



TESI DOCTORAL UPF / 2021

Transmedia Storytelling and Participation for Peacebuilding and Peace Education  
Rwandan Youth, Digital Inclusion, and Socio-Political Context



Tugce Ataci

TESI DOCTORAL UPF / 2021



Universitat  
Pompeu Fabra  
Barcelona

Transmedia Storytelling and  
Participation for Peacebuilding  
and Peace Education  
Rwandan Youth, Digital Inclusion, and  
Socio-Political Context

Tugce Ataci

---

# **Transmedia Storytelling and Participation for Peacebuilding and Peace Education**

Rwandan Youth, Digital Inclusion, and Socio-Political Context

**Tuğçe Atacı**

---

TESI DOCTORAL UPF / 2021

DIRECTOR DE LA TESI

Prof. Carlos Alberto Scolari

DEPARTMENT DE COMUNICACIÓ



**Universitat  
Pompeu Fabra  
*Barcelona***

This thesis has been conducted with the financial support of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Department of Universities and Research - AGAUR) and the European Social Fund.

Aquesta tesi ha estat realitzada amb el suport econòmic de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Departament d'Universitats i Recerca-AGAUR) i el Fons Social Europeu.

Esta tesis ha sido realizada con el apoyo económico de la Generalitat de Catalunya (Departamento de Universidades e Investigación- AGAUR) y el Fondo Social Europeo.



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament d'Empresa i Coneixement  
**Secretaria d'Universitats i Recerca**



**Unió Europea**  
Fons Social Europeu  
*L'FSE inverteix en el teu futur*

## Acknowledgments

When I started my PhD, the first thing I did was to open a new document and put “Acknowledgments” in the title. I wrote down names starting from the first day I registered at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra as a PhD student. But in the end, I have realized that thanking those who have supported me during these four years and help me become who I am today required more than a page.

First of all, my dear supervisor, Prof. Carlos Scolari, thanks for pushing me and helping me discover what lies beyond my boundaries. It was not until the last two years of my PhD that I was able to understand the values you taught me and your efforts to make me see my capabilities.

I also want to thank the participants in this research, for I could not have done this without you! This journey is all about you. I hope I have done justice to your stories. You are the influencers and protagonists of this research and a source of inspiration for what is yet to come in my life. Many thanks also to the schools for collaborating with me, to the families for opening their homes to me, and to teachers and principals for fruitful conversations.

I also would like to thank my PhD gang: Laura Fernández, Joana Aziz, and Fortunat Miarintsoa Andrianimanana (Fortunat, I confess that I copy-pasted your last name), who bore with me since our Master’s studies. You were my rocks throughout my PhD, during both struggles and happy times. After all, you understood me more than anyone in this world.

I am also grateful to the wonderful team in the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace: Dr. Eric, Suzanne, Daphrose, Emilienne, and Victor. Many thanks to you for hosting me in Kigali. I also want to thank the moto-taxi drivers for taking me around in the city—what would I have done without you? Thanks for the rides where I felt the warm wind on my face and relaxed while watching the land of a thousand hills.

Thanks to my family for supporting me with lots of laughs even when I wanted to call it quits. Serap, Çav, Ulu, and Gizem, I am lucky to have friends like you who endure my complaints and whining. And Emile, I can only imagine how grouchy and

unbearable I have been over the last four years. It was very stressful for both of us and I thank you for sharing my burden as well as being my reviewer #2. And my thanks also go to Nusha, my spoiled cat, for taking my stress away with your purrs and being a joy in my life.

And to all those who are not mentioned here, if we crossed paths in the past four years, that means you have been a part in this dissertation. Thank you for accompanying me.



## **Abstract**

This dissertation discusses the ways and the extent to which transmedia storytelling and transmedia participation can benefit the peacebuilding processes in post-genocide societies. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Kigali, Rwanda during a period of three months between February and May in 2019, this dissertation aims to shed light on the digital practices of young Rwandans. The research included both online and offline ethnography with secondary school students aged between 13 and 19 who participated in transmedia storytelling workshops where they interacted with nonfiction transmedia projects about the genocides in Rwanda, Guatemala, and Cambodia, and created content about topics they found interesting in relation to post-genocide reconciliation and peacebuilding in these societies. Focus group discussions and interviews were also used as methods to gain a deeper understanding of these teenagers' online activities and approaches to digital technologies. The results show that although young people acquire diverse transmedia skills, their digital inclusion and transmedia participation for peacebuilding are affected by the socio-economic and political context in post-genocide Rwanda.

**Keywords:** transmedia storytelling, nonfiction transmedia, peacebuilding, digital inclusion, transmedia participation, Rwanda

## **Resum**

Aquesta tesis analitza les formes i el grau en que la narrativa transmèdia i la participació transmèdia poden beneficiar els processos de construcció de pau a les societats post-genocidi. A partir de la investigació etnogràfica realitzada a Kigali, Ruanda, durant un període de tres mesos entre febrer i maig del 2019, aquesta tesis té com a objectiu aportar llum sobre les pràctiques digitals dels joves ruandesos. La investigació va incloure etnografia virtual i presencial amb estudiants d'educació secundària d'entre 13 i 19 anys que van participar en tallers de narrativa transmèdia, on van interactuar amb projectes transmèdia de no ficció sobre els genocidis a Ruanda, Guatemala i Cambodja, i van crear contingut sobre temes que van trobar interessants en relació a la reconciliació post-genocidi i a la construcció de la pau en aquestes societats. També es van utilitzar entrevistes i grups de discussió com a mètode que permeten aprofundir en la comprensió de les activitats i els enfocaments

en línia d'aquestes adolescents sobre les tecnologies digitals. Els resultats mostren que, malgrat que els joves adquireixen diverses habilitats transmèdia, la seva inclusió digital i la seva participació transmèdia per a la construcció de pau es veuen afectades pel context socioeconòmic i polític de la Ruanda post-genocidi.

**Paraules clau:** narrativa transmèdia, transmèdia de no ficció, construcció de pau, inclusió digital, participació transmèdia, Ruanda

## **Resumen**

Esta tesis analiza las formas y el grado en que la narrativa transmedia y la participación transmedia pueden favorecer los procesos de construcción de la paz en una sociedad post-genocidio. Basándose en una investigación etnográfica realizada en Kigali, Ruanda, durante un período de tres meses entre febrero y mayo de 2019, esta tesis tiene como objetivo arrojar luz sobre las prácticas digitales de los jóvenes ruandeses. La investigación incluyó etnografía virtual y presencial con estudiantes de secundaria de entre 13 y 19 años, los cuales participaron en talleres narrativos donde interactuaron con proyectos transmedia de no ficción sobre los genocidios en Ruanda, Guatemala y Camboya; asimismo, crearon contenidos sobre temas relacionados con la reconciliación y la construcción de la paz después del genocidio en dichas sociedades. Las discusiones en grupos focales y las entrevistas también se utilizaron como método para alcanzar una comprensión profunda de las actividades en línea de estos adolescentes y su forma de abordar las tecnologías digitales. Los resultados muestran que, aunque los jóvenes adquieren diversas habilidades transmedia, su inclusión digital y su participación transmedia para la construcción de paz se ven afectadas por el contexto socioeconómico y político en la Ruanda posterior al genocidio.

**Palabras clave:** narrativa transmedia, transmedia de no ficción, construcción de la paz, inclusión digital, participación transmedia, Ruanda



# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	VI
LIST OF TABLES	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. RESEARCHING DIGITAL CULTURES IN POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS	1
1.2. DEFINING THE KEY CONCEPTS	6
1.3. USES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND RECONCILIATION	9
1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS	13
1.5. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS	15
<b>2. FIELDSITE AND CONTEXT</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1. BACKGROUND OF RWANDA	19
2.2. MEDIA BEFORE AND AFTER THE GENOCIDE	23
2.3. RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES	25
2.4. USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN RWANDA	29
2.5. THE YOUTH OF RWANDA	31
<b>3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1. NONFICTION TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING AND EDUCATION	35
3.2. TRANSMEDIA PARTICIPATION: INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT	39
3.3. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, USER-GENERATED CONTENT, AND PARATEXTUALITY	44
3.4. MEMES, HUMOR, AND MEME LITERACY	51
3.5. CONCEPTUALIZING PEACEBUILDING AND EDUCATION IN THE TRANSMEDIA AGE	56
3.6. DIGITAL INCLUSION	62
3.7. YOUTH INCLUSION, PARTICIPATORY SPACES, AND POSITIONING	69
<b>4. METHODOLOGY: HYBRID ETHNOGRAPHY</b>	<b>73</b>
4.1. ENTERING THE FIELD AND ETHICAL PROCEDURES	73
4.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS	79
4.3. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES	88
<b>5. TRANSMEDIATIZING RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING</b>	<b>99</b>
5.1. TRANSMEDIA JOURNALISM, LOCAL COLLABORATIONS, AND MOBILIZATION	100
5.2. PHOTOGRAPHY AS A TOOL FOR TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT	105
5.3. CONVERGENT WORLD-BUILDING THROUGH EXHIBITIONS AND SCREENINGS	112

5.4.	COMMON ACTANTIAL MODELS AND ENUNCIATION	119
5.5.	TRANSMEDIATIZING DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PEACEBUILDING PROCESS	125
5.6.	THE BODY AS A LEGACY OF THE GENOCIDE	129
5.7.	OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS	133
<b>6.</b>	<b><u>UNPACKING TRANSMEDIA PARTICIPATION</u></b>	<b>137</b>
6.1.	FROM TRANSMEDIA LEARNING TO TRANSMEDIA PERFORMATIVITY: LAYERS OF INTERACTION	137
6.2.	VERNACULARIZING GENOCIDES AND PEACEBUILDING	149
6.3.	EXPERIENCING TRANSMEDIAITY: A TYPOLOGY OF NONFICTION TRANSMEDIA ENGAGEMENT	176
6.4.	OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS	183
<b>7.</b>	<b><u>BEYOND ACCESS: THE DIGITAL INCLUSION OF RWANDAN YOUTH</u></b>	<b>187</b>
7.1.	DIMENSIONS OF ACCESS: INEQUALITIES AND RESTRICTIONS	188
7.2.	DIGITAL DISENGAGEMENT: VOLUNTARY NON-USE AND ATTITUDES	200
7.3.	USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: MOTIVATIONS AND BENEFITS	207
7.4.	TRANSMEDIA SKILLS	214
7.5.	OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS	239
<b>8.</b>	<b><u>ICT POLICY AND PEACE EDUCATION IN RWANDA: WORLDS APART?</u></b>	<b>243</b>
8.1.	ICT POLICY IN RELATION TO THE DIGITAL INCLUSION OF YOUTH	243
8.2.	PEACE EDUCATION IN RWANDA	256
8.3.	OVERVIEW OF THE RESULTS	269
<b>9.</b>	<b><u>CONCLUSION</u></b>	<b>273</b>
9.1.	TELLING POST-GENOCIDE STORIES AND TRANSMEDIA PARTICIPATION	273
9.2.	SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR TRANSMEDIA PARTICIPATION	276
9.3.	TRANSMEDIA EDUCATION FOR PEACEBUILDING	278
9.4.	LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH	282
<b>10.</b>	<b><u>REFERENCES</u></b>	<b>285</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b><u>APPENDICES</u></b>	<b>307</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1. Uses of digital technologies in peacebuilding. Larrauri and Kahl, 2013.....	12
Table 2. Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling. Jenkins, 2009. ....	36
Table 3. The Indirect Model of Peace Education. Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009.....	58
Table 4. The Direct Model of Peace Education. Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009. ....	59
Table 5. The dimensions of digital inclusion.....	65
Table 6. School A participants.....	76
Table 7. School B participants.....	76
Table 8. School C participants .....	77
Table 9. School D participants .....	78
Table 10. School E participants.....	79
Table 11. Questionnaires: age demographics.....	85
Table 12. Questionnaires: gender and school types .....	85
Table 13. Age demographics of the focus group participants.....	87
Table 14. Age demographics of the interviewees.....	88
Table 15. Gambarato's (2013) Analytical model for transmedia storytelling.....	94
Table 16. Components of selected transmedia projects.....	100
Table 17. Layers of interaction with transmedia projects.....	149
Table 18. Typology of user-generated content as paratexts .....	175
Table 19. Types of transmedia engagement .....	177
Table 20. Types of transmedia skills .....	237
Table 21. Summary of ICT policy and implementation .....	256

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Crossmedia and Transmedia. Pratten, 2011 (p. 3). .....	7
Figure 2. The location of UGC as paratext. Inspired by Guerrero, 2016. ....	49
Figure 3. Transmedia literacy. Scolari, 2018 (p. 16).....	68
Figure 4. The interface of the Love Radio project .....	101
Figure 5. Image from the Femmes du Ruanda (Women of Rwanda) website.....	107
Figure 6. Images from the Scars of Cambodia photo book .....	108
Figure 7. The Love Radio exhibition.....	109
Figure 8. An example from the GEMM project website .....	110
Figure 9. The Scars of Cambodia exhibition .....	115
Figure 10. Love Radio exhibition rooms .....	117
Figure 11. The “Enter the Village” interface of the interactive documentary.....	120
Figure 12. The interface of the interactive documentary .....	121
Figure 13. The “Tree of Life” sent by a fan of the radio soap .....	127
Figure 14. Scenes from The Act of Killing (on the left) and Scars of Cambodia (on the right) .....	132
Figure 15. Participants' transmedia interactions with the projects .....	148
Figure 16. “Mocking SpongeBob” meme on the Cambodian genocide .....	151
Figure 17. “Minor Advice Marvin” meme on learning about genocides .....	151
Figure 18. “Confused Nick Young” meme about Belgium .....	153
Figure 19. “Distracted Boyfriend” meme on genocide ideology.....	153
Figure 20. “Angry Walter” meme on the Uganda–Rwanda conflict .....	156
Figure 21. “Waiting for OP” meme about Museveni .....	157
Figure 22. “Left Exit 12 off Ramp” meme about Burundi–Rwanda.....	158
Figure 23. “Disaster Girl” meme about Pol Pot.....	159
Figure 24. “The Most Interesting Man in the World” meme about Rwanda .....	163
Figure 25. Instagram story about the Rwandan youth.....	165
Figure 26. “Drakeposting” meme on the “ethnicities” in Rwanda.....	166
Figure 27. “The Rock driving” meme criticizing outsiders.....	168
Figure 28. “Ancient Aliens” meme .....	169
Figure 29. “Donald Trump's First Order of Business” meme on the development of Rwanda .....	172
Figure 30. “Distracted Boyfriend” meme about the Guatemalan genocide.....	173
Figure 31. “Facepalm” meme about justice in Guatemala.....	174
Figure 32. Facets of digital inclusion .....	188
Figure 33. Survey results for device ownership by school type.....	194
Figure 34. Survey results for device ownership by gender in the public school .....	194
Figure 35. Survey results for device ownership by gender in the private schools ..	195
Figure 36. Survey results for mostly used digital platforms and apps .....	198
Figure 37. Survey results for the use of digital platforms.....	198
Figure 38. Survey results for playing games by school and gender .....	210



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Researching digital cultures in post-conflict settings

*The school I visited today was the fifth public school that I talked to for my research. They said they can't participate due to their schedule. The private school principal I had an appointment with in the morning was very enthusiastic about the project. I wanted to do a comparative analysis between public and private schools. But it seems like I have to change that aspect of my research. Why are the public schools not willing to participate in the research? Are there other reasons? At first, I was very upset and nervous about it, but now I think: not being able to get data is still data.*

*From my research diary [18/02/2019]<sup>1</sup>*

*Today's workshop was the last workshop I conducted for my research. Brilliant kids, fruitful and controversial conversations, so much laughter and so many memes... I am exhausted but also very nervous about what is to come. Will I be able to do justice to the participants' stories? Will I put them in danger if I share their controversial statements?*

*[27/03/2019]*

*A white person I met a couple of weeks ago asked me if I know someone looking for a job. I asked him what kind of requirements or competencies he was looking for. He said that it would be enough if the candidate had good communication skills and also that it would be better if he is one of the "tall" ones. I did not believe what I heard first. A colonial perspective, where the Tutsi are associated with being tall and the Hutu with being short, continues to exist. I acted like I did not understand what he meant. I asked, "What do you mean?" He responded, "Don't you know who? Those from the president's side. If you want to do business here, you should pick your staff carefully," he said, and added, "The closer to the government, the better for the business."*

*[04/04/2019]*

*Most of the challenges I faced as a researcher did not come into existence because I was doing research on peacebuilding, but on digital technologies. The conversations I had with parents when they invited me to their home put me in a position where I had to negotiate between the young people and their parents in terms of the use of digital technologies. I thought they would ask me about what kind of topics we are discussing in workshops with regards to the genocide, but instead, the questions targeted topics such as screen time and the disadvantages of social media. It was very challenging to be caught in intergenerational conflicts.*

*[29/04/2019]*

---

<sup>1</sup> These notes were taken in my native language, Turkish. I translated these segments into English for my dissertation.

When I arrived in Rwanda for my research I knew it would be a challenging and emotionally draining fieldwork project. After reading about the country's history, the genocide, and the reconciliation process, I realized there was a polarization among scholars working on Rwanda. It was an exhausting process since my background was neither history nor genocide studies. My literature review was supposed to prepare me for my field research, but instead confused me further. I found the conversations among Rwanda scholars, as well as politicians and citizens on Twitter (an alternative site I could observe before my fieldwork) hard to keep up with, baffling, and at times hostile. Rwanda made a very interesting and complex case for researching transmedia storytelling and digital inclusion for many reasons. But before I explain this in further detail, let me go back to the very beginning of the research process.

It was the seminar I attended on "transmedia storytelling" during my Master's studies that planted the seeds for this doctoral thesis. The concept of transmedia storytelling was not new to me. I had read about popular culture, fandom, and youth studies. But this seminar made me reflect on *nonfiction* transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is a concept coined by Jenkins (2006) that refers to a "storyworld" consisting of many stories on different media platforms which contribute to our understanding of that storyworld. As stated by Jenkins:

In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. (Jenkins, 2006, p. 96)

Most of the scholarship around transmedia storytelling focuses on fictional storyworlds (Scolari, 2013) and when scholars define transmedia storytelling or narratives, they tend to use the term "fiction." However, transmedia narratives are not limited only to fiction (Scolari, 2013) and storytelling projects can use fictional, nonfictional or hybrid narratives as transmedia techniques. As in fictional storyworlds, the nonfictional storyworlds also create compelling experiences for audiences. Engaging with real-life

stories through transmedia techniques can allow people to learn, interact, and share stories and lessons, as well as help them reconstruct and change personal and/or collective narratives to have a positive social impact. The research on nonfiction transmedia storytelling often revolves around transmedia journalism (see Gambarato, 2016a, 2016b; Gambarato & Tárca, 2017; Moloney, 2011) and analysis of interactive documentaries (see Aufderheide, 2015; Kerrigan & Velikovsky, 2016; Vázquez-Herrero & Gifreu-Castells, 2019). Additionally, there are other emerging areas of research such as transmedia mobilization, activism, and transmedia education (Alper & Herr-Stephenson, 2013; González-Martínez et al., 2019; Hancox, 2019; Kalogeras, 2014; Scolari et al., 2019; Zimmerman, 2016).

I started collecting information about transmedia documentaries that usually involved some kind of journalism such as independent journalism or citizen journalism. But I wanted to narrow the scope to a study that I found interesting, challenging, and compelling: peace and conflict studies. My interest in conflicts, wars, and peace processes results from the place where I grew up and lived most of my life. Coming from Turkey, a country where conflicts and so-called peace processes impact the social, economic, cultural, and political life of citizens, I also observed how these dynamics influenced young people in many ways. My autoethnographic reflections in my own country shaped my research interests and background.

After narrowing my topic, I did preliminary research on transmedia projects focused on conflicts. I came across transmedia projects about genocides in Guatemala, Cambodia, and Rwanda, and started analyzing how these projects tell the stories of people, conflicts, and peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. While analyzing these projects and stories, I wondered how people in these countries would interact and react to these projects. I had informal conversations with the producers of the projects in Guatemala and Cambodia—I could not reach the producers of Rwandan projects, but read their interviews online—to understand the background of the projects as well as not to overlook any expansion of the projects on different platforms. I asked the producers if they used these projects or organized screenings with local people. They organized some local projects, screenings, and discussions, but they did not know what kind of interactions these projects led to among local populations. After my conversations with the producers and reflection on the projects, I decided to merge

my analysis of nonfiction transmedia projects with audience studies and education since the projects' objective was to educate and inform people about the genocides, their consequences, and the difficulties of reconciliation processes. Therefore, I picked Rwanda as my fieldsite of hybrid ethnography to understand how young people use digital technologies, interact with transmedia storytelling projects, as well as what kind of stories they create in order to make sense of current contexts in Rwanda with regards to the peacebuilding and reconciliation process.

