University of Amsterdam 2018) focuses on the impact of community justice on everyday life in post-genocide Rwanda. Since 2005 he intermittently worked as researcher for community based sociotherapy in Rwanda.

Unofficial memory culture in post-1965 Indonesia
Grace Leksana and Martijn Eickhoff

In this presentation we will reflect on our two memory work projects on Java that study the massacres of 1965/66. We will discuss the role that sites, rituals, social and inter-generational relations have played and continue to play in unofficial memory culture. What kind of communicated memory can we trace in the context of a dominant – state supported – discourse in which the killing are only mentioned in euphemistic terms?

Grace Leksana works on a PhD-project at KITLV. She studies post-New Order memories in Indonesia. Her research focuses on the question how villagers in East-Java live through the state’s memory construction.

Martijn Eickhoff is senior researcher at NIOD specialized in War and Culture Studies. In 2013/4 he organised two workshops on Memory Landscapes and Regime Change in Semarang in collaboration with UNIKA Semarang.

The Mute's Soliloquy

Film. Première in the Netherlands. The title of the film is derived from the book by Promoedya Ananta Toer, a memoir of eleven years of imprisonment (from 1965 onwards) on Buru Island, Indonesia, and of survival.

Commemorating the Indonesian genocide
The third generation and the website ‘Ingat 65’ (Remember 1965)
Saskia Wieringa

The perpetrators of the genocide that took place in Indonesia starting on 1 October 1965 have never been brought to justice. To the contrary, as their side has remained in power all through the military dictatorship of President General Suharto, and even after his fall, impunity remains. This
is sustained by the continued influence of the propaganda that incited militias to help commit these massacres and other crimes against humanity and justified the genocide. The survivors and their families have lived in shame, haunted by the stigma that they were communists, and therefore anti-religious, anti-nationalist and given to sexual perversions. They often kept silent about their suffering, just as the murderers and torturers didn’t want to admit to their crimes. Their grandchildren have grown up in this culture of silence and impunity. Two years ago a group of young journalists started the website Ingat 65, Remember 65. They collect stories about the grandchildren of both victims and survivors and of the perpetrators. Many of these members of the third generation only recently found out about the involvement of their grandparent(s) in the ‘events of 1965’. The editors hope to break the silence around this genocide and to tell the truth about this period in Indonesian history.

**Saskia Wieringa** is emeritus professor same-sex relations crossculturally at the University of Amsterdam. She is the Chair of the Foundation International People’s Tribunal 1965 which organized a People’s Tribunal on the post October 1 genocide. Her latest book is ‘Imagine evil; propaganda and the genocide in Indonesia’ (Routledge forthcoming).

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**How legacies of genocide are transmitted in the family environment**

**Lidewyde Berckmoes**

The 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and its aftermath led to large-scale individual traumatization, disruption of family structures, shifts in gender roles, and tensions in communities, which are all ongoing. Previous research around the world has demonstrated the transgenerational effects of mass violence on individuals, families and communities. In Rwanda, in light of recurrent episodes of violence in the past, attention to the potential ‘cycle of violence’ is warranted. The assumption that violence is passed from generation to generation was first formulated in research on domestic violence and child abuse, but is receiving increasing attention in conflict-affected societies. However, the mechanisms behind intergenerational transmission are still poorly understood. Based on qualitative research with 41 mothers and their adolescent children, we investigated how legacies of the 1994 genocide and its aftermath are transmitted to the next generation through processes in the family environment in Rwanda. Our findings reveal direct and indirect pathways of transmission. We also argue that intergenerational effects might best be described as heterotypic: genocide and its aftermath lead to multiple challenges in the children’s lives, but do not necessarily translate into new physical violence.

**Lidewyde Berckmoes** is a postdoc researcher at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement (NSCR). Her work centres on long-term and long-distance effects of political conflict. Her current work is about intergenerational effects of conflict among children of Burundian migrants and refugees in the Netherlands and Belgium.

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**Disturbed family dynamics in post-genocide Rwanda and its trickle down effects on the next generation in terms of reconciliation**
Emmanuel Sarabwe

Social death as a consequence of genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda didn’t only unweave intra-community but also intra-family ties. Two consecutive researches about marital conflict in post-genocide Rwanda have confirmed this to be the case. The first research identified genocide-related factors contributing to marital conflict while the second showed how parental marital conflict over consequences of the genocide affects the daily life and marriage of descendants. A main study finding is that parents reconciled with their victimizers and forgave them in a way that they accept to live peacefully with them in their respective communities without necessarily weaving ties within their respective families. On the other side, perpetrators asked forgiveness from those they victimized but they didn’t necessarily ask forgiveness from their spouses who also suffered from consequences of their crimes. It thus seems that rebuilding social relationships between community members may be less difficult than rebuilding frayed relationships within families. Though children were negatively affected by parental marital conflict they also learnt something valuable from it resulting in socialisation with members of former adversaries. Participation in community-based sociotherapy also led to positive changes. One or more stories illustrating theses change in the lives of the second generation will be presented.

Emmanuel Sarabwe has been a staff member in charge of quality assurance of Community Based Sociotherapy since 2005. He is a holder of a MA in social work and social administration and a second one in Human Rights, Gender and Conflict in Social Justice Perspective.

The transmission of traumatic memories of Rwandan female survivors of genocide rape to their offspring and children’s responses

Annemiek Richters

How are genocide memories transmitted from women survivors of rape to their children born after the genocide (18-23 years old)? What is the effect of participation by these women in community based sociotherapy on memory transmission to their children? And how did these children respond to learning about their mothers’ past experiences by reading their life histories as published in a local language booklet? A study conducted among a small sample of mothers who survived genocide rape and their descendants gives some answers to these questions. The outcomes of this study confirm that ‘ghosts refuse to rest in their graves until stories are told.’ Through sharing one’s life history with descendants, ghost can go from haunting the next generation to become simply part of their history. It is too early to tell how the past of the mothers in our sample will determine their children’s future live. Our observation is that even though it was difficult for the children to learn more about their mother’s stories, they did feel a kind of release from what had been haunting them.

Annemiek Richters is emeritus professor culture, health and illness, Leiden University Medical Center, and staff member of the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research, the Netherlands. Since 2005 she has been an active supporter of community-based sociotherapy in Rwanda.