Rwanda has a complex history, a controversial peacebuilding and reconciliation process, and socio-political dynamics, which we will soon examine in detail. But there was another side to this research: the use of digital technologies. Africa is usually seen as a continent lacking digital literacy and having a profound digital divide. Many scholars (see Deen-Swarray, 2016; Fuchs & Horak, 2008; Gyamfi, 2005) address the challenges and problems of adoption of ICT (Information and communication technologies) and also make suggestions, such as providing Internet content in local languages (Deen-Swarray, 2016) and "strategic interventions by governments" (Gyamfi, 2005, p. 28). In the context of Africa, Unwin et al. (2010) state that "the use of computers and the Internet for learning is still very much in its infancy" (p. 5). Additionally, Rivers, Rivers and Hazell (2015) comment on the role of the governments in implementing ICTs:

Although numerous attempts have been made to narrow the digital divide in Africa, particularly in the higher education setting, it is a fact that many of these initiatives have failed. Therefore, it is vitally important that African governments and policy makers consider the factors that foster and hinder the successful implementation of ICTs in Africa in order to improve current initiatives and/or develop new initiatives that are more likely to succeed. (Rivers et al., 2015, p. 26)

The questions around the use of digital technologies in Africa can fall into stories of "catching up" with the Western societies, the technologies or apps, and the necessary intervention of governments (e.g. Fuchs & Horak, 2008). I wanted to move beyond this simplistic and reductive discourse of "progress" or "modernization." Instead, I preferred to focus on the context and how the use of digital technologies is contextualized and

localized. I also touched upon the Rwandan government's regulations and efforts and connected these regulations and efforts to the accounts of the research participants and my observations in the field. By emphasizing their co-habitation with the digital technologies and how their uses of it are adapted to local needs and expectations, I aim to shift such narratives from being progressive and linear (such as "using tech is the future") to inclusive ones that show how people use digital technologies in their daily lives and what kind of skills they acquire by doing this while acknowledging the complexities, risks, limits, disadvantages, and obstacles in these contexts.

Since the genocide in 1994, Rwanda has been trying to recover from the past atrocities and construct a peaceful society through an ongoing reconciliation process. The degree to which this process has been a success is a topic of debate in both academic research and international political spheres. Since the end of the genocide, the Rwandan government has focused attention on "rebuilding" the nation through the introduction of policies and regulations in relation to peacebuilding and development of the country. The youth, whom the government has positioned as "future leaders," has become central to this nation-building process. The research on Rwandan youth shows different dilemmas and complexities regarding the involvement of Rwandan youth in the context of post-genocide reconciliation (Hilker, 2009, 2011; Pells, 2011b; Pells et al., 2014).

Rwanda is considered one of the developing and promising technology hubs in Africa, as well as a contentious case with regards to the peacebuilding and reconciliation process due to the highly authoritarian nature of the ruling regime. It has a very young population, which makes young people's approach to digital technologies as well as peacebuilding strategies especially interesting. The scholarship on Rwandan youth and their use of digital technologies heavily highlights ICT use and its importance in formal education. The research on ICT and digital technologies is focused on ICT programs and initiatives such as "One Laptop Per Child," the digital divide, and teachers' use of these technologies (Byungura et al., 2016; Fajebe, 2013; Farrell, 2007; Were et al., 2009). There is a limited amount of research on the use of digital technologies by Rwandan youth in their daily practices and its implications on the peacebuilding and reconciliation process (Grant, 2019).

Therefore, the present study contributes to the scholarship on young people's approaches to the peacebuilding and reconciliation process in Rwanda while analyzing their uses of digital technologies and transmedia skills, as well as the implications of these on peacebuilding processes. With this aim in mind, I conducted ethnographic research with secondary school students, organized workshops about transmedia storytelling, and conducted focus group discussions and interviews. During the workshops, participants watched documentaries, read information online, and navigated through the transmedia projects selected for the research. During their interactions, they were encouraged to create stories related to these projects. The participants generated content such as multimedia texts, Internet memes, and videos, among others. After the workshops, I conducted focus group discussions to understand the group dynamics and individual interviews in order to more deeply understand their habits of digital technology use and their opinions about the peacebuilding process in Rwanda.

## **1.2. Defining the key concepts**

Before examining the background of Rwanda, the theoretical framework and methodology, and the research results, it is important to explain certain terms used in this research.

### ***What is transmedia?***

The confusion over terminology needs to be addressed for readers to understand what I mean by transmedia and what the differences are between multimedia, crossmedia, and transmedia? One common mistake is to conflate the terms "transmedia", "multimedia," and "crossmedia." Moloney (2011) explains the differences according to their use of "media form" and "media channel." He states that multimedia requires one story created with many forms and placed on one channel, while crossmedia uses one story on various channels; on the contrary, transmedia tells many stories by building a storyworld with many forms on different channels (Moloney, 2011). Furthermore, Jenkins (2010) defines multimedia as "the integration of multiple modes of expression

within a single application,” whereas transmedia is “the dispersal of those same elements across multiple media platforms” (para. 4).

In addition, in a diagram portraying these concepts as blocks (see Figure 1), Pratten (2011) defines crossmedia and transmedia as the old and new world, respectively. While both crossmedia and transmedia use various platforms, according to Pratten (2015), they differ in creating a whole picture of the story or storyworld. In crossmedia, when all the parts come together, they do not seem to complete each other to create the storyworld. On the other hand, the transmedia world brings all the pieces together in such a way that the storyworld can be built and comprehended in its entirety, which urges the audience to drill deeply into the story. Along the same line with Jenkins’ explanation of each part of transmedia as “autonomous consumption” (Jenkins, 2003, para. 10), Pratten (2015) also emphasizes that the content on different media and platforms should be comprehensible when consumed independently. For this study, I use “transmedia” as a concept for participation in peacebuilding and peace education in the sense that young people consume information on different media and platforms and try to make sense of this information through their interactions as they use various media and platforms to share their stories and experiences.

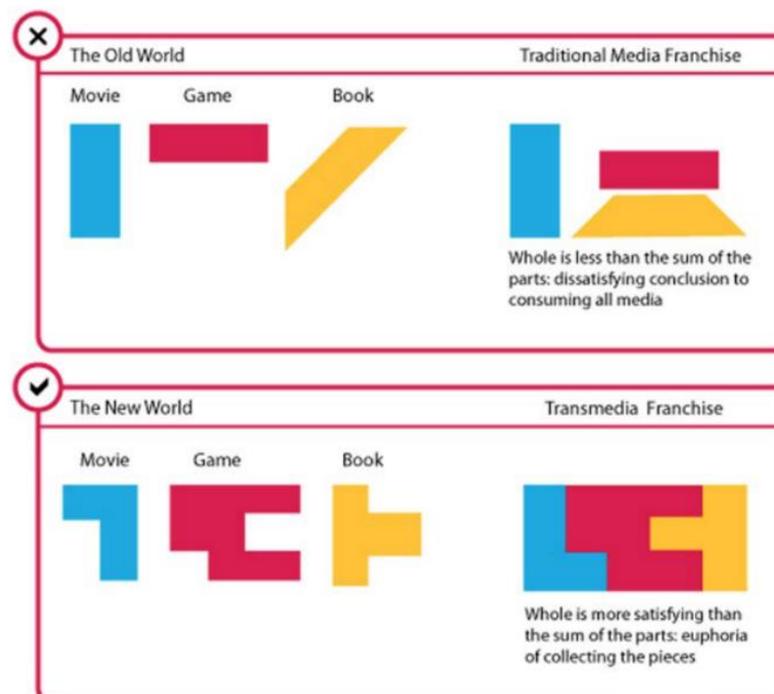


Figure 1. Crossmedia and Transmedia. Pratten, 2011 (p. 3).

### ***What is youth participation?***

“Youth” is a fluid concept that has been generally described as the time between childhood and adulthood. Various age ranges are used to define youth. For example, according to the United Nations, youth refers to those between 15 and 24. The age range, though, can change according to different contexts and countries. For this study, I address secondary school students who are aged from 13 to 19 as “youth” not only because they are actively involved in society as young people, but also because they no longer define themselves as “children.” Based on my conversation with the participants and how they position themselves in their communities, I do not limit the age range to the official documents and I define these young people as they would want to be defined. Youth participation, then, refers to their active involvement in discussing and solving issues that affect their lives (Checkoway, 2011).

### ***What is peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-conflict societies?***

Discussions of peacebuilding are mainly focused on the necessary conditions for obtaining and maintaining a sustainable peace in post-conflict societies (Angom, 2018). According to Barnett et al. (2007), there are three dimensions with regards to post-conflict peacebuilding: stability creation, restoration of state institutions, and addressing the socioeconomic dimensions of conflict. Stability creation refers to generating a space for reinforcing stability through demobilizing combatants, reducing the material means of conflicts, and organizing reintegration camps, among others. The second dimension, namely the restoration of state institutions, refers to the re-establishment of the key functions of the state and the creation of legitimate institutions. Lastly, addressing the socio-economic dimensions of conflict refers to the strengthening of the society’s skills and abilities to manage and navigate conflict in peaceful ways and the boosting of economic development through justice and reconciliation, dialogue, gender empowerment, human rights education, and so on (Barnett et al., 2007). In this research, the last dimension of the peacebuilding process will be the main focus. However, I also believe that one of the main resources to long-term and sustainable peace is local people and the cultural context in the post-conflict setting. Therefore, the mechanism needed to resolve the conflict and build a peaceful

society lies in the existing cultural setting of that society (Agbu, 2006). The approach this study takes concerning peacebuilding aligns with Agbu's comment on the cultural context of the post-conflict society in question. Within this framework, I approach the peacebuilding process in Rwandan society through the accounts of the participants in this research and their socio-cultural practices, both offline and online.

The concept of "reconciliation" should also be defined since this term also proves to be important within the scope of a post-genocide society. According to Staub (2006), reconciliation means that all parties involved in the conflict "come to see the humanity of one another, accept each other, and see the possibility of a constructive relationship" (p.868). It requires mutual recognition and acceptance and attempts to create a common future and move beyond the past conflict. From a psychological perspective, it defines an informal process in which the members of the society form new and positive beliefs about each other, their society, and the relationship with the former adversary (Bar-Tal, 2000). Therefore, reconciliation can be considered as a component of the peacebuilding process.

### **1.3. Uses of digital technologies in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation**

In this section, as a starting point to my research and research objectives, I mention some relevant projects and research from the post-conflict societies where digital technologies and digital storytelling have been used to promote peace. Although the influence of traditional media on the peacebuilding process in post-conflict societies has been widely discussed, the impact of interactive new media technologies remains partially uncharted. In recent years, digital technologies and digital inclusion in peacebuilding and peacemaking have become an emerging topic in the field (Hirblinger, 2020).

Digital storytelling has frequently been used as a tool for peace education since it can change perceptions and behaviors between conflicting groups by providing examples of peaceful communication and cooperation. Furthermore, it can improve the relationship between people or groups and may contribute to effective problem-solving

techniques, and, as a result, build mutual trust and awareness. For example, Higgins (2011) analyses the use of digital storytelling for peacebuilding processes in Cyprus based on a workshop with Turkish and Greek Cypriots. His findings show that “digital storytelling and community media, with direction, are able to cultivate skills of self-reflexivity, active listening, and authentic dialogue that provide a sense of empowerment and facilitate personal attachments among participants” (Higgins, 2011, p. 11). In another project called “MOSES,” interactive storytelling systems were also used to facilitate post-conflict healing processes in Liberia (Smyth et al., 2010). With the cooperation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, Smyth et al. have established this interactive kiosk system to support the reconciliation process in the country. The system allows Liberians to share videos with other citizens despite the lack of enough communications infrastructure. The research has resulted in some promising outcomes; however, the researchers emphasized that:

Of course it is too soon since the end of Liberia’s civil conflict to judge the true impact of any initiative on securing a lasting peace. It would also be unrealistic to expect an experimental project on the modest scale of MOSES to have a measureable impact on a nation of over three million. (Smyth et al., 2010, p. 1066)

Although the impact cannot be large scale due to the limitations of the project, Smyth et al. (2010) found out that MOSES created a space for citizens to engage in a dialogue. Even if the kiosk system did not provide an opportunity for direct conversation, people could experience and learn about others’ opinions and points of view. Liberians were also excited to participate and share their own video messages to be listened to by others. The researchers also note that “for many users, simply having the chance to record a video and see it played back then and there was an edifying and exhilarating experience” (Smyth et al. 2010, p. 1066). In addition, one of the results of the project was that the participants did not focus only on the civil war in Liberia, but also on present-day issues that they face in today’s Liberia, which shows that this kind of interactive system might take a forward-looking approach. Another project Smyth et al. were involved in to promote reconciliation and peace in conflict areas is the Gurtong Trust - Peace and Media Project, which is a media platform engaging South Sudanese for mutual understanding, awareness, and

a better future by sharing stories (Smyth et al., 2010); this project showed results similar to those of the MOSES project.

In addition to the digital storytelling projects, games also provide different kinds of interaction for people. Technological devices, interactive platforms, and networking channels can have an impact on people’s behaviors regarding the promotion of peace and prevention of violence thanks to collaborative processes. Games in particular are a good example of this collaborative process since the gamers acquire such skills as empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving. For instance, *Games for Change*<sup>2</sup> and *Games for Peace*<sup>3</sup> are organizations that bring together people who are interested in creating games for social impact. Through these games, people are educated on different subjects about conflict areas. Another initiative is PEACEapp, created by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), which develops a “series of projects aiming at the use of ICT, gamified apps, and video gaming platforms as strategic ways of building peaceful understanding among individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds.” (UNAOC, n.d.).

Although digital storytelling is one of the main tools used for peacebuilding and reconciliation through digital technologies, other strategies have also been tried by different projects in various settings. Larrauri and Kahl (2013) present a taxonomy for how digital technologies are used in peacebuilding, namely data processing, communications, gaming, and engagement; they provide examples for each category (See Table 1):

<b>Data Processing</b>	Using different digital tools to contribute to data collection and analysis about conflict and post-conflict contexts. For example, the Ushahidi platform, <sup>4</sup> Google Crisis map, <sup>5</sup> MapsData, <sup>6</sup> and FrontlineSMS. <sup>7</sup>
<b>Communications</b>	Incorporating voices through media creation and collaborative practices, and new opportunities to share information and contesting narratives. For example: Piggipedia, <sup>8</sup> used by Egyptian activists; MapStory <sup>9</sup> to empower

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gamesforchange.org>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gamesforpeace.org>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usahidi.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://support.google.com/crisismaps/?hl=en>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mapsdata.co.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.frontlinesms.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/groups/piggipedia/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://mapstory.org/>

	people to tell their stories; collaborative documentaries such as #18daysinegypt <sup>10</sup> and the Peace Factory <sup>11</sup> to share messages of love; and the Umuzi Photo Club <sup>12</sup> in South Africa, which encourages young people to make art for peace.
<b>Gaming</b>	Changing attitudes, promoting social change and action through elements of gaming such as role-play. For example, The Sambaza Peace Game <sup>13</sup> for teaching non-violent living through cartoons and Slavery Footprint <sup>14</sup> for teaching what kind of actions to take to fight slavery.
<b>Engagement</b>	Promoting ways for civic engagement in communities through digital technologies. For example, Avaaz <sup>15</sup> for creating online petitions to change policies, and funding platforms such as Kickstarter <sup>16</sup> and Spacehive <sup>17</sup> .

*Table 1. Uses of digital technologies in peacebuilding. Larrauri and Kahl, 2013.*

With the emergence of new media technologies, digital devices and online spaces are becoming ever more vital for people's inclusion in socio-economic issues and political participation. Therefore, I believe that the use of digital technologies, digital skills, and their intertwined relation to social inclusion and socio-economic dynamics also need to be taken into consideration when it comes to the peacebuilding and reconciliation process. The concept of digital inclusion has also been recently discussed in the context of peacebuilding and peacemaking processes. For instance, by giving examples from Colombia, Libya, Ukraine, Kenya, and Syria, Hirblinger (2020) emphasizes the importance of peace mediators' use of digital technologies. He also asserts that mediators should not ignore technological, socio-cultural, and political factors surrounding digital inclusion or exclusion to adapt peacebuilding practices and programs to their contexts.

It is to this important point that my research attempts to make a contribution. I aim to analyze the factors of digital inclusion or exclusion among young Rwandans, the contextual factors, and the benefits and limitations of integrating digital technologies into peacebuilding and peace education initiatives in Rwanda. I would add, however, that I do not see digital technologies as a solution to conflicts or peacebuilding and

<sup>10</sup> <http://beta.18daysinegypt.com/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://thepeacefactory.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://umuziphotoclub.blogspot.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.comminit.com/governance-africa/content/sambaza-peace-game>

<sup>14</sup> <http://slaveryfootprint.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://avaaz.org/page/en/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.kickstarter.com/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.spacehive.com/>

reconciliation. Rather I see them as a tool that can be beneficial as long as it is used consciously and ethically. This is why I emphasize transmedia skills and the socio-economic factors behind digital inclusion, as well as the political circumstances that impact digital participation. In this context, I also aim to focus on the limitations of digital technologies in the context of post-genocide societies considering the misinformation, disinformation, and “fake news” that are easily spread on online platforms. Therefore, I propose a multi-dimensional research in which I combine different elements and conduct hybrid ethnography (online and offline) to understand how people utilize these tools and gadgets in their daily lives for social and political engagement and how this can impact the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

#### **1.4. Research objectives and questions**

In the light of the information provided in the previous sections and the need for interdisciplinary research for digital inclusion of Rwandan youth and peacebuilding in Rwanda, four objectives have been set:

***I. Examine the storytelling strategies used by transmedia projects selected for the research which tackle the issues in post-genocide societies and compare the projects to find their similarities and differences.***

- What are the purposes of the projects?
- What kind of narrative elements do they use?
- What kind of characters do these projects build upon?
- What are their extensions and contributions to the storyworld?

After focusing on the transmedia projects about post-genocide societies, I analyze the participants’ transmedia participation and the user-generated content created by them in workshops that were conducted with these projects. Therefore the second objective is as follows:

***II. Analyze the participants’ interaction with the projects as well as their transmedia storytelling products (user-generated content) in relation to their stance on specific topics.***

- What do students think about the projects? What was their experience during their interaction? Do different media channels shape their experiences differently?
- Can a typology be created in terms of their transmedia participation?
- What kinds of stories did they create? Which platforms did they use? How did they experience the process? How do they reflect on specific topics?
- In what ways are the stories related to the original story?

My research is not limited to workshops in that it is also focused on the general context of the digital inclusion of young Rwandans based on the focus group discussions, interviews, and my observations both within and outside of their schools. I also try to understand the interrelation between digital inclusion and the peacebuilding process in Rwanda due to the increasing use of digital technologies. Thus the third objective is to:

***III. Analyze the different levels of digital inclusion among young Rwandans and the possible outcomes, benefits and challenges of digital inclusion or exclusion of youth in terms of peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in Rwanda.***

- Where do young people access digital technologies? Are there any challenges in this respect?
- Do they engage or disengage with digital technologies? Why?
- What are their motivations for using certain technologies and platforms?
- What kind of transmedia skills have they acquired, and how? How do these skills impact their lives or vice versa?
- How can digital inclusion or exclusion be related to peacebuilding and reconciliation processes?

Lastly, the general context of ICT use in classrooms, peace education initiatives in the country, as well as students' approaches and opinions about ICT use, the peacebuilding process, and peace education in their schools are discussed to give an overall perspective to the Rwandan context:

***IV. Conduct a policy analysis regarding ICT use and peace education in classrooms in Rwanda and identify the benefits and challenges according to observations made during the fieldwork as well as the accounts of students throughout the research.***

- What ICT policies and projects exist in Rwanda in relation to youth and education?
- What are the challenges and achievements of these policies and projects when their application is considered?
- Are there any peacebuilding initiatives in schools? Can their objectives be fulfilled? Why or why not?
- What do participants think about ICT use in the classroom and in the peacebuilding process and peacebuilding initiatives in Rwanda?

## **1.5. Outline of the thesis**

In light of these objectives and questions, **Chapter 2** introduces the background of the fieldsite, information about the context, and the questions that inform this research. It provides a detailed review of the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as well as its ethnicities and the de-ethnicization process. The role and influence of media on the genocide and the reconciliation process, as well as the initiatives for peacebuilding and research on Rwandan youth are also presented from the literature on Rwanda.

**Chapter 3** discusses the theoretical framework that informs this study. Theories from media and communication, youth studies, and peace and conflict studies are included and explained to present the framework of this research. The concepts of digital inclusion, nonfiction transmedia, user-generated content, participation, interaction and engagement and what these concepts mean in the framework of this research are described. In addition to these concepts, the notions of peacebuilding and peace education are re-conceptualized in terms of digital media and technologies.

**Chapter 4** explains the ethnographic approach I took to conduct this research. In this chapter, I describe my pragmatic approach to ethnographic research, my positionality as a researcher, how I entered the field, the methods I used to collect the data

(workshops, interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and field notes), and the analysis procedures I applied throughout my research.

**Chapter 5** corresponds to the first research objective and is aimed at analyzing the transmedia projects related to the genocides in Rwanda, Guatemala, and Cambodia with regards to their approaches to transmediatizing genocides. The projects were selected with a purposive sampling strategy. I have used the analytical model developed by Gambarato (2013) and the semio-narratological approach to analyze the transmedia strategies of these projects.

**Chapter 6** corresponds to the second research objective and is focused on the interactions of research participants with these projects in the workshops. I discuss how the participants interacted and engaged with the information provided in the projects. I also present a typology that is based on these interactions and engagements. I discuss the participant's user-generated content and analyze them within the socio-political context of Rwanda as paratexts for negotiating the peacebuilding and reconciliation process there.

In **Chapter 7** I take a step back to understand the overall digital use of participants and examine the different levels of digital inclusion among Rwandan youth. This chapter corresponds to the third research objective. More specifically, I examine the dimensions of access (locations, devices, platforms, and socio-economic inequalities), digital disengagement (voluntary non-use and attitudes), the motivations behind the uses and benefits of uses, and finally the transmedia skills of the participants.

In **Chapter 8** I analyze the context of ICT and peace education initiatives in Rwanda by comparing these initiatives to the research participants' experiences and accounts as well as my observations inside and outside of schools; all of this corresponds to the last objective of this research project. I focus on ICT initiatives that are presented and targeted by the government and peace education programs promoted by the government and non-governmental organizations. I also discuss whether these two fields are intertwined or not in the initiatives and programs in question.

In **Chapter 9** I conclude and summarize the research findings. I place my research findings in the general socio-political context of Rwanda as well as other research

projects with regards to digital inclusion, nonfiction transmedia storytelling, and peacebuilding. I also discuss the limitations of this study and possible options for further research. I present what kind of things did not work during the fieldwork or what I would do differently if I were to conduct the research a second time. I end by discussing potential research questions that emerged during this research and which could be answered in future research projects.



## **2. FIELDSITE AND CONTEXT**

In this chapter, I present previous research that has been conducted on Rwanda. Firstly, I provide general information about the pre-colonial and colonial periods of Rwanda and offer some insights and debates surrounding the aftermath of genocide. Since it is a complex topic, I try to review the contesting narratives in academia about the Rwandan government's regulations and policies. Later on, I continue by discussing the role of media in the genocide as well as the reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives that were established in the post-genocide period. Finally, I introduce details and statistics about the use of digital technologies and the youth in Rwanda and how the latter are being positioned in the aftermath of the genocide.

### **2.1. Background of Rwanda**

Rwanda is a landlocked country with a very small surface area, which makes it one of the smallest countries in Africa. It has a population of approximately 12.5 million people (World Bank, 2020). Rwanda was a part of German East Africa from 1894 until the end of the First World War, and in 1924 Belgium took control as the administering authority. During both colonial periods, the Tutsi were favored more than the Hutu (Magnarella, 2005). The ethnicities before and during the colonial states have been summarized by Mamdani (2002):

If Hutu/Tutsi evoked the subject-power distinction in the precolonial Rwandan state, the colonial state gave it an added dimension: by racializing Hutu and Tutsi as identities, it signified the distinction as one between indigenous and alien. By making of Tutsi and Hutu identities evocative of colonial power and colonial subjugation—and not just local power relations—colonialism made them more volatile than ever in history. (Mamdani, 2002, p. 75)

After the country's independence in 1962, the Hutu elite quickly took over power thanks to Belgian support (Thomson, 2013) and the Tutsi encountered a "strictly limited sphere of influence" (Hintjens, 1999, p. 248). After a four-year civil war (1990-1994) that was caused by a long history of discrimination and conflicts before and after

colonial times, Rwanda was devastated by a genocide that resulted in the murder of at least a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus by Hutu extremists in a short period of three months between April and July in 1994. According to Uvin (1999), the polarization that led to ethnic violence was closely linked to the ruling Hutu elite's eagerness to maintain its power through using "ethnicity" as a tool for legitimization. On April 7, 1994, the plane carrying back then President Habyarimana and the president of Burundi was shot down, which triggered the genocide (Des Forges, 1999), but who attacked the plane remains undiscovered and is still hotly debated. The Tutsi were the main target of the genocide due to their ethnicity, while moderate Hutus were killed for being "co-conspirators" (Zorbas, 2004). The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), under the leadership of Paul Kagame, the current president, ended the massacre after gaining control of the capital city of Kigali (Purdeková, 2008a) and has been the ruling party in Rwanda since then. After the genocide, the Rwandan government focused attention on the "social engineering" of economic, political, and cultural systems (Straus & Waldorf, 2011). In the economic arena, the government aims to turn Rwanda into a middle-income knowledge-based country and a technology hub under the "Vision 2020" program (Ansoms, 2008). The country has developed economically compared to pre-genocide times (McKay & Verpoorten, 2016), but there is still a divide and inequality of opportunity between the poor and the rich, and ties between rural and urban communities are weak (Ansoms, 2008; S. Thomson, 2018).

In the context of politics and social life, research reveals government silencing of political opposition (Reyntjens, 2006; Straus & Waldorf, 2011; Thomson, 2018), surveillance of citizens (Grant, 2019; Purdeková, 2011), lack of independent media and freedom of information (Sobel & McIntyre, 2019), highly politicized daily life (Ingelaere, 2010; Thomson, 2010), and fear of discussing political issues (Beswick, 2010). For instance, many scholars claim that the 2001 law on "divisionism" and the 2008 law on "genocide ideology" are used by the government "to restrict political competition and curb criticism of its regime" (Hilker, 2009). "Divisionism" has been defined as "the use of any speech, written statement, or action that divides people, that is likely to spark conflicts among people, or that causes an uprising which might degenerate into strife among people based on discrimination" (Republic of Rwanda, 2001) while, according to the report, "genocide ideology" means

an aggregate of thoughts characterized by conduct, speeches, documents and other acts aiming at exterminating or inciting others to exterminate people basing on ethnic group, origin, nationality, region, color, physical appearance, sex, language, religion or political opinion, committed in normal periods or during war. (Republic of Rwanda, 2008)

The ambiguity of what is considered unlawful according to the law of “genocide ideology” (Amnesty International, 2010; Waldorf, 2009), as well as the vague definition of “divisionism” (Zorbas, 2004), enables the government to accuse people of being “enemies of the ‘new’ Rwanda” (Thomson, 2010, p. 22). Any opinion that does not align with the official narrative can be labeled as inciting genocide ideology (Buckley-zistel, 2006). Similarly, “[l]egislation on ‘divisionism’ and ‘genocide ideology’ serves a dual purpose: it shields the RPF’s narrative on history and national unity and reconciliation, and enables it to silence political dissent” (Reyntjens, 2016, p. 68). The official RPF narrative states that the “liberation” of the country was a consequence of RPF’s intervention (Bouka, 2013) and the reasons for the 1994 genocide were ethnic division resulting from colonialism, poor governance and leadership, and authoritarian rule over an obedient, mostly peasant, population (Thomson, 2013). In opposition to this dominant narrative of the RPF and Kagame as “saviors” and “heroes” in ending the genocide (Baldwin, 2019a; Bouka, 2013), some scholars argue that the RPF committed war crimes against Hutu civilians during the genocide (Des Forges, 1999; Straus & Waldorf, 2011; Thomson, 2018). Research also demonstrates differences between Rwandans’ lived experiences during the genocide and the official narrative in museums and memorials (Jessee, 2017).

Following the genocide, Rwanda has faced a complex process of reconciliation and peacebuilding in which the emphasis on abolishing “divisionism” and “genocide ideology” prevails in the social and cultural life of Rwandans due to the ongoing “national unity” program promoted by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). The stated goal of the NURC program is the “rebuilding” of the nation through “reeducation” about its history and the elimination of the ethnic categories “Hutu,” “Tutsi,” and “Twa.” The dominant RPF discourse considers this ethnic categorization a European colonial tool for dividing the nation. Shortly after the genocide, the RPF-led government declared ethnic categorization detrimental to the

unity of the country. The government implemented a “de-ethnicization” process, called “Ndi Umunyarwanda” (*I am Rwandan*), and established “Rwandanness” as the basis for citizenship (Buckley-zistel, 2006). According to Ingelaere (2010), the narrative around “Rwandanness” consists of three components: that colonialism divided the country, which led to the genocide against the Tutsi; the RPF ended this division and created unity among citizens; and that citizens should embrace “Rwandanicity” and be aware of “genocide ideology” that tries to harm this unity. Despite its appearance as inclusive, the discursive frame of the RPF’s new nation-building movement “obscures the top-down dissemination, tightly policed boundaries and totalitarian nature of the discourse” (Purdeková, 2008b, p. 3). Furthermore, although the use of ethnic labels is avoided, the state has created a different categorization system, which divides the population into five groups based on their experience during the genocide: *returnees* (mainly Tutsi and some Hutu exiles who returned when the RPF took power), *refugees* (Tutsi pre-genocide refugees and Hutu post-genocide refugees), *victims* (both Tutsi and moderate Hutu), *survivors* (only Tutsi) and *perpetrators* (Hutu) (Mamdani, 2002, pp. 266–267). The discourse of the new genocide-based categorization is evident in the commemoration practices, *Kwibuka*,<sup>18</sup> which are held every year between April and July. The synonymous use of “Tutsi” and “survivor” as well as “Hutu” and “perpetrator” in these practices conflicts with the framework of the new nation-building process that emphasizes de-ethnicization (Baldwin, 2019b). Additionally, this discourse appears to be transmitted to younger generations, who take on “survivor status” despite having been born after the genocide (Baldwin, 2019b).

The peacebuilding and reconciliation process in Rwanda is very complex and has many dimensions to consider. In the light of this brief introduction to the Rwandan context, the role of media before and after the genocide should be also mentioned. The following questions need to be highlighted in order to understand the objectives and results of this study: Where is the media located in the process of nation-building? How do the press and traditional and new media deal with nation-building and the dominant discourses that surround peacebuilding and reconciliation?

---

<sup>18</sup> *Kwibuka* means “to remember” in Kinyarwanda and signifies the annual commemoration of the 1994 genocide.

## 2.2. Media before and after the genocide

“For those requesting weapons, I have just been informed that they are now available. To the youth, continue with the training. Tomorrow or the day after at the latest, you will be provided weapons. We would go and flush out the *Inyenzi*,<sup>19</sup> where ever they may be hiding.”<sup>20</sup>

These words from Kantano Habimana are excerpted from a broadcast on Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) on 30 May 1994. Kantano Habimana, one of the presenters of the radio station, explains that people should not be “cowards” and that they should stay and fight for the country alongside the youth. He presents information on how and where to find Tutsis and how to kill the “cockroaches”, congratulates those who took part in “protecting” the country, and blames those who fled. The role of hate media during the genocide is well documented by many academics (see Kellow & Steeves, 1998; Kirschke, 1996; Li, 2004; Mitchell, 2007; Paluck, 2009; Straus, 2007; Thompson, 2007, 2019). During the civil war between 1990 and 1994 and the genocide in 1994, RTLM was the most popular local media inciting hatred towards Tutsis by dehumanizing and scapegoating the Tutsi and the moderate Hutu (Mitchell, 2007; Somerville, 2012). RTLM and Radio Rwanda broadcast several programs with derogatory propaganda content against the Tutsi community through jokes and comments (Paluck, 2009; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014).

Overall, radio has become associated with hate speech during the 1994 genocide and it has been claimed that radio broadcasts, and especially those produced by RTLM, had a direct effect on the mass killings (see Dallaire & Beardsley, 2005; Des Forges, 1999; Power, 2001). On the other side, some scholars believe that the radio could not have been the only source for inciting hatred towards the Tutsi, though they acknowledge that it had some impact on the attacks (Higiro, 2007; Mironko, 2007; Straus, 2019). Regarding the impact of radio on the genocide, Yanagizawa-Drott (2013) provides statistical information on the high and low literacy regions in Rwanda

---

<sup>19</sup> *Inyenzi* means cockroach in Kinyarwanda. The radio programs referred to the Tutsi as *inyenzi* during the genocide.

<sup>20</sup> By Kantano Habimana, 30 May 1994, page 9.

[http://migs.concordia.ca/links/documents/RTLM\\_30May94\\_eng\\_K023-8685-K023-8704.pdf](http://migs.concordia.ca/links/documents/RTLM_30May94_eng_K023-8685-K023-8704.pdf)

and their participation in the genocide. According to his results, the RTML broadcasts did not have an impact on high-literate people:

The radio propaganda thus seemed to be ineffective among the literate population. Based on the data from Rwanda, the results therefore provide suggestive evidence that a necessary condition for radio propaganda to induce civilian participation in violence is that the targeted population lacks basic education. When alternative print media provides competing views and information, as was the case in Rwanda in 1994, a plausible explanation for why basic education may limit the persuasive power of a given propaganda outlet is that it enables citizens to access alternative news sources. (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2013, p. 391)

Although alternative print media also existed, “Rwandan newspapers reached a small proportion of the population because of their high cost and the high illiteracy rate” (Higiro, 2007, p. 86). Similarly, Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) states that “the circulation and readership of these newspapers in rural areas was limited due to relatively low literacy rates” (p. 7). Thus, print media appealed to the educated urban population; the use of television was also limited to this group (Straus, 2019). Right now in Rwanda, according to Rwandan Utilities Regularity Authority statistics (RURA, 2020), there are “three (3) pay TV operators, thirty-four (34) FM radio stations, nineteen (19) television stations, twenty-three (23) online media houses, thirty-one (31) print media houses, and three (3) international media houses” in the country (p. 19). However, after the genocide, the new government took severe precautions regarding media regulations and the radio programs gave little space to political news (Frère, 2009).

Recent studies on press freedom in Rwanda show that self-censorship and political interference prevail in Rwandan media (see Fiedler & Frère, 2018; Sobel & McIntyre, 2018, 2019). In terms of the use of digital media and digital media content, the situation is similar. According to the 2020 report of Freedom House, the Rwandan government restricts any online content that is not aligned with its official narrative. Online news websites and content criticizing the government, such as *Inyenyeri News*, *The Rwandan*, and *Le Prophete*, remain blocked in the country (Freedom House, 2020). The report also reveals that self-censorship of citizens and journalists is still high, that

few Rwandans are aware of the blockage of online content, and that journalists are at risk of being subject to criminal charges and intimidation. The Rwandan government also released a report about how people in foreign countries use different media outlets to deny the genocide and called for citizens, especially young people, to use social media to fight against “denialism” (Freedom House, 2020).

In the past, the media was used as a tool to incite hatred towards an ethnic group during the genocide, and currently, there are limits on what can be said in the media due to self-censorship and fear. On the other hand, the media have also been used as a tool for peacebuilding by some peacebuilding initiatives. In the following section, a brief history of such initiatives and consideration of their benefits and challenges are discussed in the context of socio-political dynamics in Rwanda.

### **2.3. Reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives**

The magnitude of the genocide in 1994 resulted in many genocide suspects, which caused the government to adopt the traditional community justice process given the inadequacy of the justice system to deal with them (Lambourne, 2003). The courts known as *Gacaca*, meaning “justice on the grass” (Ingelaere, 2016), were initiated to speed up the trial of the alleged participants in the 1994 genocide. The aims of these grassroots legal mechanisms were to “punish génocidaires, release the innocent, provide reparations, establish the truth, promote reconciliation between the Hutu and the Tutsi, and heal a nation torn apart by genocide and civil war in 1994” (Rettig, 2008, pp. 25–26). The courts achieved a difficult task in the aftermath of a genocide that led to the destruction of legal structures of the country, however, research also shows that this legal mechanism failed in some aspects. For instance, people did not participate honestly in these courts due to heavy penalties and lack of community trust, which limited their contribution to reconciliation and peacebuilding (Rettig, 2008). Additionally, those who testified as witnesses in the *Gacaca* courts showed higher levels of depression and PTSD (Brounéus, 2010).

Intending to promote reconciliation, the Rwandan government initiated the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), which “held public meetings around the country with various categories of people, asking them to say what they believed

was necessary for reconciliation and what they personally needed to be able to reconcile” (Staub, 2014, p. 506). The commission organizes meetings, conferences, and events addressing reconciliation as well as re-education programs focusing on the “new vision of Rwanda” (Staub, 2014).

Beyond this, there were media interventions in the reconciliation and peacebuilding process. For example, Internews initiated the “Justice After Genocide” newsreel project, which showed video footage of trials in Arusha and the national courts, as well as in the *Gacaca* (Frohardt & Orlando, 2019). The screenings were hosted in public spaces and aimed to foster a dialogue among the citizens, local organizations, and other audiences on issues related to justice and reconciliation (Frohardt & Orlando, 2019). These screenings helped audiences to gain information about the courts and trials, and thus reflect on justice and reconciliation in the country (Longman, 2014). Another very popular initiative is a radio drama called *Musekweya (New Dawn)*, which was first broadcast in 2004 by the Dutch non-governmental organization Radio La Benevolencija Humanitarian Tools Foundation<sup>21</sup> (Staub, 2013). Intending to prevent violence and promote reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda, the radio drama tells the story of two fictional villages in conflict and gives messages about trauma, peace, justice and dialogue (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2013; Staub, 2014). In a one-year-long field experiment using the radio drama with the research participants and collecting observational data about their discussions, as well as questionnaires and focus groups, Paluck (2007) reports that

The reconciliation program affected listeners’ perceptions of and behaviors toward some of the most critical issues for Rwanda’s post conflict society, such as intermarriage, open dissent, trust, and talking about personal trauma. A pattern of perceived norm and behavior change was observed across measures of participants’ attitudes, group discussions, and behaviors during

---

<sup>21</sup> As described on its website, the Radio La Benevolencija Humanitarian Tools Foundation is “a Dutch NGO that empowers groups and individuals who are the target of hate speech and ensuing acts. It broadcasts radio soaps, discussions and educational programmes, in combination with grass roots activities that provide citizens in vulnerable societies with knowledge on how to recognise and resist manipulation to violence and how to heal trauma, encouraging them to be active bystanders against incitement and violence.” (See <http://www.labenevolencija.org/la-benevolencija/mission-and-vision>.)

deliberations about a communal resource. The program also increased empathy for other Rwandans. (Paluck, 2007, p. 3)

Fictional radio dramas such as *Musekweya* can also provide a space for including oppressed historical narratives (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2013) because fiction makes it possible for people to discuss sensitive issues that certain socio-political dynamics in the country might otherwise limit. On the other hand, the current Rwandan context also determines the interpretations of conflict and post-conflict representations in fictional stories (Bilali, 2014). Similar to *Musekweya*, there are other initiatives that utilize media such as Search for Common Ground's (SFCG)<sup>22</sup> mobile cinema, which travels around villages in rural Rwanda and engages citizens in discussions through participatory theatre at the end of screenings, as well as computer games aimed at school students for educating them about the roots of conflicts and conflict resolution in everyday settings (Frohardt & Orlando, 2019). There are also other radio shows such as *Generation Grands Lacs* (GGL) and *Turumwe* ("We are one") that aim to promote peace and peaceful cohabitation (Spillane, 2015). However, there is little or no detailed assessment of these initiatives' real impact on their audiences and users in terms of outcomes for the peacebuilding and reconciliation process. It is also important to note that these studies seem to overlook the socio-political context of Rwanda.

Education programs through genocide memorials and *ingando camps* are another tool used for the reconciliation process in Rwanda. Genocide memorials are mostly visited during *Kwibuka* and these places reproduce the standardized national commemoration narrative that aligns with the narrative of the RPF (Baldwin, 2019b). *Ingando camps* were introduced by the government to "re-educate" the young people to fight against "genocide ideology," to learn about history and democracy, and to promote unity and reconciliation; however, these camps became spaces for disseminating the official narrative of the government as well as its version of the past (Buckley-Zistel, 2009; Mgbako, 2005; Purdeková, 2015). Peace education in the official education curriculum has also been emphasized. One study finds that peace

---

<sup>22</sup> Search for Common Ground is an international organization whose objective is to "to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions" (see <https://www.sfcg.org/>).

education in Rwanda “continues to contribute to national reconciliation by creating a culture of peace and promoting the universal values of justice, tolerance, respect for others, solidarity and democracy” (Mafeza, 2013, p. 9). On the other hand, the lack of teacher training, the teacher-centered approach to teaching history, limited curriculum materials, the insufficiency of teaching materials, and inequalities in educational opportunities engender challenges to educating people about the genocide (Hilker, 2011; Mafeza, 2013). Finally, history teaching in schools is limited in terms of reconciliation and peacebuilding, since the history syllabus privileges one ethnicity and its members over others, thus conflicting with the reconciliation and unity narrative (Thomas & Skinstad van der Kooij, 2018).

The inclusion of women in the peacebuilding process has also been a significant point that has been emphasized by the Rwandan government. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2020), women make up 61.3% of the parliament in Rwanda. After the genocide ended, there was an increase in Rwandan women’s organizations that were established to face post-genocide problems (Newbury & Baldwin, 2001). In his research on Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe, an organization with many NGO members, Mwambari (2017) finds that the organization has greatly contributed to the participation of women in decision-making and female-friendly policy-making. Despite its successes, the organization has also faced certain challenges such as sensitive political settings and dependence on external donors (Mwambari, 2017). Mutamba and Izabiliza (2005) also find that Rwandan women contributed substantially to the peacebuilding and reconciliation process, but that some challenges hamper their potential. These challenges include women’s subordinate status, high illiteracy, lack of education, and poverty in rural areas (Mutamba & Izabiliza, 2005). In addition, the women’s participation in local decision-making is low compared to the national level, where women have more seats in the parliament as well as in other governmental institutions:

Women’s visibility in peace building programs remains limited mainly as the result of the negative gender stereotypes that still characterise the Rwandan society that is patriarchal in structure. Throughout the study, it was noted that a big proportion of the people interviewed appreciated the role the national unity and reconciliation commission in supporting and facilitating women

reconciliation's efforts. However, some respondents were of the view that the commission could do more if it worked directly with the communities through local initiatives at the grassroots level. (Mutamba & Izabiliza, 2005, p. 47)

## 2.4. Use of digital technologies in Rwanda

According to the RURA report in 2020, the rate of mobile phone penetration in Rwanda is 77.87% of the population, and the internet subscription rate is 62.3% (RURA, 2020). The report also shows that, in terms of using mobile phone SIM cards, most of the population utilizes pre-paid cards. People use Internet subscriptions through their mobile phone Internet subscription and the rate of fixed Internet subscription via broadband is 0.1%. Out of approximately 13 million Rwandans, according to DataReportal (2020):

- There are **3.31 million** Internet users in Rwanda as counted in January 2020. The number of Internet users **increased** by **267 thousand** (+8.8%) between 2019 and 2020.
- There are **610,000** social media users in Rwanda as counted in January 2020. The number of social media users **increased** by **103,000** (+20%) between April 2019 and January 2020.
- There are **9.37 million** mobile connections in Rwanda as counted in January 2020. The number of mobile connections in Rwanda **decreased** by **153,000** (-1.6%) between January 2019 and January 2020. (DataReportal, 2020)

The Rwandan government emphasizes the use of digital technologies and aims to turn the country into a technology hub under the “Vision 2020” program. One of the initiatives is the National Information and Communications Infrastructure (NICI) plans, which are five-year rolling plans first implemented in 2001 (Farrell, 2007). The last plan to date was published in 2015 as the last phase of the NICI plans. As stated in the plan, the objectives are to:

- Transform Rwanda into an IT-literate nation
- Promote and encourage the deployment and utilization of ICTs within the society

- Improve the civil and public service efficiency
- Develop the information and communications infrastructure of Rwanda
- Make Rwanda a regional ICT hub
- Transform the educational system using ICTs with the aim of improving accessibility, quality and relevance to the developmental needs of Rwanda
- Empower Rwandans by developing a human resource base that adapts to changing demands of the economy
- Develop the legal, institutional and regulatory framework and structures required to support the deployment and utilization of ICT (Republic of Rwanda, 2015a, p. 13)

Quantitative research on demographics and socioeconomic differences among mobile phone users as well as mobile phone use shows that owners are more likely to be from privileged backgrounds, male, educated, and wealthy, while in terms of using mobile phones there appear to be gender differences such as longer call lengths on the part of women (Blumenstock & Eagle, 2010).

In spite of the efforts of the policies and actions plan, research shows that the digital divide still exists and marginalized groups such as rural communities tend to be the most vulnerable (Were et al., 2009). Furthermore, unequal gender access to ICTs prevails in Rwandan society (Mumporeze & Prieler, 2017). The studies about the use of digital technologies in Rwanda reveal the challenges of ICT use in classrooms from the perspective of teachers (Mukama & Andersson, 2007; Were et al., 2009), the complexities of university students' interaction with web-based sources in multilingual settings (Mukama, 2008, 2009), heightened use of the Internet in line with economic development policies (Gagliardone & Golooba-Mutebi, 2016), increasing use of social media in public institutions by both employers and employees to share knowledge (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017b), the socio-economic difference in mobile phone use of adults (Blumenstock & Eagle, 2010), the limited amount of citizen-generated content due to censorship and filtering by media houses (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017a) and the struggle of teachers in applying the One Laptop per Child initiative in their realities (Fajebe, 2013). The research on the use of digital technologies of youth from the perspective of young people themselves, on the other hand, is very limited. One study of youth focuses on both teachers' and students' accounts to understand how they

use ICTs in schools. The researchers conclude that there is limited access to computers at schools and how students use digital technologies in school differs from their uses of them in everyday life:

There is no evidence that ICT is being used in a playful and experimental way by young people in schools, and the ICT curriculum seems to be constraining teachers to "teach theory" before allowing students hands-on engagement with the technology. This is likely to be in contrast to how young people are using ICT out-of-school in Rwanda. (Rubagiza et al., 2011, p. 43)

Concerning young people's use of the Internet and social media in their daily lives and outside of formal education, the research is also very rare. One of them is Grant's (2019) ethnographic research, which explores the dynamics of youth in Kinyarwanda entertainment websites and how young people in Rwanda create their own space for discussion and self-making. Grant adds that although these websites pertain to celebrity culture, the conversations taking place on the websites have a political end:

While entertainment websites are not political in any direct sense, they are shaped by the pervasiveness of on- and offline surveillance, and some young Rwandans seem to view the Internet as yet another space of political performativity wherein they could perform their allegiance to the state. (Grant, 2019, p. 14)

## **2.5. The youth of Rwanda**

According to the report by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) "Rwanda's population is very youthful with 40.1 percent being under age 15; 20 percent between 15 and 24, and 68.7 below age 30 in 2015" (National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2017, p. xiii). As suggested by Honwana (2014), in Africa young people "constitute a disenfranchised majority, largely excluded from major socioeconomic institutions and political processes," which presents an obstacle for their engagement in their social and political life (p. 2433). In the case of Rwanda it is also important to consider that although the government's decisions and regulations target young people, these policies overlook the needs and priorities of youth

(Sommers, 2011); for this reason, young people face certain challenges due to the conflict between what is expected from them and what reality holds for them.

The government of Rwanda has defined the role of youth as critical to the process of the reconciliation and the nation-building project, and therefore new strategies for promoting it through youth inclusion and education are significant parts of government policy. Reeducating youth about the history of Rwanda and including young people in the peacebuilding and reconciliation process is prominent in the government's agenda (Basabose & Habyarimana, 2019). The Rwandan government's discourse is that young people are at the core of constructing "a new metanarrative of national rebirth" (Pells, 2011a). Young people have certain expectations projected on to them, such as changing their status from "victims of their parents' past" to "being leaders of tomorrow" (Pells, 2011a). This discourse also creates further categorization between people. Most young people in Rwanda subscribe to the RPF's vision of a "good" young Rwandan as being a successful student, an obedient child, and a contributing citizen. Young people who are not able to fulfill these ideals feel a sense of exclusion (Pells et al., 2014). The ability to attain them is often broken down along socioeconomic lines. The pressure to be a "good" Rwandan reinforces socio-economic inequalities and tensions between those who find these standards unattainable and those who are privileged enough to achieve what is expected from them (Pells et al., 2014). Through legislation and regulations, the government has utilized and revised the educational curriculum in schools. Several programs and strategies have been introduced, developed, and supported with the goal of educating young people about unity, reconciliation, and peacebuilding. The Rwandan youth are not passive recipients of these strategies; on the contrary, they are actively involved in the reconstruction of the state narrative and national identity through their experiences and their interaction with local realities (Pells, 2011a).

The research on Rwandan youth also shows that "ethnicity" is still a significant factor in identity construction by youth (Blackie & Hitchcott, 2018; Hilker, 2009, 2012, 2014), even though the government emphasizes de-ethnicization. Young people still try to identify others based on ethnicity and categorize them, although they "do not talk together about ethnicity or how they feel about their own identity, nor share the details about their experiences or their views about Rwanda's past" (Hilker 2009, p. 96). Even

though ethnicity is not officially acknowledged, clues about national and cultural identities are transmitted to young people, through which they interpret historical events and position themselves in relation to others (Wolnik et al., 2017). As Pells (2011b) states, in Rwanda “not only past shape[s] the present, but the present shapes the view of the past” (p. 603). The past is made present not only by remembering it through commemoration events or speeches, but also by compelling Rwandans to perform their identities and practicing identity-making on a daily basis in various participatory spaces.

As summarized in the previous sections, the Rwandan context is complex. For this reason, research on Rwandan youth requires an interdisciplinary approach. Especially with the increasing popularity of digital media among youth, the research about them should also consider looking into their everyday digital activities to make sense of their lives and to approach certain topics in post-genocide Rwanda. Interdisciplinary research on Rwandan youth and their use of digital technologies, and the implications of these on the peacebuilding and reconciliation process appears to be lacking in the literature on Rwanda. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the field by analyzing the accounts of young people in Rwanda through the lens of their approach to digital media and peacebuilding.



### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

An interdisciplinary approach is needed to fully understand the complexity behind the use of digital technologies by young people in Rwanda and its implications on the peacebuilding process. I therefore utilize various theoretical approaches from the fields of communication, media, youth studies, international studies, and peace and conflict studies. As such, this section aims to present and consolidate the theories that form the basis for this study. It identifies prevalent themes and discussions in relation to transmedia storytelling (section 3.1.), transmedia participation (section 3.2.), user-generated content (sections 3.3. and 3.4.), peacebuilding and peace education (section 3.5.), digital inclusion (3.6.), and youth participation (section 3.7.).

#### **3.1. Nonfiction transmedia storytelling and education**

Transmedia storytelling has been used as a technique to spread information, stories and messages with the participation of audiences. It is not a new or modern notion (Scolari, 2014; Scolari et al., 2014). Transmedia storytelling has a long historical background, but the digitization that characterizes the new media ecology has made it more visible, accessible, and interactive than ever (Freeman, 2014; Scolari, 2014). Scolari (2009) describes transmedia storytelling as

a particular narrative structure that expands through both different languages (verbal, iconic, etc.) and media (cinema, comics, television, video games, etc.). TS is not just an adaptation from one media to another. The story that the comics tell is not the same as that told on television or in cinema; the different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of the transmedia narrative world. (Scolari, 2009, p. 587)

Transmedia storytelling does not consist of the same story on different platforms; rather it builds the story from a different and new perspective on each platform. Each medium contributes something new that can generate discussion, and all this enriches the intertextual discourse that helps construct a story plot that becomes increasingly dense and complex (Jenkins, 2011). Jenkins (2009) defines “seven principles of

transmedia storytelling” (described in Table 2) in order to depict what a transmedia story must achieve and the ways in which it draws audiences’ attention and engages them in the storyworld: Spreadability vs. Drillability, Continuity vs. Multiplicity, Immersion vs. Extractability, Worldbuilding, Seriality, Subjectivity, and Performance (Jenkins, 2009). His principles, though, are based on fictional storyworlds. Like Jenkins’ research, most of the scholarly work on transmedia storytelling stems from the analysis of fiction.

In this research, I will approach transmedia storytelling from the angle of a nonfictional storyworld. The scholarship on nonfiction transmedia storytelling began to emerge with regard to documentaries (Kerrigan & Velikovsky, 2016; Vázquez-Herrero & Gifreu-Castells, 2019), journalism (Gambarato & Tárca, 2017), and social change and activism (Freeman, 2016; Hancox, 2019; Srivastava, 2009) among others. Nonfiction transmedia “emerges as a means of building continuous daily experiences around audiences” (Freeman, 2016, p. 8). Thus, as with fiction transmedia, a nonfiction transmedia narrative is also characterized by its expansion through audience participation, interaction, and engagement.

<b>Spreadability vs. Drillability</b>	Spreading and deepening content for different audiences to explore the extensions of the story
<b>Continuity vs. Multiplicity</b>	Maintaining the storyworld for a long time and through alternatives
<b>Immersion vs. Extractability</b>	Allowing audiences to enter the story and use some aspects of it in their everyday lives
<b>Worldbuilding</b>	Extending the story to give richer depictions, led mostly by user communities
<b>Seriality</b>	Expanding the story through multiple media channels and engaging different audiences
<b>Subjectivity</b>	Including various perspectives for users to experience the story in alternative ways
<b>Performance</b>	Inspiring audiences to contribute to the storyworld with their own storytelling

Table 2. Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling. Jenkins, 2009.

In the transmedia world, people not only consume, but also expand the story through their contributions, which makes user engagement and user-generated content one of

the core values of transmedia worldbuilding. Telling and expanding the story on different platforms would not be considered transmedia without audience engagement. While fiction transmedia storytelling emphasizes user engagement and user-generated content as well, nonfiction content created by users and their engagement becomes crucial in nonfiction transmedia projects since most of these depend on their users and audiences to contribute to their social impact. For example, in transmedia journalism, there are three important factors that need to be considered for projects to have an impact: multiple media platforms, content expansion, and audience engagement (Gambarato & Tárca, 2017). On the other hand, user engagement can be limited in certain projects, especially in terms of creating content. For example, research finds that transmedia storytelling in museums does not stimulate audiences to generate content (Mateos-Rusillo & Gifreu-Castells, 2018).

Nonfiction transmedia carries a potential for engaging people to voice their concerns and create a social impact through creative means and storytelling. I see nonfiction as a tool to fight against a single story by sharing multiple narratives from multiple voices in the same storyworld. It also encourages a culture of co-creation that benefits the collective with active listening and exchange of stories through participation, interaction, and engagement in transmedia worldbuilding. I also see nonfiction transmedia storytelling as a teaching and learning method, as storytelling has been proven to be a significant pedagogical tool (Kalogeris, 2014). Transmedia storytelling gets its power from the traditional means it uses such as emotions, engagement, and global themes (Rutledge, 2011), and also from modern tools such as digital environments and user-generated content thanks to digital technologies, all of which make it very effective in enhancing learning and teaching activities. Audiences can be encouraged to navigate across issues and platforms through educational nonfiction transmedia projects. Freeman (2016) states that

the key, it seems, lies in the way that transmedia can enable not just the spreading of messages across multiple media, but equally the creation of a social fence around those messages, inviting participation and building a stronger community. (Freeman, 2016, p. 4).

As Gifreu-Castells and Moreno (2014) state, “now the student is immersed in a technological learning environment based on the feedback of information; therefore, schools that use a unidirectional transmission of knowledge based on listening and repetition of concepts seem tedious” (p. 1307). They also assert that transmedia storytelling components such as interactive documentaries provide a challenge to overcome, give data to come up with ideas and decisions, and allows users to navigate and connect the dots to make sense of the story, which makes it compelling and engaging for the education field (Gifreu-Castells & Moreno, 2014). In this regard, blending nonfiction transmedia storytelling and recent technology is a promising tool that has the potential to enable participation, interaction, and engagement in social issues and social change among users and audiences. Additionally, it presents “an immersive learning landscape, which enables multivarious entry and exit points for learning and teaching” (Fleming, 2013, p. 371) by engaging audiences through multiple literacies. Jenkins (2010) also points out the different practices of transmedia and multimedia when it comes to education:

Multimedia and Transmedia assume very different roles for spectators/consumers/readers. In a multimedia application, all the readers need to do is click a mouse and the content comes to them. In a transmedia presentation, students need to actively seek out content through a hunting and gathering process which leads them across multiple media platforms. (Jenkins, 2010, para. 5)

Following these scholars who emphasize the advantages of using transmedia storytelling as an educational tool, I concur with the idea that educators can use interactive, immersive and participatory storyworlds to draw and maintain the attention of students who are more and more familiar with the digital media world. However, this would not entail “a replacement of teachers and curriculum, but rather a supplement.” (Teske & Horstman, 2012, p. 9). On the contrary, using nonfiction transmedia storytelling in educational settings would still require educators who know how to combine digital technologies with learners’ skills, thus eliminating educator-centered methods and generating a more learner-focused pedagogy. In the digital era, which poses some disruptions to the field of education such as “a changing media landscape; the rupture with traditional forms to deliver instruction, as well as, a fast paced

development of mobile technologies and the inherent impact on the educational context” (Rodrigues & Bidarra, 2014, p. 46), transmedia storytelling can provide not only an innovative and interactive teaching method, but also an enjoyable experience for learners. In this research, I discuss nonfiction transmedia storytelling also as an educational tool for peace education in post-conflict societies, which encourages transmedia participation for reflexivity, open dialogue, and discussions.

### **3.2. Transmedia participation: Interaction and engagement**

Participation is at the heart of the fight for social justice and inclusion of citizens in solving social problems that affect their lives. In that regard, digital media has the potential to affect the dynamics of participation (Dahlgren, 2013). Transmedia participation can reinforce and strengthen online political and civic participation in certain cases. I use the notion of “transmedia participant” as an umbrella term for interaction and engagement with transmedia storytelling projects and extend the transmedia narrative in online and offline spaces. It comprises various ways of interacting with transmedia projects and engaging in transmedia worldbuilding as well as community building. On the subject of participation in transmedia storytelling, Jenkins states, “I object to calling it participation if the people involved have no sense of themselves as belonging to something bigger than the individual. For me, participation starts at that moment when we see ourselves as part of a group that is seeking to achieve some shared goals through collective effort” (in Allen et al., 2014, p. 1145). Schäfer defines participation as the ways users “contribute to or participate in using a service or a platform” (in Allen et al, 2004, p. 1142). He also adds that “it is necessary to point out the context of user activities, their agency, the role of design, and the objectives and influence of the platform providers. Then we can be more specific about the quality of participation and can develop criteria for measuring its impact” (p.1142).

Transmedia participation for this thesis is considered to involve different dimensions. The design of transmedia projects has a significant impact on the transmedia participation of users. Following von Stackelberg (2011), I argue that designing effective transmedia stories requires three interrelated components: interaction

design, narrative design, user engagement design. Interaction design is related to audience interaction with the interface of the project and its navigation through the narrative while the narrative design is concerned with the narrative elements of the transmedia storytelling (Stackelberg, 2011). User engagement design, on the other hand, focuses on the design of the transmedia storytelling in terms of audience participation in the narrative. In this thesis, although my approach to transmedia participation is focused more on users' perspectives, I also acknowledge the importance and significance of the design of transmedia projects. Therefore, I use interaction and engagement as two concepts of transmedia participation while including the elements of the design of projects and their narratives.

Firstly, the *interaction* process of young people with the transmedia storytelling projects demonstrates how young people navigate the interfaces of the projects, what kind of difficulties such as unequal opportunities to access and infrastructural drawbacks they encounter as well as their interpretation of the design of the projects. Digitalization has made a variety of content available for users to consume on various digital platforms, "bringing about a technological and multiplatform convergence" (Sánchez Martínez & Ibar Alonso, 2015, p. 87). For instance, different characters in a story can explain their own perceptions of the same issue, or different media platforms can be utilized to reach the target audience (Hancox, 2017). By using multifaceted media and audience interaction design, transmedia storytelling projects can create a real-life experience.

With regard to transmedia storytelling, Ryan (2004) describes five properties of digital media: reactivity and interactivity, multimedia capabilities, networking capabilities, volatile signs, and modularity (p. 338). She points out that although digital media should be defined by emphasizing each one of these properties, "interactivity" is particularly crucial when storytelling is concerned because "when interactivity is added to the text or the movie, its ability to tell stories, and the stories it can tell, are deeply affected" (p. 339). She further develops a typology adapted from Espen Aarseth's typology in order to categorize user interaction in digital media into internal versus external involvement and exploratory versus ontological involvement:

In the internal mode users project themselves as members of a virtual (or fictional) world, either by identifying with an avatar or by apprehending the

virtual world from a first-person perspective. In the external mode readers situate themselves outside of the virtual world. [...]

In the exploratory mode users are free to move around the database, but this activity does not make history, nor does it alter the plot; users have no impact on the destiny of the virtual world. In the ontological mode, by contrast, the decisions of the users send the history of the virtual world on different forking paths. (Ryan, 2004, p. 339)

In her subsequent research, Ryan (2015) adds another type of interactivity called “productive interactivity.” This is defined as users’ contributions to the storyworld which leave marks on the transmedia worldbuilding. It can adopt a bottom-up approach, such as fan-fiction that is created and disseminated freely by users, or a top-down approach, where productions and dissemination inside the project can be encouraged and allowed by the project producers (Ryan, 2015). Users create and expand the story by their contributions and disseminate these productions through social media, blogs, and forums, among others. I use this type of “interactivity” as part of the “engagement” process rather than interaction with the transmedia projects. Because while interaction might be limited in terms of active participation, engagement allows space for deeper involvement in building the storyworld. Similarly, Gambarato (2013) focuses on the importance of audience engagement through the contribution of users to produce a richer transmedia storyworld. When it is rich and expanded through engagement, the storyworld of transmedia comprises many stories arriving from the interaction of people or groups, settings, subjects, and events. This factor lets users utilize various approaches in communicating and negotiating issues that affect their lives.

I focus on *engagement* as a process where users become “prosumers” and active participants in storyworlds they interact with. The concept of “prosumer” (producer+consumer) was introduced by Toffler (1980) to define the ways in which consumers are involved in the production process by either expressing their choices to corporations or producing themselves with the possible potential of technology. As Scolari (2015) states:

If we look at the audiences we see that the critical, rebellious and counterhegemonic subject identified in the 1980s is now a prosumer that

actively participates in the creation of texts to feed the social networks. Remixing, postproduction and user-generated contents are the new coordinates of media consumption practices. (Scolari, 2015, p. 8)

In this regard, Jenkins et al. (2009) also define today's young generation as prosumers that utilize new digital technologies to appropriate, recreate, blend, and adapt the provided content and messages, which acquires potential for active citizenship and creativity as well as productivity. Transmedia storytelling strategies, then, can be used to involve audiences and users with the aim of changing perceptions on important social issues or encouraging participation and social activism. Jenkins (2013) asserts that

Millennials, who have been acclimating themselves with the tools of connectivity in times of play, now have at their disposal the means to harness a global community to solve such pressing issues as global warming, ethnic, racial or religious genocide, labor unrest, the inequities associated with class, and countless other modern-day assaults (Jenkins, 2013, para. 3).

Thus, the transmedia *engagement* process does not only involve the extension of stories through user-generated content but also a cognitive process where they compare and link stories, share their experiences, apply what they learn to their everyday lives, develop critical thinking and reflexivity on certain concepts in different timeframes and settings, create empathy and solidarity. This cognitive process created through engagement strategies can contribute to perspective-taking strategies thanks to its audiovisual and textual methods for immersive experiences. Perspective-taking is the cognitive skill of viewing a situation from another point of view (Davis, 1983), which can be beneficial for fighting against conflicts and social issues and be efficient for peacebuilding and reconciliation processes thanks to its potential to increase intergroup relations and reduce prejudices and stereotypes (Gutenbrunner & Wagner, 2016; Todd & Galinsky, 2014; Vescio et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2014). As Batson and Ahmad (2009) observe, media-generated experiences can be useful because they lead people to “imagine the thoughts and feelings of a member of a stigmatized group as he or she attempts to cope (imagine-other perspective taking), we can be led to value this person's welfare and feel empathic concern” (p. 169), thereby fostering

positive behaviors and attitudes. Furthermore, as Buber notes, storytelling enables people to comprehend and “imagine the real[ity] of the other” (as cited in Black, 2008, p. 96). By using digital devices and more participatory strategies, nonfiction transmedia storytelling has the potential to elicit a kind of perspective-taking that allows people to listen to each others’ stories, and view themselves and their (former) adversary in a more thorough and complete way than would be possible in any other setting or by means of any other kind of media and communication tool. Since the story is at the core of compelling and effective transmedia narratives, personal connection through engagement and user-generated content make it possible for transmedia projects to be used in educational and social transformation (Alexander & Regier, 2011; Ramasubramanian, 2016).

Transmedia engagement techniques have been used in many projects in order to encourage people to have a dialogue on various global issues. In this sense, transmedia storytelling is a tool for not only delivering a message but also allowing people to communicate an experience to bring awareness and encourage action among people or groups in such a way that broadens and deepens their participation. However, as mentioned before, nonfiction transmedia storytelling comes with some disadvantages due to the fact that it usually handles sensitive social issues. Although the interaction of users can be possible through navigating the project, viewing different viewpoints, and reading alternative documents, engagement can be limited because of several reasons such as fear among citizens. Another issue is to provide a long-term and well-thought engagement strategy where the expectations and needs of audiences are considered and analyzed. As Edmond (2015) states, “encouraging intense and longer-term audience engagement helps to extend the lifespan, reach and profitability of a single piece of intellectual property” (p. 1577). In the case of nonfiction transmedia engagement, when long-term engagement is fulfilled, participation of audiences through transmedia strategies contribute to social change as well as the articulation of social issues by citizens (Hancox, 2019).

In transmedia storytelling and transmedia participation, the notions of engagement and interaction are complementary and should be seen as tools with which users participate in transmedia worldbuilding and community building. The rapid growth of new digital tools has made it possible for users to change from passive consumers to

active contributors. Whether the interaction is internal or external as well as exploratory or ontological, as Ryan (2004) suggests, it can further allow users to engage with the worldbuilding activities to make better use of the collaborative properties of the digital world.

People are willing to look for information in many documents and across multiple platforms because they are so in love with the storyworld that they cannot get enough information about it. In its “classical” form (i.e., the one represented by commercial franchises), transmedia storytelling is not a game of putting a story together like a jigsaw puzzle, but rather a return trip to a favorite world. (Ryan, 2015, p. 4)

Although Ryan (2005) focuses on commercial use of transmedia storytelling and also to some extent on fictional storyworld in her statements where she emphasizes a revisit to a favorite world, it can also be adapted to the nonfiction transmedia storytelling where long-term participation can include going back to reexamining, revisiting and delving into the storyworld through interaction and extend this online participation to offline spaces through engagement. As Ryan (2005) mentions, in some cases, transmedia participation becomes not about bringing puzzle pieces together to have a full picture but turns into a process of creating one’s own puzzle or complicating the puzzle by adding another piece to it.

### **3.3. Civic engagement, user-generated content, and paratextuality**

Civic engagement is described as citizen participation in their communities with the aim of ameliorating the circumstances and shaping the future of the community (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Youth civic engagement has been widely discussed among academic researchers. According to Hattani (2017), “the traditional civic practices do not seem to empower the young generation [sic] interest” (p. 8), thus they tend to get involved in new practices of civic engagement through new media and digital technologies. For this research, I define civic engagement as any kind of engagement that intersects with issues in one’s community. I specifically focus on online civic engagement where users interact, participate, produce, co-produce, and disseminate content in relation to the problems of their society, mistakes that are made, and actions

that need to be taken. Additionally, I consider “civic imagination” as part of this engagement in which audiences create and disseminate content where “they imagine alternatives to current cultural, social, political, or economic conditions; one cannot change the world without imagining what a better world might look like” (Jenkins et al., 2020: 5). Therefore, user-generated content is central to online civic engagement and civic imagination.

User-generated content is defined as “the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). It has become more ubiquitous with the emergence of smartphones, cameras, and network infrastructures. It can take many forms, ranging from YouTube videos to tweets, from blogs to Facebook posts. User-generated content is an inseparable part of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009, 2013) whether it is a fiction or nonfiction transmedia project. It refers to the contribution of the general public (as opposed to professionals) to a certain topic or product and the distribution of this content on the Internet. Guerrero (2016) defines transmedia user-generated content in the framework of fiction as “the textual, graphic or audiovisual manifestations made by the fans of a particular product of mass culture based on it” (p. 77). Although fiction transmedia might tend to have entertainment-related facets, civic engagement for social change is also being shaped by fandom due to the blurry borderline between political and cultural participatory spaces (Brough & Shresthova, 2012); campaigns for certain TV shows to continue their broadcasting with the aim of increasing the representation of minorities or the visibility of certain groups are just one example of this. We see a similar pattern with regards to participation in the nonfiction transmedia universe, which blends popular culture with certain characteristics of journalism, activism, political participation, social change, and civic engagement (see Gambarato, 2018; Hancox, 2019; Srivastava, 2009). While in fiction, fandom and using popular culture might have political ends but do not necessarily aim at political participation, in the nonfiction transmedia universe, most of the time the central objective is political participation and civic engagement targeting social change through potential and possible uses of digital technologies and popular culture.

I therefore define user-generated content (UGC) in nonfiction transmedia as *any text created by users based on their interaction with the storyworld (the product of*

*representation) and/or its actuality (the real world) with the aim of civic engagement.* As a result, I see UGC as an intersecting and overlapping paratext between the representation of the real world (transmedia projects) and the real world which functions as a “transaction zone” (Genette, 1997) in which the users’ social positioning is communicated, negotiated, and diversified through participatory spaces, civic and political engagement, and identity creation. These paratexts are an essential part of the transmedia universe and can be transmedial, even though they might not contribute to “narrative progression” or expand it in the traditional sense of transmedia storytelling as defined by Jenkins (2006). In order to further discuss this point, we must first go back to the very beginning of the concept of “paratextuality.”

Genette defines paratexts as *thresholds* that lead and guide reader’s interpretations; rather than having boundaries or borders, they function as a transition area “that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (1997, p.2). He differentiates two kinds of paratexts: those which “surround” the text (*peritext*), such as titles, acknowledgments, and footnotes; and those which “extend” the text (*epitext*), such as interviews, conversations, and reviews (1997). Although Genette’s terminology is based on written works, it has been expanded and applied to media studies. For example, Pearson (2008) discusses transmedia storytelling in terms of paratexts based on whether these paratexts function as the expansion of the narrative or as paratexts that allude to the text without expanding the narrative. Gray (2010) extends Genette’s work to film and television studies by building on the idea of the transactionality of paratexts. In so doing, he uses the phrase “ebb and flow” to define the relation between the text and its paratext by combining the metaphors of “overflow” (Brooker, 2001) and “convergence” (Jenkins 2006) in media studies. He also identifies two types of paratexts with regards to temporality: “entryway paratexts” and “in medias res paratexts”. While the former consist of paratexts that affect viewers before they reach the text, such as ads and trailers, the latter refers to those that viewers interact with “during” and “after” viewing, such as discussion forums and fan websites (Gray, 2010). Taking a different approach, McCracken (2013) analyzes paratexts in terms of electronic reading devices, namely Kindles and iPads, and states that “[i]f one conceives of the principal verbal literary text as the center, one can identify exterior and interior pathways leading readers both away from and more deeply into the words

at hand” (p. 106). Thus she categorizes these pathways as “centrifugal” and “centripetal” paratexts.

Centrifugal paratexts draw readers outside the text proper. On the centrifugal vector, for example, while reading an e-book, readers can easily engage with blogs, other readers’ comments, or an author’s web page without putting aside the e-device. Centripetal paratexts, in contrast, modify readers’ experience on inward vectors. On centripetal digital pathways, readers engage with new paratextual elements such as format, font changes, word searching, and other enhancements. (McCracken, 2013, pp. 106–107)

Finally, Mittell (2015) also utilizes paratext in the context of fiction television series and identifies “orienting paratexts” that are placed outside of the diegetic storyworld that aim to present insight into the narrative through timelines, maps, recaps, graphics, etc.; this separates them from “transmedia paratexts,” which expand the narrative and continue it on different platforms.

In the light of these approaches to user-generated content as paratextuality, I follow the chart proposed by Rodríguez-Ferrándiz (2017) based on the categorizations of Genette. In the following sections, I explain how the aforementioned categorizations and Genette’s definition of paratexts, as well as the defining features of paratextual elements, are used for understanding user-generated content in nonfiction transmedia. In other words, user-generated content as paratexts are defined by “its location (the question *where?*); the date of its appearance and, if need be, its disappearance (*when?*); its mode of existence, verbal or other (*how?*); the characteristics of its situation of communication – its sender and addressee (*from whom? to whom?*); and the functions that its message aims to fulfill (*to do what?*)” (Genette, 1997, p. 4, emphasis in original).

#### *The location of UGC as paratexts*

Genette (1997) describes the location of paratexts as inside the book (peritext) or outside the book (epitext) but also suggests that “nothing precludes its [the epitext’s] later admission to the peritext” (p. 13). Therefore, epitexts can later become peritexts, which emphasizes their transitional characteristics. In the context of digital media,

though, the discussion on the inside and outside of a text becomes more entangled than with a book (Bolin, 2011), since the concepts of transitionality and transactionality grow into a continuous relationship with other elements in a storyworld. In this case, McCracken's (2013) categorization of "centrifugal" and "centripetal" paratexts could be adapted to the user-generated content in the sense that UGC is in a constant flux, either staying closer to the original text and bringing the reader into it, or moving away from the center and carrying the reader away from it.

Reducing the spatiality of paratexts to centrifugal and centripetal movements would not be enough to capture a comprehensive perspective on user-generated content because the content does not only flow in reference to the original text, but also creates its own domain or intersects with other domains. Hence, I propose the notions of "canonized" and "intersecting" paratexts to highlight the fact that the position and the role of paratexts can change due to their interaction with users. "Canonized" paratexts refer to those that become centralized through user-generated content made by users after being influenced and inspired by its paratext, which in this case are other UGC. This process is also an example of the bottom-to-bottom UGC that Guerrero (2016) mentions in her work. These paratexts, especially in nonfiction transmedia, can function as free-standing texts independently outside their prevailing context. Even those who have not viewed the original text (transmedia projects) could comprehend and expand the transmedia universe through its paratexts thanks to their knowledge of the actuality represented in the transmedia universe (real world).

If today's television and film paratextuality extends the horizons of the narrative universe well beyond what "the text itself" offers, surely some audience members will find that the universe is more interesting at its horizons. In such cases, these audience members may still consider themselves fans or at least viewers of the text, but here rather than simply modify or inflect the text, the paratexts may in time become the text, as the audience members take their cues regarding what a text means from the paratext's images, signs, symbols, and words, rather than from the film or program's. (Gray, 2010, p. 46)

Therefore, understanding the spatiality of UGC as paratexts in nonfiction transmedia is more complicated when we consider the actuality and the intersectionality with its

other representations. For this reason I also call attention to the “intersecting” paratexts which refer to those converging with other possible universes based on narratives and characters. Especially in nonfiction, this is almost inevitable when global issues are in question.

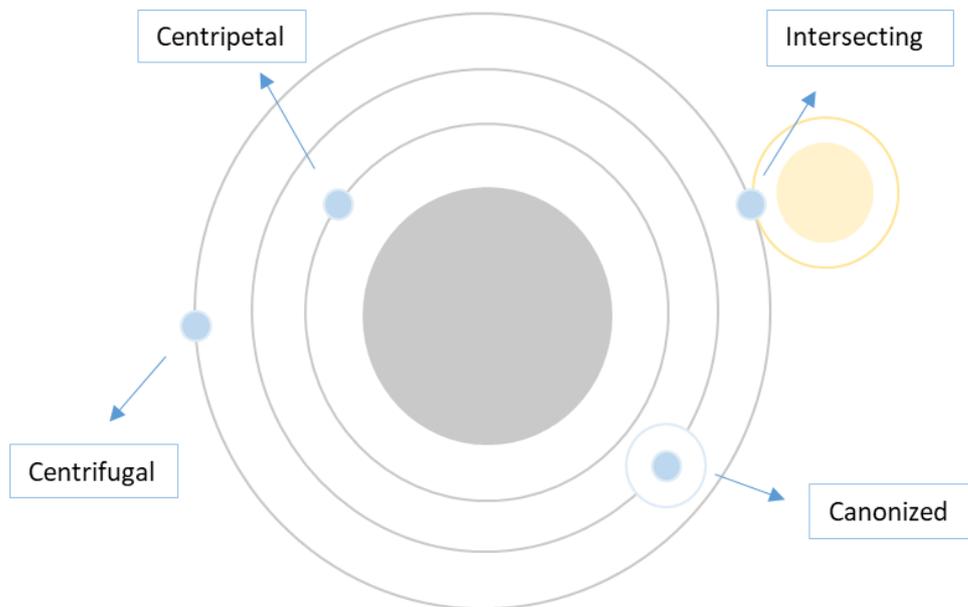


Figure 2. The location of UGC as paratext. Inspired by Guerrero, 2016.

### *The temporality of UGC as paratexts*

Genette (1997) states that “If, then, a paratextual element may appear at any time, it may also disappear, definitively or not, by authorial decision or outside intervention or by virtue of the eroding effect of time” (p. 6). Building on Genette’s typology, Gray (2010) suggests a temporal classification of paratexts in the context of media: “entryway” and “in media res” paratexts. He also touches upon the paratexts that are created in the aftermath of viewing, which Rodríguez-Ferrándiz (2017) calls “memorabilia paratexts,” which “either acquire [a] certain elegiac character, of homage or goodbye of fans and even the producers themselves, or serve as memories from a favorite show and as a public demonstration of support and loyalty to the franchise” (p. 170). This typology can be adapted to nonfiction UGC as “pre-viewing,” “in medias res,” and “post-viewing” with respect to the time of creation. Additionally, the disappearance of the content should be also considered and analyzed accordingly.

### *The modes of UGC as paratexts*

When Genette (1997) asked the question “how?” to define the ways paratexts are created, his answers were conceived of in reference to literature and literary work. However, as Rodríguez-Ferrándiz (2017) observes, many scholars in media and communication studies applied this to digital use and environments. With the emerging technologies, users can navigate through information, generate content, and disseminate it on different digital platforms. Although the birth of user-generated content precedes the advent of the Internet and social media, escalation in terms of access and usability that digital technologies allowed made the creation of UGC to be less demanding, even effortless (Burgess & Green, 2009). Therefore, when Genette’s question of “how?” is applied to UGC, the categorization would be divided into digital paratexts and non-digital paratexts. While the former refers to content created by digital means, such as videos, memes, and multimodal texts, the latter comprises those which are made without the use of digital technologies, such as poems, drawings, and written stories, but which can be digitalized afterward. In this category, the literacies surrounding the creation of digital texts should be taken into consideration. This is because how these texts are produced can only be made sense of by analyzing the digital literacies applied when the content is created.

### *The actors of UGC as paratexts*

Genette’s (1997) question of “from whom? To whom?” is construed by “the characteristics of its situation of communication” and deals with the enunciatory approach to paratexts in literary works (*authorial, allographic, or actorial*). His idea was built upon “strong authorship and passive reception” (Rodríguez-Ferrándiz, 2017, p. 176). I see users that are a part of the represented world in transmedia projects as similar to the expansion of characters in the nonfiction transmedia universe. Even though these non-fictional actors do not necessarily exist in the storyworld, they take part in its actuality. So the actorial paratexts can be formed and enunciated individually and collectively, which results in identity negotiations regarding social and global issues. Thus collective identity or formation of subjectivities should be considered in the enunciation of user-generated content. Additionally, Genette’s question of “from whom to whom” dealt with whom the message is enunciated. Therefore, imagined

audiences become central to this category. The direction of these paratexts can be considered as the online communities where they are disseminated, although they may be specifically enunciated toward specific individuals or collectives.

### *The functions of UGC as paratexts*

Asking the question “to do what?”, Genette (1997) refers to the functions of paratexts, which “constitute a highly empirical and highly diversified object that must be brought into focus inductively, genre by genre and often species by species” (p.13). The functionality of a paratext has been employed by some scholars (see Nottingham-Martin, 2015; Rockenberger, 2015). For instance, Nottingham-Martin (2015) discusses the functions of paratexts with regard to transmedia and categorizes them as navigational, commercial, didactic, world-building, community-building, and activating. Rockenberger (2015), on the other hand, uses the functionality of paratexts in the analysis of video games. Mittel’s (2015) analysis of television also takes into consideration the functions such as transmedial and orienting paratexts. When the functions of UGC in nonfiction transmedia storytelling are considered, the analysis of functionality becomes based on the user’s position with respect to the text:

Whatever aesthetic or ideological investment the author makes in a paratextual element (a “lovely title” or a preface-manifesto), whatever coquettishness or paradoxical reversal he puts into it, the paratextual element is always subordinate to “its” text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence (Genette, 1997, p. 12)

Understanding the spatiality, temporality, modes, addressers and addressees, and functionality of user-generated content as paratexts would help us understand how prosumers make sense of the information they receive, how they position themselves in the transmedia storyworld, and how they use digital technologies for civic engagement. In the following section, I will present theories about Internet memes, since they were the most common user-generated content created by the participants in this research.

### **3.4. Memes, humor, and meme literacy**

As defined by Shifman (2014), Internet memes are “(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users” (p. 41). These memes are not made or disseminated haphazardly; on the contrary, they are a product of a culture, appealing to a specific group of people (Burgess, 2008). As in the case of the memes created by the participants of this research, they emerge as a response to cultural, social, or political contexts. Earlier research mainly addresses the formations, discursive practices, and dissemination of memes on online platforms (e.g Chonka, 2019; DeCook, 2018; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Milner, 2012, 2013; Nowak, 2016). As Milner (2016) says, “[m]erely observing form or flow can’t tell us what, specifically, participants get out of the use, reuse, or ‘misuse’ of memetic texts” (p. 30). He points out Miltner’s (2014) empirical audience-oriented research where she conducts focus groups to understand why people share “LOLCat” memes and the social and cultural forces behind them.

This research also adopts a similar approach, but the focus is on the users themselves as well as why they created memes and what their inspirations and deliberations were. The “ambivalent” characteristics of these cultural artifacts make it difficult to understand how memes should be interpreted (Chonka, 2019). As a consequence, gathering comprehensive knowledge and data about the contexts in which memes are made and how meme-makers are engaged with each other and with their surroundings is essential to understanding them. This includes the memes’ “imagined audiences,” the “mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating” (Litt, 2012, p. 331). One of the advantages this research is its ability to answer such questions about the participants’ motivations in creating these memes and how their imagined audiences influence the decision-making process. The interviews and focus group discussions clearly show the participants’ inspiration or the people whom they convey their messages to in the user-generated content.

Shifman (2014) builds the concept of memes on three dimensions: content, form and stance. The “content” relates to the ideas and ideologies communicated through the memes. Their “form” refers to their appearance and the way they are presented. Lastly, the “stance” refers to memes’ tone, style, and communicative function. Wiggins (2019) later expanded upon this typology, and specifically the notion of “stance”, in

observing that Shifman's development of these dimensions through the study of video memes, in which the tone, style, and communicative functions are applied to the speech, effectively limit its usefulness for the analysis of image-based memes. He suggests that "[c]ontent and stance merge given that the conveyance of ideas and ideologies occurs within deliberate semiotic and intertextual construction, especially with the absence of human speech" (Wiggins, 2019, p. 15). Therefore, while the content and form of memes can be embodied and construed within an image, understanding its stance requires further analysis of its context. Prior to Shifman (2014) and Wiggins (2019), Knobel and Lankshear (2007) proposed a discursive analysis based on three systems of memes: a referential or ideational system, a contextual or interpersonal system, and an ideological or worldview system. The focus of these systems is on the meaning of a meme, its social relations and values, and its beliefs and worldview, respectively. A closer look at the form of memes should go beyond which type of memes or visual elements are re-appropriated to convey a message, because selecting a certain type of image to spread the content requires further evaluation of why they are preferred over others and in what ways they are created. To start with, why the participants created memes to discuss a serious topic acquires several reasons. Even if not every online meme is playful or humorous, humor is one of the pillars of memetic success (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Shifman, 2012).

Internet memes are "vernacular creativity" practices (Burgess, 2008) which can be practiced and executed via simple and readily available production means. They are a form of "pop polyvocality" (Milner, 2013) that allow people to share diverse views on different platforms for various audiences (Gal et al., 2016). In the field of digital media and participation, it has been long observed that participation in online spaces necessitates digital literacy (see Buckingham, 2015; Livingstone, 2007). Yet digital literacy alone would not suffice for participating in memetic cultures since such participation requires more than the ability to use digital technologies. While creating memes with limited sources has become simple and smooth, "meme literacy" (Milner, 2012) is required in order to be able to engage in meaning-making and identity negotiation. Milner (2016) further argues that, as well as digital and meme literacy, detailed knowledge and familiarity with the relevant subculture of that specific meme is also required for the process.

Meme literacy requires the subcultural knowledge of memes or what kind of language or template should be used for certain memes. But who decides if the meme is generated in a “right” or “wrong” way? Milner (2012) argues that it is the memetic community that discusses and negotiates if the language is used accurately, which is not a clear-cut or definitive process. Therefore, as Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017) note, “some conventions about memes may be widely held, but none are ubiquitous.” (p. 494). Thus, the localization, adaptation, resemiotization, and contextualization of memes are acceptable as long as collective or group identity is formed and performed through content and stance.

The texts and montages produced and read as part of being infected with and propagating a meme online are never free standing. Rather, they are implicated in and generated out of networks of shared interests, experiences, habits, worldviews and the like that pick up on or use texts, events, phenomena, icons, cultural artifacts, etc., in particular if not socially idiosyncratic ways. (Knobel & Lankshear, p. 220)

Several reasons regarding the choice of memes are discussed in the literature (see Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Milner, 2016; Phillips & Milner, 2017; Shifman, 2014; Wiggins, 2019), such as the availability and simplicity of use of memes thanks to meme generator websites, familiarity with the intertextual and subcultural elements of memes, and relevance to the topic of the discussion. Some studies show how meme-creating and sharing contribute to systemic and structural racism and bolster prevalent narratives of racial identity (see Dickerson, 2016; Yoon, 2016). For example, Yoon (2016) analyzes the forms and content of memes and finds that Internet memes exhibit racism through stereotypes, othering, and the denial of racism. Memes are a “snapshot” of participation within the social, cultural, and political dimensions of participatory cultures (Milner, 2013; Moreno-Almeida, 2020). These snapshots of participation not only constitute a tool for self-representation, but also form a social practice that constructs and reconstructs a group’s identity, actions, and attitudes (Ask & Abidin, 2018; Milner, 2018; Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017; Shifman, 2014). Due to the intertextual nature of memes, only those who are familiar with the intertextual elements and the context will grasp the humor and sarcasm (Miltner, 2014), which

creates a sense of community as well as solidarity among the meme-makers and audiences.

The ability of humor to generate affinity and community building among meme-makers and audiences as well as reinforce in-group identity make it integral to meme cultures. Humorous content in political and ideological memes can function as a social critique, resistance, or political dissent (Huntington, 2016; Mina, 2014; Moreno-Almeida, 2020), as well as political propaganda that legitimizes official discourses or extremist views (Askanius, 2021; DeCook, 2018; Denisova, 2019). Furthermore, as Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017) observe, “when memes are used in conversations about politics or ideology, their role could be viewed not only as a means of expression but also as a way of establishing common ground and kinship among bickering sides” (p. 498). While constructing mutual understanding, memes can play a part in negotiating views and identities through personal or collective narratives. Citizens, especially young people, use memes for political meaning-making, reimagining, and negotiating the cultural and political representations of their countries (Ekdale & Tully, 2014).

For this study, memes will be approached as “partial stories” that reflect different perceptions of social and political realities (de Saint Laurent et al., 2021). De Saint Laurent and colleagues (2021) observe that considering memes as a part of a bigger narrative “is to recognize that any meme, taken in isolation, will have relatively limited narrative information for viewers or, to be more precise, will operate with many implicit references to people and events known by specific communities of viewers” (p. 11). Thus, memes can be considered “elements of storytelling” (Denisova, 2019). When combined with other elements such as intertextual references, memes reveal interesting and discerning insight into the lives and stances of their makers, and should therefore not be considered as “mere internet frivolity” (Ask & Abidin, 2018, p. 13). In this research, I treat these “partial stories” as paratexts that surround a main text or topic, presenting diverse viewpoints and identities and acquiring different functionalities based on the content and context and guiding audiences around the discussions. Approaching memes as paratexts in a transmedial storyworld is to acknowledge that memes can present previous public debates in a new format where meme-makers’ imagination and creativity is communicated in alternative ways to reflect on issues that affect their lives. As Gal, Shifman and Kampf (2016) suggest,

“memetic practice is not merely an expression of existing social cultural norms, it is also a social tool for negotiating them” (p. 1700). Through memes, the young Rwandans in this research are negotiating their social positioning in their society, constructing their individual and collective identities, and refusing to partake in existing norms that are deliberately forced upon them. Moreover, they are challenging certain normative viewpoints by means of the “polyvocal” aspects of memetic practices.

### **3.5. Conceptualizing peacebuilding and education in the transmedia age**

Referring to various examples in Colombia as an illustration of the use of transmedia for education, Freeman (2016) puts emphasis on the use of transmedia projects in post-conflict societies by mentioning their potential impacts on positive social change, the reconstruction of memories, and the representation of stories. In this sense, transmedia education is a multisided strategy with great potential for societies to learn, change, and grow through reliving their stories and memories; they do this by enabling audiences see different perspectives, gain more profound knowledge, and reinforce the information they already have. Education through nonfiction transmedia can also boost constant learning and sustainable experiences that bring about significant behavior change. However, sensitive issues around peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-genocide societies also need to be acknowledged when integrating transmedia into peacebuilding processes and peace education.

Digital technologies can be used to undermine peace just as easily as they can be to promote it. While these technologies can contribute to community dialogue and constructive peacebuilding thanks to of the ease with which they allow the sharing of inspiring messages about peace that can reach many people in a short time, hate speech and the spread of “fake news”, misinformation, and disinformation that are prevalent on digital media can just as easily hamper meaningful peace processes and fuel further conflict. These dangerous messages can spread easily on social media if users do not critically engage with polluted information:

There are several characteristics shared by developing countries, particularly those with a recent history of conflict and/or government repression, that make

them more vulnerable to dangerous speech spread by social media. This includes low media or digital literacy, a lack of available alternative media and the prevalence of untraceable messaging platforms such as WhatsApp. (Maclellan, 2019, p. 447)

Therefore, digital literacy must be considered a part of education for peacebuilding since it goes hand-in-hand with peace education and online political and civic participation in post-conflict societies. According to many (Bekerman & McGlynn, 2007; Chinyere, 2013; Murithi, 2009; Noddings, 2012; Spink, 2005), peace education is considered a significant way to endorse peace and reconciliation. Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) define two approaches regarding peace education: the school approach and the societal approach. In the school approach, the focus is placed on the activities promoting peace carried out in schools, while the societal approach looks to the integration of people in the society for reconciliation. They also propose two models of peace education, namely indirect and direct peace education (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). Indirect peace education does not precisely explain the conflict; rather, it revolves around the general themes regarding peace-making and reconciliation by avoiding direct clashes and references to the conflict. Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) offer five of these themes in order to discuss the properties of these values in terms of peace education (described in Table 3). On the other hand, direct peace education addresses the conflict by confronting the parties involved in it. As Bar-Tal and Rosen observe, however, for this kind of education method, societal, political and educational conditions should be appropriate (2009). They also discuss five different themes in the direct education system (described in Table 4).

Indirect and direct models of peace education can be applied to any kind of conflict regardless of the characteristics of the conflict since these models include general concepts needed for reconciliation (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). However, implementing peace education and the methods for conducting it can vary according to the circumstances in which the society is experiencing the post-conflict situation. In addition, the potential advantages and disadvantages of digital technologies for peacebuilding and reconciliation need to be carefully considered in the light of the society's specific variables and circumstances and the increasing use of digital technologies and media. More and more peacebuilding initiatives use digital tools to

nurture peacebuilding processes, which also raises the issue of the need for discussions of digital literacy and the skills to use, understand, share, produce, and disseminate information in digital environments. But how digital tools are used for peace education in formal and informal settings and whether how they are used has an impact on peacebuilding is missing in the literature on peace education and digital literacy.

---

The Indirect Model of Peace Education

---

<b>Reflective Thinking</b>	Considering alternatives to analyze information and to have accurate information in order to assess the complexities and judge the essence of the conflict regarding these complexities
<b>Tolerance</b>	Promoting mutual recognition and acceptance, avoiding negative stereotypes and prejudices, reducing the perceived fear or anger of the other side
<b>Ethno-Empathy</b>	Comprehending another's feelings, emotions, perceptions and aspects, seeing the other group's members as human individuals with goals, needs and concerns
<b>Human rights</b>	Becoming conscious of human rights, reinforcing the respect for fundamental rights, raising awareness for the recognition of the other group's human rights
<b>Conflict resolution</b>	Recognizing the importance of collaborative work for negotiation and solutions, becoming aware of the constructive methods to peace processes

*Table 3.* The Indirect Model of Peace Education. Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009.

---

The Direct Model of Peace Education

---

<b>Conflict and peace</b>	Teaching the aspects of the conflict, the explanations of violence and wars, the essence of the peace process, the ways to conflict resolution
<b>Peace process</b>	Teaching the definition of peace, the obstacles to peace, the peace agreements signed in the conflict context, the analysis of the reconciliation process
<b>Presentation of the rival</b>	Teaching the process of legitimizing, equalizing, and differentiating the parties and the personalization of the rival to understand them as human beings with objectives, needs and virtues
<b>History of the conflict</b>	Teaching the unbiased history of the conflict, its causes and consequences, deconstruction of the collective narrative

---

<b>New affect and emotions</b>	Teaching collective hope and trust and mutual recognition while reducing collective prejudices, fears, and hatred
--------------------------------	---

---

*Table 4.* The Direct Model of Peace Education. Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009.

In post-conflict societies, the process of reconciliation must take into account both past and future (Lederach, 1997). Cole (2007) proposes a revision in history education methodology and content in which critical thinking and empathy skills are taught through more inclusive and multiple narratives. However, in societies emerging from conflicts, the collective memory often conforms to the official memory, which may be present in the history books in official education systems, such as in the case of Rwanda (Reyntjens, 2016).

As Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) note, schools can have an important role in promoting reconciliation for four reasons:

First, education in schools is sure to reach a whole segment of a society (i.e., the young generation) because schools are compulsory and all children and adolescents are required to attend them. Second, schools are often the only social institution that can formally, intentionally, and extensively achieve the mission of peace education as they have the authority, the legitimacy, the resources, the methods, and the conditions to carry it out. Third, schooling takes place during children’s formative years, and the young generation, which still is in the process of acquiring a psychological repertoire, is least affected by the dominating ethos and is more open to new ideas and information. Finally, the young generation is required to learn the messages and information transmitted in schools and often treats them as truthful, and, therefore, it is possible to ensure that students at least will be exposed to them. (p. 560)

However, when it comes to digital skills and how they are acquired, research shows that most young people learn digital skills informally and outside of schools (Scolari, 2018). Therefore, novel ways to integrate digital literacy education into peace education can be explored so that two birds can be killed with one stone. In this context, transmedia storytelling can be used in an efficient, adaptable, easy, and cheap way by facilitating a constructivist approach to peace education. In constructivist

learning theory, the teacher is not the single source for learning; rather, learning is “*complex and fundamentally non-linear in nature*” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 11).

Another component of peacebuilding and peace education that is important for this research is memory and its relation to peace as well as digitalization. Bekerman and Zembylas (2011) state that “[m]emory has been strongly connected to activity, material or symbolic (not mental), and it has served as a useful human skill and as an aid to human understanding of the world” (p. 53). Moreover, with the evolution of technology and the emergence of new media, human life and memories have been shaped anew. In this process, memory is dependent on remembering and forgetting, which makes memory a kind of performance influenced by both individuals and society.

Ndura-Ouédraogo (2009) emphasizes the role of contested narrative and memories in peace education in post-conflict societies and recommends a method with a multicultural education focusing on the mindsets and approaches of educators and students. Bekerman and Zembylas (2011) also discuss the importance of “dangerous memories” in pedagogical practices in troubled societies in constituting “new social and emotional spaces in classrooms and schools that inspire solidarity through the memory of common suffering and common humanity” (p. 206). Dangerous memories might raise questions regarding the importance of memory in societies and the relation between memory and history. It is crucial for educators and students to think beyond the collective and official memories, which are mostly seen as the source of history. Dangerous memories provide an alternative in understanding the various forms of remembering and forgetting; they take “us to the limits of memory and forgetting, but the recollection of past suffering is not only fixed on “our” suffering” (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011, p. 209).

Taking the notion of dangerous memories as a pedagogical practice, then, means to be inclusive by taking into account the other’s memory. Opposed to the idea that forgetting is necessary to moving on in post-conflict societies, this concept makes including any form of remembering and forgetting a requirement to overcoming some problems in the reconciliation process. Providing this kind of space in classrooms may not be easy and can require true connections and dialogue. Nevertheless, finding ways to show similarities and negotiating the recollection of memories have great potential

in peace education in societies emerging from conflict. Bekerman and Zembylas (2011) state that

[...] what might be needed is not for the victim to be understood, recognized and included (or not only this) or for the victimizer to become more sensitive and understanding, but for both to *understand* and *feel* the world differently, as a result of “feeling with” the other’s suffering. For example, feeling with the other’s suffering (empathy) can be a productive mode of social engagement in which examining testimonies can work round emotional impasses and generate trust and connectivity. (p.210)

With the development of digital technologies, many digital platforms have made it possible for memories to be curated, shared, and disseminated. For instance, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter allow their users to share their videos and interact through commenting on one another’s productions. These platforms provide new possibilities, as well as challenges, regarding the production, dissemination, and reception of memory. It is also important to emphasize that the new developments and the current situation in which the mediatization of memory is shaped depend on the earlier phases. People still write diaries to keep memories, listen to elders and interact with them through sharing memories, watch TV and listen to the radio for national commemorative events, and visit museums to learn about the past. But these activities are becoming increasingly linked to digital practices.

Hoskins (2009) states that since “the resources of memory-making in the form of digital data becomes more fluid and accessible but also more revocable and diffused, individuals locate their own pasts and those of their groups and societies through their immersion in emergent networks” (p. 40). Similarly, Pentzold (2009) describes the Web as “a plethora of potential dialogue partners” and asserts that

In their discursive interactions, texts can become an active element in forms of networked, global remembrance. In consequence, these texts may not only be part of “storage” memory but also part of “functional” memory because they are remembered and linked to other texts in forms of “living” intertextuality. (p. 262)

Many scholars (Hoskins, 2009; Keightley & Schlesinger, 2014; Pentzold, 2009; van Dijck, 2008) emphasize the fact that in the digital era, memory has become more interconnected, networked, and dynamic. Memory has been always shared, constructed, reconstructed, connected, and performed. However, the visible amount of production, dissemination, and reception of memory and its speed has increased thanks to the new ways of interaction and participation. Digital media can be seen as not only archives but also platforms that exhibit the past in certain modes, forms, and manners. This is why people who would like to learn and discover the past by utilizing different media platforms should be equipped with digital and media literacy to understand these platforms. Peacebuilding, peace education, memory, and digital technologies are thus intimately intertwined and connected in the digital age. In light of the information provided in this section, the following will focus on the concept of “digital inclusion” as a tool that can contribute to peacebuilding and peace education.

### **3.6. Digital inclusion**

The concept of the “digital divide” has been discussed widely in academic spheres (see Andreasson, 2015; Fuchs & Horak, 2008; Mossberger et al., 2003; Selwyn, 2004; Selwyn et al., 2002; Steyn & Johanson, 2010; Warschauer, 2002). The digital divide is described as the inequalities with regards to “the access, skills, and capacity to take advantage of ICTs in order to reap the full benefits of the information society” (Andreasson, 2015, p. xxi). It is considered as “a very complex and dynamic phenomenon” (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003, p. 316). Its complexity involves many factors and different types of divides such as those of age, gender, income, education, race, ethnicity, ethics, abilities, and geography, among others. Furthermore, given the constant evolution of digital technologies, the dimensions of the “digital divide” are also evolving. Following some scholars, I use “digital inclusion” as a term to define the contextual complexities of the access to and use of digital technologies with the aim of avoiding the potential ambiguities of the term “digital divide” that can result in binaries of “haves” and “have-nots” (DiMaggio et al., 2004; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

In an attempt to abolish the simple binaries of access/no-access or user/non-user, many scholars have proposed new frames for digital inclusion. For example, Helsper (2008) categorizes digital engagement levels as basic (information seeking, learning, leisure information, buying, individual communication), intermediate (gaming, finances, individual networking, eGov) and advanced levels (civic engagement, social networking); she also identifies three types of motivation regarding digital engagement, namely basic, social, and economic. Bradbrook and Fisher (2004) define the key aspects of digital inclusion as the five C's: connection, capability, content, confidence, and continuity. While connection indicates physical access to digital technologies, capability refers to the skills necessary to make use of them. Content is one of the factors that allows users to engage with digital technologies if it is relevant and appealing to them. The aspect of confidence refers to the motivation each user has for using digital spheres. Finally, continuity is related to the promotion and encouragement of ICT use and digital inclusion (Bradbrook & Fisher, 2004).

Although the starting point for digital inclusion is access to digital technologies, as Castells (2002) notes, "access alone does not solve the problem, [even if] it is a prerequisite for overcoming inequality in a society whose dominant functions and social groups are increasingly organized around the Internet" (p. 248). Therefore, research on digital inclusion should take a multidimensional approach, which brings certain complications and difficulties:

For researchers, identifying how people use the internet, and with what consequences, is not as straightforward as determining whether they have access. For example, how should we conceptualize the practical skills and subtle competencies which facilitate confident internet use, the lack of which limits the use of new and inexperienced users if not excluding them altogether? The nature of use and the skills required to maximize the benefits of internet use may be measured in many ways – frequency of use, time spent online, kinds of uses, expertise in use, specific skills online, attitudes towards internet use and so forth. (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007, p. 674)

In the context of digital inclusion, the role of schools in access, use, and attitudes towards digital technologies has also been emphasized by scholars. Digital media

education is seen as one of the tools for the digital inclusion of young people. According to Jenkins and his colleagues (2009), digital media education should address three important concepts: participation gap, transparency problem, and ethics challenges. The participation gap refers to the unequal opportunities of access to new media technologies. The transparency problem, on the other hand, refers to the limited ability of youth to criticize and examine the media themselves in spite of their active participation with them. Finally, the ethics challenge is concerned with the ethical choices that young people make in the flux of online environments and the influence of these choices on others (Jenkins et al., 2009). Introducing digital and media literacy to the formal education system can be a tool for overcoming the uncritical consumption of information and the digital divide so that learners are provided with equal opportunities to navigate today's digital environments and become critical thinkers (Hobbs, 2010). However, the inclusion of digital and media literacy into classrooms must not be implemented as a separate subject; rather, it should be integrated into any subject taught at school. According to Jenkins et al. (2009):

Much of the resistance to embracing media literacy training comes from the sense that the school day is bursting at its seams, that we cannot cram in any new tasks without the instructional system breaking down altogether. For that reason, we do not want to see media literacy treated as an add-on subject. Rather, we should see it as a paradigm shift that, like multiculturalism or globalization, reshapes how we teach every existing subject. (pp. 108-109)

In this regard, schools have a significant role in fostering and enhancing new media literacies. Young people might know more about the new digital media environments than their parents and teachers, but they might need adult intervention and supervision to engage them in critical thinking so that they entirely comprehend complicated digital practices. Miller and Bartlett's research (2012) finds that many young people fully trust the information they obtain on the web and never apply checks to it. In addition, 48% of the teachers surveyed in the research asserted that they encountered discussions of conspiracy theories in the classrooms and schoolwork with incorrect internet-based data (Bartlett & Miller, 2012). Therefore, for critical consumption, teachers, parents, and educators should also be able and ready to take on certain responsibility for mediating and negotiating digital skills around learning experiences. Since the

combination of many information types and mediums on the Internet and the vast amount of media messages around them lack structure, students need to be taught to personalize content and reconstruct it in order to make sense of it (Lessig, 2008).

Following the literature on digital inclusion as well as my observations in my fieldwork in Rwanda, I categorize digital inclusion into four groups for this research: dimensions of access, digital (dis)engagement, motivations and benefits of uses, and transmedia skills. While the dimensions of access focus on socio-economic inequalities, places, and devices for access (such as schools, libraries, home), as well as restrictions, the motivations and benefits of uses discuss in what ways people believe they benefit from the use of digital technologies and their motivations behind their use. Digital disengagement, on the other hand, refers to some people’s reasons for voluntarily refusing to use digital technologies. For this concept, I follow Kuntsman and Miyake’s (2015, 2019) work on digital disengagement. According to their research, digital disengagement is concerned with “monitoring and state/corporate surveillance; the disappearance of ‘human connection’ or ‘quality time’; the impacts on emotional, psychological, physical, mental and spiritual health; financial costs and excessive materialism; and environmental concerns” (Kuntsman & Miyake, 2019, pp. 7–8). While some of these reasons for disengagement stem from individual practices and choices, others can be influenced by collective, social, and political concerns (Kuntsman & Miyake, 2019).

<b>Dimensions of Digital Inclusion</b>	
<b>Dimensions of Access</b>	Physical spaces for accessing and using digital technologies as well as digital spaces and platforms for interaction and engagement
<b>Digital Disengagement</b>	Voluntary non-use of digital technologies due to perceived advantages or disadvantages
<b>Motivations and Benefits</b>	Use of digital technologies based on the benefits they bring as well as the motivations for using them due to perceived advantages
<b>Transmedia Skills</b>	Digital skills needed to navigate the digital environments in the transmedia age

*Table 5.* The dimensions of digital inclusion.

One other concept that I have used in defining digital inclusion is that of “transmedia literacy.” The increase in digital video production and dissemination, social media use, online games, virtual worlds, and the use of internet-based media by people shows that people are motivated to learn more about using digital technologies and producing in digital media. The expansion of information and communication technologies and their accelerating influence on society require the detection, development, and utilization of necessary skills and abilities. With the evolution of media, the concept of media literacy alters its focus from traditional media to new media where the border between consumer and producer has blurred and new challenges are being faced. Therefore a critical approach to literacy in digital environments should be adopted, given that the role of digital literacy should reposition users from being mere consumers to active participants.

Defining digital literacy has proven to be a complicated task since digital spaces and tools are in constant development (Pangrazio, 2016). But in general, the concept of digital literacy refers to the set of skills needed to use digital technologies, such as social, operational, information navigation, and creative skills (Helsper et al., 2015). Digital literacy also involves critically navigating the internet’s potential for democracy, since while it the potential to boost democratic participation, it can also sabotage it through surveillance, misinformation, and disinformation (Carmi et al., 2020; Fuchs, 2010). In this sense, digital literacy is closely linked to not only navigating information, but also assessing it critically (Cordell, 2013). In addition, Jenkins (2009) defines the *new media skills* needed for the new media landscape, focusing on community involvement rather than individual expressions:

**Play** – the capacity to experiment with one’s surroundings as a form of problem-solving

**Performance** – the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery

**Simulation** – the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes

**Appropriation** – the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content

**Multitasking** – the ability to scan one’s environment and shift focus as needed to salient details

**Distributed Cognition** – the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities

**Collective Intelligence** – the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal

**Judgment** – the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources

**Transmedia Navigation** – the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities

**Networking** – the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information

**Negotiation** – the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms (Jenkins, 2009, p. xiv)

What is lacking in these approaches to digital literacy, however, is a framework of “critical digital design” (Pangrazio, 2016). Pangrazio defines critical digital design as “a deliberately political model of digital literacy in which complex and detailed understandings of discourse, ideology and power in the digital context are scaffolded” (2016, p. 170). The objective of the concept is to analyze the general structures of digital technology and the Internet as well as multimodal features of digital texts so that learners or users can acquire a better understanding of these concepts (Pangrazio, 2016). In the context of digital literacy, critical digital design or new media literacies, I use the concept of “transmedia literacy” as an umbrella term since it encompasses all of the approaches mentioned above. Scolari (2018) describes transmedia literacy as “a set of skills, practices, values, priorities, sensibilities, and learning/sharing strategies developed and applied in the context of the new participatory cultures” (p. 15). He also notes that transmedia literacy is focused on interactive media experiences and considers its subject to be a “prosumer” (Scolari, 2018). Furthermore, transmedia skills include production skills, individual management, social management, performance, media and technology, narrative and aesthetics, ideology and ethics, and risk prevention (Scolari et al., 2018).

	 LITERACY	 MEDIA LITERACY	 TRANSMEDIA LITERACY
<b>Media semiotics (language)</b>	Verbal text (read/write)	Multimodal	Multimodal
<b>Media supports</b>	Books and printed texts	Printed, audiovisual and digital	Digital networks - Interactive media - Transmedia
<b>Aim of the action</b>	To develop critical readers and writers	To develop critical consumers and producers	To develop critical prosumers
<b>Subject interpellation</b>	As an illiterate	As a passive media consumer	As a prosumer
<b>Direction of the action</b>	Top-down	1) Top-down 2) Bottom-up	1) Bottom-up 2) Top-down
<b>Learning environment</b>	Formal (schools)	Formal (schools), no formal and informal	From informal to formal (schools)
<b>Role of the teacher</b>	Knowledge authority - Mediator student/text	Knowledge mediator - Creator of learning experiences with the media	Knowledge facilitator - Cultural translator
<b>Theoretical references</b>	Linguistics	Media Studies (Theory of Media Effects) - Cultural Studies	Media Studies (Media Ecology, Transmedia Storytelling studies) - Cultural studies

Figure 3. Transmedia literacy. Scolari, 2018 (p. 16).

According to the Transliteracy Project, young people acquire transmedia skills through informal learning strategies rather than formal educational environments (Scolari, 2018). Therefore, new questions emerge regarding what kinds of responsibilities governments, schools, and teachers have in order to facilitate the digital inclusion of young people. Since traditional inferences and educational methods have ruptured,

new learning and teaching models need to be explored in order to fulfill the needs of today's learners by integrating new ways of consuming and producing data in media environments into education (Rodrigues & Bidarra, 2014). Young people need a convenient and safe space to acquire the transmedia skills they need to eventually become critical prosumers who actively participate in online and social environments. Therefore, education systems must adopt a transmedia education approach that will be useful for students in the age of participatory culture. Supporting and teaching young people to navigate the means and challenges of new digital media can reinforce and strengthen their online political and civic participation (Kahne et al., 2012).

### **3.7. Youth inclusion, participatory spaces, and positioning**

In addition to the digital aspect of this research, I also take into consideration the socio-political dynamics of post-genocide societies in peacebuilding processes as well as young people's participation in these contexts. Young people's participation in the everyday practices of peacebuilding, such as voicing their concerns about certain political structures, is complex and so the many-sided nature of their practices and engagement in post-conflict settings has an impact on their relations with the structures, surroundings, and people around them (Berents & McEvoy-Levy, 2015). According to Tsekoursa (2016), defining youth participation with "zero-sum" conceptions, in which power appears to be limited and participation is understood in terms of hierarchical levels, is reductive in the sense that young people are considered "marginal" and "powerless" and thus restrained in terms of speaking up and acting independently whereas adults are seen as "power holders." Since, however, young people are constantly negotiating their identity across several social and political spaces, as Cornwall (2002) observes, "[a]nalyzing participation as a spatial practice helps draw attention to the productive possibilities of power as well as its negative effects, to the ways in which the production of space itself creates – as well as circumscribes – possibilities for agency" (p. 8). Connecting spaces with participatory practices requires us to determine not only how and why individuals participate in certain spaces, but also to thoroughly consider the different dimensions and degrees of participation and power relations within these places.

Participatory spaces are social spaces that serve as an interface between the state and society and are shaped by the interactions, engagements, and actions of those who are involved in them (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007); they “may serve simply to reproduce echoes of dominant knowledges rather than to amplify the alternative, ‘bottom-up’ perspectives that are claimed for them” (Cornwall, 2002, p. 9). Therefore, these mostly formal spaces can be limited in inclusivity despite aiming for the opposite. Since particular discourses and individuals can be excluded from these spaces if they do not seem fit the established norms (Cornwall, 2004), the discursive framework of these spaces is shaped by their creators and organizers and is thus permeated with power relations (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). On the other hand, participatory spaces that are created by people themselves rather than the authorities can constitute different characteristics in terms of power relations, diversity, and inequalities (Cornwall, 2008).

Following Cornwall (2002), the concept of participatory spaces in this research is used in two senses: in abstract terms that signify creating and perceiving any occasion for engagement and as actual spaces where people come together to engage in conversations. School activities, clubs, households, commemoration practices, student organizations, and digital environments are participatory spaces where young people in this research are (dis)engaged politically. These spaces for participation are shaped by power relations and are not neutral (Cornwall, 2002). Therefore, examining the participants’ discourses and experiences within these spaces elucidates the power dynamics and the negotiation of constant positionings within them.

Power relations and discourses in these spaces shape self and group identity by positioning people into social categories. Harré and Langenhove (1991) explain “positioning” as the “discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations” (p. 395). Individuals constantly position themselves and others as an expression of identity, and they communicate, negotiate, and diversify these positions (Elejabarrieta, 1994) through a dynamic, collective, and complex process through which meanings are constructed and transformed. Throughout this continuous process, individuals form subjectivities while

accepting or resisting the positions that exist in particular discourses and a contingent set of social relations and practices (Cahill & Coffey, 2016).

Positioning oneself and being positioned by others in a society conveys power relations, obligations, structures, duties, and expectations about how to act and behave. Positions that are assumed or given also confer rights or a lack of rights, such as the right to speak (Van Langenhove, 2017). For example, in Rwanda, “it is logically possible to speak out against the government and it might be socially permissible to do so among a trusted group of friends, but it would not be permissible to disagree with the government in a public forum, as you would risk being arrested” (Blackie & Hitchcott, 2018, p. 25). Therefore, while young people are being positioned as “future leaders,” they might face challenges while participating openly and politically. However, for long term peace, youth inclusion and their participation in the peacebuilding and reconciliation process is necessary.

The next generation of leaders, facilitators and stakeholders will emerge from among the current cohort of young people: so their engagement in the peace process/peace building and the shaping of their political attitudes and skills in the period will have important long-term implications. (McEvoy-Levy, 2001, p. 5)

Focusing on transmedia participation for peacebuilding and peace education requires combining different theories from multiple fields. In this section, I have provided information about the concepts of nonfiction transmedia storytelling, participation, user-generated content as paratexts, and Internet memes. Additionally, I have tried to conceptualize peacebuilding and peace education in the context of the transmedia age. Digital inclusion was another notion that I have explained in the light of the literature review, as well as the fieldwork observations in Rwanda. Finally, the socio-political dynamics around youth participation in the peacebuilding process, the participatory spaces they are involved in, and the discursive framework of participatory spaces, which is positioning in these spaces, have been discussed. In the following section, I lay out the methodological approach, data collection methods, and analysis carried out in this research.



## **4. METHODOLOGY: HYBRID ETHNOGRAPHY**

In this chapter, I explain in detail the methodology and methods I used to answer the research questions. In the light of the information provided about the general context of Rwanda, youth and peacebuilding, and digital media use among Rwandans in the Introduction as well as the Theoretical Framework that defines this study, the focus is based on ethnographic research that conducted in Kigali, Rwanda between February and May of 2019 during the 25th year of commemoration of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Throughout the explanation of the methods utilized in this research, I also reflect on the obstacles that I experienced during my fieldwork. Before going into detail about the methodology and methods I used to answer the research questions, in the following section I explain how I entered the field and made contact with the research participants. Since the data gathered for this research is ethnographic in nature, it seems relevant to shed light on the process I went through and how it impacted my research.

### **4.1. Entering the field and ethical procedures**

This research was conducted in Rwanda, which was described by Jessee (2011) as a “highly politicized research setting”(p. 288). The short and focused ethnographic research lasted for three months between February and May in 2019. Rwanda was selected as the field site for this study for different reasons, which are discussed in the Introduction. Why was the capital city selected for the research? As a researcher, I needed to narrow down the sites and schools I was going to do research in due to limited time and resources. Since it was an individual PhD project, I had to choose one city to focus on. Although I planned to visit different cities in the country, after facing certain challenges as a lone female researcher, for my own safety, I decided to stay in Kigali, where I had friends and connections. Before entering the country, I followed the rules and regulations regarding conducting research in Rwanda. One of the challenges of field research, especially while researching sensitive topics, is obtaining access to specific areas and spaces to conduct the study. For this research to be concluded, there were two “formal gatekeepers” (Leavy, 2017): the Rwandan government and secondary schools in Kigali. Firstly, some internet research was done

to gather information on how to get a research permit in Rwanda. The required emails and contact information were collected and after contacting some officials, I sent an email to the National Council for Science and Technology in Rwanda to learn about the process in detail. According to the rules, I needed to partner with a local organization for my research. I contacted some organizations by email and the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) showed interest in my research and agreed to be my partner organization. After they provided me with a reference letter, I applied to the National Council for Science and Technology for the research permit. All of the ethical procedures were followed according to both my institution and the Rwandan regulations. Required documents, such as the affiliation form, recommendation letter, application form, cover letter, research objectives and questions, and research methodology were sent to the Council. After the requirements of the first gatekeeper were satisfied, I began to investigate possible candidates for schools.

I collected the data at five different secondary schools in Kigali. Despite having contacted 14 schools via email, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings, only five agreed to collaborate in the research. The remaining schools did not answer my emails and calls or declined to participate in the research due to their tight school schedule or reluctance. After discussing the research with the principals of the five schools and obtaining their permission, I hung the recruitment flyer on the walls around the school and talked to the students informally. The target group was secondary school students no matter their age, so I did not set a limit for the age and accepted every student who wanted to participate in the workshops. Therefore the age range was between thirteen and nineteen, which was the age range of secondary school students in Rwanda. Since the research involved sensitive topics and students under the age of eighteen, the participants and their parents/guardians had access to relevant information regarding the study before the consent was gathered through a written parent/guardian consent form. Before starting to collect the research data, the participants were informed what the researcher intended to do and what the research process involved. They were notified about their rights during the research process, such as withdrawing from the research whenever they wanted to. They were also ensured that their identity would be kept strictly confidential and that for the publication of this thesis pseudonyms would be used. As well as concerns related to the

participants, there were possible challenges for the researcher researching sensitive topics in the fieldwork, such as managing emotional impacts (Rager, 2005) and reflexivity and positionality (Sultana, 2007). I took the necessary precautions into consideration and decided on strategies, before, during, and after the fieldwork.

The consent forms were signed by parents or legal guardians. Every student who wanted to participate in the research had to fill out a questionnaire that asked about the demographics of students and what kind of digital technologies they used, and signed it to give their consent to use their data (because I believe that as well as their parents, children should give their consent). I conducted workshops, focus group discussions and individual interviews with students from the five schools. I think it would be more relevant to explain the process I went through in each school separately, since how I started my research process varied in every school, which requires more detail. I will also discuss my data collection methods in detail and why I picked these methods specifically.

### ***School A***

I found School A through the Internet and visited them on a school day. It was a private school with a lower fee, which I learned from the research participants later on. The school principal was not at school but the vice-principal welcomed me. He was very interested in the project since they have been trying to introduce digital technologies in the classroom. He asked me to come the next day to have a meeting with the principal. The next day I talked to the principal and he gave me permission to conduct my research in the school. I attended the morning assembly, where all the students come together in the morning to pray, sing, and then go to their classes. The principal introduced me to the students and I explained my research interests briefly and I asked them to come to the space that was provided to me by the school administration—this was in the conference room near the lunch room, which made it easier for students to see me during lunch break—if they wanted more information. Many students stopped by to get more information and asked me questions about what they needed to do. In total, 29 students brought me the signed consent forms and questionnaires, but only 11 students attended the workshop because the school allowed me to do the workshop at school only on the weekend in the computer lab. Someone from the

school administration prepared the lab and opened the gate for us. However, since the workshop was on the weekend, some students later texted me and said they would be either in church or with the family so they could not attend. Out of 11, seven students were interested in a further conversation through interviews.

School A	Female	Male	Total
Questionnaire	27	2	29
Workshop/Focus group discussions	9	2	11
Interviews	5	2	7

Table 6. School A participants

### **School B**

I found out about School B through a friend I met in Kigali. He called the principal who was his friend and arranged a meeting for me. It was a private school, rather small compared to other private schools I went to. I attended the morning assembly meeting and introduced myself and asked students to come to the teachers' room or the library, where I had been given a space to talk to the students. I also walked around the compound to talk to the students and to hang up the recruitment flyer. The participants mostly found me in the library, where there were also computer and research classes and where students spent their free hours during school time. In total, 11 students turned in their parents' consent forms and questionnaires and who attended the workshops. I conducted a second workshop, but fewer students attended due to the exam period. Both workshops were conducted at school during school hours in the computer lab. Three students were interested in the individual interviews for further conversations.

School B	Female	Male	Total
Questionnaire	7	4	11
Workshop/Focus group 1	7	4	11
Workshop/Focus group 2	3	1	4
Interviews	1	2	3

Table 7. School B participants

## **School C**

My entrance to this school was a bit different compared to the other schools. One day I was going shopping on foot at the time students had just finished their school day. Therefore many students were rushing home or talking to each other in the street I was walking on. Two school boys were walking beside me and asked, “Why are you walking? It’s too hot! You should drive your car!” With a smile, I answered, “I don’t have a driving license, let alone a car.” They were surprised to hear that but tried to hide their feelings. We started having a conversation and they asked me why I was in Kigali and if I was a tourist, etc. I mentioned my research and they started talking about the apps they were using and video games they were playing. I asked them about their school and if they would be interested in joining the research. Their positive answer and excitement led me to their school the next day. I told them I’d be there in the morning. The next day they welcomed me in front of the school gate and helped me find the school principal. The school principal did not speak English so the boys interpreted the conversation between us. After getting his permission, I visited the classrooms and explained my research to other students. Many students took the consent forms and the questionnaires and 66 students returned them the next day. However, only six students could attend the workshops, because the school did not allow me to conduct the workshops in the school facilities due to their schedule and so I had to do it on a weekend in the IRDP’s conference room.

School C	Female	Male	Total
Questionnaire	35	31	66
Workshop/Focus group discussions	2	4	6
Interviews	2	0	2

Table 8. School C participants

## **School D**

Someone I met told me about this school since his child had gone there before changing schools. It was a private boarding school where students stay in dormitories throughout the school term and were not allowed to have their own phones or computers; they were only allowed to use the computer labs, which made for an

interesting case for my research. I made an appointment with the principal and she was very interested in the project. When I asked her how I could contact the students, she told me that she wanted to arrange everything. I could give her the recruitment flyer and she allowed me to spend time in the compound, but not in classrooms. She arranged a workshop on a Saturday and 11 students attended the workshop. The consent forms from parents were sent to me by the principal either as scans or as an email. I could conduct the interviews when they were on holiday, so I could only have a conversation with those who lived in Kigali.

School D	Female	Male	Total
Questionnaire	4	7	11
Workshop/Focus group discussions	4	7	11
Interviews	1	1	2

Table 9. School D participants

### **School E**

I contacted School E via email. They answered quickly and gave me an appointment for a meeting. After talking to the vice principal, I had a meeting with the principal. She told me it was an interesting project since they were trying to prioritize digital technologies in the classroom. However, one condition they requested was that they arrange the workshops for me, as in the School D. I accepted this and on two Wednesdays I conducted two workshops and three focus groups. I later realized that all of the students the school administration picked for the research were members of the “Patriotism Club” at school, which had an impact on my research results with regards to the discussions surrounding the peacebuilding and reconciliation process. Although I told the principal that I would like to keep the groups small, there were 15 students in the first workshop. I therefore divided them into two groups to allow for a more intimate discussion. While one group was creating digital stories, I had a focus group discussion with the other.

School E	Female	Male	Total
Questionnaire	6	9	15
Workshop 1	6	9	15
Focus Group 1	3	5	8
Focus Group 2	3	4	7
Workshop 2	3	5	8
Focus group 3	3	5	8
Interviews	3	5	8

Table 10. School E participants

## 4.2. Data collection methods

With the aim of fulfilling the research objectives and answering the questions that result from these objectives, qualitative research methods were utilized for this research. Qualitative research is mostly used in social sciences in order to “explore, describe and explain” (Leavy, 2017, p. 9). It can also provide rich contextual and narrative explanations of social and human experiences (Creswell, 2007) because qualitative research is “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 15). It applies inductive approaches to the acquisition of knowledge with the aim of uncovering meaning-making processes through focusing on people’s experiences (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) and comprehending the complexities of social phenomenon (Leavy, 2014). In the light of the objectives of this research explained earlier, out of qualitative methodologies a hybrid ethnography were utilized. Therefore online and offline ethnographic methods were applied.

In its traditional sense, ethnography is about understanding, analyzing, and describing a culture. It enables researchers to study cultural behaviors and patterns (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). But for me it also involves “*learning from people*” (Spradley, 2016, p. 3). Ethnography has been mainly used by sociologists and anthropologists, but it is also useful and suitable for communication and digital

research (Boellstorff, 2012). Therefore to be able to understand how young people in Rwanda use digital technologies and how they position themselves in the society they are living in, and in order to understand their experiences and everyday activities, I follow ethnographic methods since these objectives can be achieved by grasping the patterns of their behaviors as well as their dialogues, imaginative and creative practices and processes. I combine digital and offline ethnography, which, as Culhane and Elliot (2017) note, “flows from theoretical approaches that assume that ethnographic knowledge emerges not through detached observation but through conversations and exchanges of many kinds among people interacting in diverse zones of entanglement” (p. 3). Along with participant observation, this ethnographic research also focused on how digital practices, imagination, and creativity “shape and are shaped by social relations, politics, and cultural formations that infuse lived experience” (Culhane & Elliott, 2017, p. 3). Therefore I used virtual and actual methods to observe and understand the Rwandan youth in this research. As Murthy (2008) states, “a balanced combination of physical and digital ethnography not only gives researchers a larger and more exciting array of methods to tell social stories, but also enables them to demarginalize the voice of respondents in these accounts” (p. 839). Additionally, with the advent of digital technologies and the increasing use of digital media and tools by young people, “traditional” ethnography should not ignore their important place in people’s everyday lives. On the other hand, the fact that the use of digital technologies and access to them depends on many factors such as class, gender, and age (Murthy, 2008), this needs to be taken into consideration while doing digital ethnographic research. This is why at times only traditional ethnographic techniques were applied, at other times only digital ethnography, and at yet other times a blend of the two.

By engaging in both face-to-face and digital fieldwork, I was able to have conversations and make connections with people through digital means, generate rich data about how the participants in this research use digital media, technologies, and tools, how they integrate these into their everyday life, as well as about the consequences, challenges, and benefits of their use (Lupton, 2015). Following a hybrid ethnography allowed me to observe the research participants in their natural settings and surroundings, in their schools, at their homes, as well as in online environments such as WhatsApp, emails, and Instagram, which have become a part

of their daily lives. It also had some challenges such as adapting to different needs and expectations of the participants. Thus every workshop I conducted was different in each school. I had to observe the physical settings and analyze what the students needed and wanted. I adopted a pragmatic approach to my research design so I combined several methods and also modified certain questions or approaches depending on the course of my fieldwork. In this way, this research adopted the logic of triangulation, a concept described by Patton (1999) as the logic “based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanations. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of data collection and analysis provide more grist for the research mill” (Patton, 1999, p. 1192). I believe using multiple research methods, data sources, theories, and analyses expands the understanding of the phenomenon research can reveal. This research is fundamentally established on this point of view, since it results from an interdisciplinary approach. In the following sections, I explain every method and mode that have been used during my fieldwork in detail.

### ***Participant observation and field notes***

According to Atkinson and Hammersley (1994), participant observation is not a research method but “a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers” (p. 249). Therefore it is the basic requirement that all research techniques need to acquire (Adler & Adler, 1994). The observations occurred in two ways: physical and digital. The observations while “being there” in the traditional sense were focused on the activities of students during digital storytelling workshops, their interactions with each other at school in the classroom, as well as during extracurricular activities (where I was allowed by the school authorities and teachers to be a guest) and their behaviours in their homes (when the interviews were conducted in their homes). I also spent time with the students during class breaks and lunch breaks. Furthermore, since it was the 25th anniversary of the 1994 genocide, I had the chance to participate in the activities and events in relation to the commemoration of the genocide where I could observe the young people and their participation.

My role was that of “peripheral membership” (Adler & Adler, 1994), which allows researchers to be “moderate participants” where they “maintain a balance between

being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation” (Spradley, 1980, p. 60). Thus I was partly involved in activities with the students, especially during workshops and digital ethnography, but did not participate in the core activities (Adler & Adler, 1994). While I was active as a digital media user when I participated in social media activities and asked them to invite me to their digital practices such as WhatsApp groups (Pink et al., 2016), I was passive while in their classrooms and attending other activities during the commemoration.

During the field research, the workshops in the classroom, and the time spent in schools, I took notes on how students interacted with the story and with other group members. As described by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), these field notes are “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (pp. 118–119). Adapting the typology from Burgess, Jensen (2002) defines three types of field notes: substantive notes, logistical notes, and reflexive notes. *Substantive* notes depict the field under study; *logistical* notes explain the situation in which the study is conducted; *reflexive* notes lead to the beginning of analysis based on observations and other data (p. 243). I took notes throughout the research process where I depicted the environment I was in, the students, their behaviors, the school system, the conversation I had with students, their parents, teachers, and principals, as well as anyone I met during these times. I took notes where I described the situation in which I conducted my study. Lastly, I also wrote a separate research diary where I reflected on my observations. I used two notebooks which I later digitized; they turned out to be around two hundred Microsoft Word pages. I highlighted certain topics with different colors to categorize the themes.

I was intrigued to find that, although I am a white researcher, my age (26 at the time of the fieldwork) was more central to my positionality than my “whiteness.” Sometimes telling me “you understand us, you’re young,” the participants could easily talk about and criticize elders, teachers, and even their parents in my presence. Additionally, my position as an outsider (non-Rwandan) and non-Western (Turkish) may have helped participants to feel that they could openly share with me their criticism of the Rwandan government and of the government’s Western approach to constructing the post-genocide society. I usually felt this when students asked me about opportunities to

study in Europe. Some of the students were in their last year of high school and were planning to apply to universities and study abroad. Once we were informally having a conversation waiting for other students to arrive for the workshop. They asked me how I got accepted to a university in Europe, how I was being treated as a non-European, and if racism existed in Europe as much as in the USA.

### ***Workshop strategies***

For the purpose of understanding how research participants tell stories through digital means, I conducted workshops where they watched, read, navigated, and interacted with the transmedia projects selected for this project. First of all, through a purposive sampling strategy, transmedia storytelling projects about genocides have been identified using the MIT database and a simple Google search. The projects were selected according to their topic, which is post-genocide peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, rather than a focus on the genocide itself; therefore, I eliminated three projects (one about the Holocaust, one about the Bosnian genocide, and one about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda) since they solely focused on the genocides. Two of the projects are about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, while the other two are related to the Guatemalan (Mayan) genocide and the Cambodian genocide. They were selected and analyzed prior to the fieldwork based on their variety of narratives and narration tools and the expansions they used. These projects are:

#### Love Radio – Episodes of Love and Hate

Love Radio is a transmedia project developed by Anoenk Steketee and Eefje Blankevoort, which is based on three main interconnected pillars that tell stories that are taking place in Rwanda and that try to reproduce the post-genocide reality of the country. The interactive web documentary consists of two interactive parts: tap stories for smartphones and an exhibition in Foam, the Exhibition Museum Amsterdam. It is based on reviving the popular radio soap *Musekeweya* (broadcast in 2004) and comparing it with reality.

#### 20 Years after the Genocide: Portraits from a Changing Rwanda

Produced by Giordano Cossu, this transmedia project includes a web documentary, a documentary film, and a photo exhibition. It tells the story of the Rwandans who are struggling to rebuild their lives after the genocide and explains the reconciliation process and inner conflicts of people who experienced the genocide.

#### Granito: Every Memory Matters

Granito: Every Memory Matters is a transmedia project produced by Skylight Pictures that aims to recover the Guatemalan collective memory through the story collection related to the genocide against indigenous people. The project consists of a documentary, a webisode series, and a digital project that targets Guatemalan youth who do not know much about the genocide. It tries to create a dialogue between these young people and older people. By providing an intergenerational exchange through videos, texts, photographs, and letters, the project hopes to construct a common historical narrative regarding the past and the future.

#### Scars of Cambodia

Scars of Cambodia is a transmedia project that consists of a documentary, photography book, audio slideshow, and an exhibition telling the Khmer Rouge regime's history through a Cambodian fisherman's eyes, which sheds light on the history of the country during the genocide that caused so many psychological and physical traumas. The project was carried out by Emilie Arfeul and Alexandre Lieber.

Before the workshops, participants filled a questionnaire about their demographic information as well as what kind of digital tools they owned or used regularly, which apps they used the most, etc., so that when I divided them into groups, I could put those who were interested in similar things together. However, this strategy only worked in the schools where I could conduct two or more workshops. In every workshop, I had to change my strategy depending on the number of participants, what they were interested in, or the conditions of the place we held the workshop. For instance, in two of the schools, students could use their mobile phones with special permission (since they are normally not allowed to have their phones at school), while in the other schools, students could not bring their phones. The transmedia project I

used in each workshop also depended on the number of workshops as well as the interest of the students.

Age	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Number of Students	3	10	12	32	38	25	14	134

Table 11. Questionnaires: age demographics

Gender & School	Private	Public	Total
Female	44	35	79
Male	24	31	55
Total	68	66	134

Table 12. Questionnaires: gender and school types

At the beginning of each workshop, I asked the students which project they would like to interact with. After they watched documentaries, acquired more knowledge about the project by navigating through its website, or read some information on other sites, they were given time to create their own content related to the topics that emerged from their interactions with the projects. They were not limited to any kind of digital platform or any kind of style, but they were asked to create stories related to the genocide, peace, memories, etc. In total, the students created 38 digital texts, mostly memes and Instagram posts, individually or in groups: 1 poem, 1 video, 36 Instagram posts with 25 memes, captioned images, selfies, and an Instagram story. After every workshop, students were asked questions regarding their experiences during the interaction with the projects, which was in groups in the form of focus group discussions. During the focus groups, students were encouraged to discuss the projects and their approaches to the use of transmedia storytelling in their classrooms.

### **Focus groups**

Although focus groups are not considered to be a part of ethnography (Brink & Edgecombe, 2003), I argue that for the sake of my research I needed them to understand group dynamics and my interviewees' ways of communicating. Focus groups are a kind of group interview, but differs from interviews in the sense that the former requires collective activity. As Kitzinger (1995) states, "[a]lthough group

interviews are often used simply as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously, focus groups use explicitly group interaction as part of the method” (p. 299). In this regard, the researcher asks questions to encourage the participants to talk to each other and comment on each other’s opinions and experiences. It is also very useful to understand “not only what people think but also how they think and why they think that way” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). Focus groups also allow the researcher to drill more into people’s interaction with each other through observing their jokes, arguments, and anecdotes. This kind of data is useful since the participants are not responding to the direct questions, but communicating with their peers as if in an authentic daily conversation.

For this research, participant observation, which is considered as the foundation of ethnographic research, would have limited my ability to fully grasp the nature of group dynamics among the youth or with other groups in terms of the post-genocide reconciliation process due to many obstacles I explained about Rwanda and Rwandan authorities in the Introduction. Due to the lack of social trust and self-censorship, participant observation of open dialogues would have been severely limited. Furthermore, since my access to certain sites for observation and group dynamics would have otherwise been limited and restricted (Suter, 2000), I found focus group discussions appropriate for the aim of gaining insight into in-group communication. I found, however, that I had to move away from certain characteristics of conventional focus groups. For example, although I prepared questions using the “funnel” method suggested by Roller and Lavrakas (2015), in which the researcher should start with general questions and continue with more precise questions, thus developing rapport with participants, I decided not to use these questions as much as possible so as to create a lively discussion among participants in which they directed the conversation more naturally. I changed my role from being an active facilitator to mostly being a listener. When the conversations were blocked, I tried to revive them with a question by referring to previous statements. Another advantage I had during these discussions was that most of the participants knew each other. They were either from the same class, athletes on the same team, members of the same club, residents of the same dormitories, or were just friends who encouraged each other to attend the workshops together. In a sense, I followed some characteristics of the ethnography of communication through observing not only the “ways of speaking” but also nonverbal

vocal and nonvocal forms of communication (Duff, 2002). I took notes on this nonverbal communication during the discussions. I also analyzed “who was in charge, which parts were interview-like, meeting-like, and conversation-like, which topics were lively and which were flat, how well ratified topics were by the group as a whole, and who dominated and who was silent” (Agar & MacDonald, 1995, p. 85). The focus group discussions were recorded with a voice recorder.

Age	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Number of students	2	5	8	18	12	5	4	54

Table 13. Age demographics of the focus group participants

### ***Semi-structured in-depth interviews***

The aim of the semi-structured interview is to discover a subject more openly and to allow the participants to express themselves in their own words (Esterberg, 2002). It involves predetermined questions and topics, but the interviewer has the freedom to come up with other questions according to the course of the interview. This kind of interview method is appropriate if the researcher knows her subject area well and has a certain research model. Sometimes the researcher might not anticipate the participant’s answers even though she is familiar with the overall topic, thus semi-structured interviews become useful for creating a conversation in which the researcher’s goal is to obtain the participant’s ideas and approach (Holloway, 1997). In this research, I used semi-structured interviews alongside focus group discussions because these methods are complementary in that individual interviews “reveal important insights absent group effects that are complimentary to focus group research” (Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001, p. 245). In addition, I thought that students who might not be comfortable talking about genocide-related topics in a group might feel comfortable expressing their opinions in one-on-one conversations. The questions I prepared for these interviews concerned the interviewee’s everyday digital technology use, school life, family life, and their experience in the workshops and focus groups, as well as (although less often) topics related to the genocide and topics current in Rwanda at the time. These interviews with the students gave me relevant and more detailed information about their interaction with digital media and tools and their approach to the use of digital technologies; if I had only had the focus group

discussions, I would not have gained the information that the semi-structured interviews provided. As Jensen (2002) suggests, “in-depth interviewing, with its affinities to conversation, may be well suited to tap social agents’ perspective on the media, since spoken language remains a primary and familiar mode of social interaction, and one that people habitually relate to the technological media” (Jensen, 2002, p. 240). The interviews were most often conducted at students’ homes with the permission of the parents, but also at school, in the Kigali public library, or another place more convenient for the participants. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. The average time of the interviews was approximately 40 minutes. Before starting the interviews, I always stated that there were no right or wrong answers, that they could withdraw from the study if they so wished, that they could skip any questions they didn’t want to answer, and reminded them that their names would remain confidential and that the recordings would only be used by me.

Age	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Number of students	0	1	4	8	7	1	1	22

Table 14. Age demographics of the interviewees

### 4.3. Data analysis procedures

During the data analysis and interpretation, I followed the phases introduced by Leavy (2017): data preparation and organization, initial immersion, coding, categorizing and theming, and interpretation. In the first phase, I transcribed the interviews, focus groups, and other data. After organizing the data, I then immersed myself in it so as not to lose sight of the big picture. The data was uploaded and coded in the data analysis software NVivo. NVivo provides all necessary tools for the analysis of qualitative data. It allows researchers to review data, make notes, create the codes, and categorize them. It also shows the relations between the collected data and the coding scheme. Additionally it “allows for open coding, axial coding (making links between codes), hyperlinks to nontextual data such as audio clips or photographs, coding according to demographic information, and the exploring of ideas visually with a modeler” (Bringer et al., 2006, p. 248). I could also attach internal annotations and external files in order to refer to a specific context that was relevant to the research

and the document (Bringer, Johnson & Brackenridge, 2006). While the data was entered in NVivo, I used the coding and started interpreting the data through content and thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups. In vivo coding as a method of open coding was used first to condense the data, and then this information was connected through axial coding methods. In vivo coding is preferred by qualitative researchers, as it gives a priority to participants' language (Leavy, 2017). Memos and jottings were added to capture my reflections, ideas, and thoughts. After finishing the coding process, the patterns between codes were defined and then these patterns were grouped in categories and themes accordingly. Finally, in the interpretation phase, I used strategies of triangulation to develop meanings out of the data gathered through different methods while using the theories and existing literature.

### ***Analyzing the transmedia projects***

I used Gambarato's (2013) analytical model, which she developed "to outline essential features of the design process behind transmedia projects in order to support the analytic needs of transmedia designers and the applied research in the interest of the media industry" (p. 89). The analytical model includes questions about premise and purpose, narrative, worldbuilding, characters, extensions, media platforms and genres, audience and market, engagement, structure, and aesthetics (see Table 15). Following this analytical approach as a guideline allowed me to understand the overall design approach to nonfiction transmedia storytelling projects about post-genocide societies. However, for a deeper analysis, I merged some of these categories to link their relations. For the narrative analysis, transmedia strategies, and character analysis, I also used semio-narratological analysis to understand story structures, the narrative roles (actants), transformations of the characters, and their actions following the work by Greimas (1987, 1984) and Courtés (1976) since the design approach would not be enough considering the objectives of this study.

Firstly, Greimas's actantial model was used with the aim of revealing different functions of actants in post-conflict narratives. The notion of actants provides groups of entities in a narrative, which are determined by the interrelations among them. Based on Greimas's (1984) actantial model, the narrative roles are as the followings:

**Subject:** The central role of narrative, which is directed toward the object and is usually performed by the main character who performs a mission.

**Object:** The actant played by what is sought by the subject; it can be performed by quality or a material or immaterial physical object.

**Helper:** The actant that supports and helps the subject perform the mission.

**Opponent:** The actant that prevents the mission from being accomplished.

**Sender:** The actant that triggers and instigates the mission.

**Receiver:** The actant that benefits from the action.

There are three axes in the actantial model: the quest axis, the communication axes and the conflict axes. The quest axis (from subject to object) demonstrates the status of the junction between subject and object, while the communication axis corresponds to the sender's and receiver's relations of transference to object. And finally, the conflict axis shows the events that might hinder or help communication or quest. Each position in the model represents an actantial role, however, actants should not be confused with actors. Greimas differentiates actants, which are narrative units, from actors, which are "recognizable in the particular discourse in which they are manifested" (Greimas 1987, p. 106). Actants can be manifested by various actors and only one actor can manifest various actants. Additionally, actants can be manifested by objects or abstract notions. Thus actants and actors do not necessarily need to have one-to-one relations. All in all, actantial models are abstract structures at the semio-narratological level and actantial analysis allows researchers to understand how realities are constructed by narrators in line with a neutral actantial structure.

The analysis of the transmedia projects would not be complete if an enunciative analysis were not employed in the narratives. As Veron states "[e]nunciation concerns not what is said but the saying of it and its modalities, the ways of saying something" (Veron, 1992, p.2). Benveniste (1970) defines enunciation as an act of speech that the speaker performs in the natural world. He indicates that personal pronouns are empty and indispensable; they are empty because anyone can utilize them, indispensable because they identify the aspect and direction of what is said (Benveniste, 1970). Greimas (1987) later adapted Benveniste's theory to non-verbal production. In Greimas's theory, actants are presented with actors acting in specific time and space

dimensions, carrying and transmitting specific figures and themes. Therefore, enunciation presupposes a speech act in which an appropriation of language by the speaker occurs, and thus requires an interlocutor and constitutes a contract. For the sake of this research, audiovisual resources are also given emphasis due to the abundance of audiovisual texts in the transmedia projects. Gaudreault and Jost (1999) point out that:

There are no stories without a storytelling instance. Virtually all narratologists agree on this point. Films differ, however, from novels in that a film can show an action rather than tell it. In that regime of showing (monstration), notably in theatrical staging or in the “documentary” recordings of the Lumière Brothers, the discursive instance is less apparent than in a written tale. Events seem to tell their own stories. Yet this is misleading, because without any mediation there would have been no recording and we would not have seen the events at all. (p. 45)

Enunciation occurs in the passage from the virtualization of semiotic structures to its realization, from linguistic competence to performance. Thus, the analysis at this level is based on how values and abstract structures in the previous levels are concretized through actors, time frames, places, and audiovisual resources. Therefore, the analysis of enunciation will provide means for understanding the subject’s and the object’s situation, the formation of meaning through signs exchanged between persons and groups, and audiovisual resources that are used to convey the message.

Analytical Model for Transmedia Storytelling	Relevant questions
<p><b><i>Premise and Purpose</i></b></p> <p>The premise and purpose of the project affect the overall course and frame of the design process and the coverage of the events and stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the subject of the project?</li> <li>- In which country and language does it happen?</li> <li>- Who is the producer(s)?</li> <li>- What is the project’s importance?</li> <li>- Is it fictional, nonfictional or both?</li> <li>- What is the aim of the project?</li> <li>- Is it local, regional, or global?</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Narrative</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the narrative elements?</li> <li>- What is the summary of the storyline?</li> </ul>

---

The transmedia setting includes a narrative structure that leads to a better understanding of the storyworld.

- What is the timeframe of the story?
- What are the phases and strategies of narrative expansion?
- What are the strategies to expand or compress the narrative? How do they affect the density, complexity and thematic relevance of the transmedia narrative world?
- Do different narrative lines produce independent narratives?

---

### **Worldbuilding**

Transmedia projects adopt an approach toward worldbuilding rather than traditional approaches, such as giving emphasis to character-building.

- When does the story occur?
- Where does the story occur?
- How does the storyworld look?
- Is it fictional or real-world? Or both?
- What are the challenges, dangers or joys of the world?
- Does the storyworld support expansions?

---

### **Characters**

Characters are an important part of the transmedia storyworld since their appearance across different media platforms determines the design and aim of the transmedia project.

- Who are the characters?
- What is the aim of the characters?
- Is the audience a character as well?
- What is the relation (dependent or independent) among different characters?
- Is there any kind of transformation of characters regarding quantity, role, relations, etc.?
- Do characters change throughout the transmedia expansion and intermedial evolution? How so?

---

### **Extensions**

Within the transmedia universe, the story is unfolded and experienced in various extensions which are crucial for the continuity of the story.

- How many extensions are there in the project?
  - Are they adaptations or expansions of the story?
  - Does each extension simply spread the content or add another layer to it?
  - Do the extensions add something to the story?
  - Do they provide an in-depth analysis of the story?
-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do the extensions bring on new questions and discussions?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media platforms and genres</b></p> <p>A transmedia project contains different media platforms and can also expand using different genres, which enrich the audience's experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which media platforms are used in the project?</li> <li>- What are the functions and characteristics of these platforms?</li> <li>- What devices are required to travel in the storyworld?</li> <li>- How do these platforms and devices contribute to the story?</li> <li>- Can we identify problems specific to the platforms used in the project?</li> <li>- Which genres are made use of?</li> <li>- What are the functions of these genres?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Audience and Market</b></p> <p>The audience plays a vital role in transmedia projects in the sense that they are not mere viewers but active spectators. Regarding the market, different business models are applied for the design and production of transmedia projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Who is the target audience?</li> <li>- What kind of spectators can be attracted to the project?</li> <li>- Which devices are targeted for which group of people?</li> <li>- Are there other projects similar to this one?</li> <li>- What is the business model?</li> <li>- Was the project successful in terms of revenue?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engagement</b></p> <p>Interaction and participation are directly linked to the design process since the engagement levels determine the experience people will have while navigating the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do the audiences experience the story as a first person, second person, or third person?</li> <li>- What is the role of the audience?</li> <li>- What are the mechanisms of interaction, immersion, and participation?</li> <li>- What kind and level of user engagement is available?</li> <li>- Is there a goal the audience is trying to achieve?</li> <li>- What type of texts do prosumers generate? Is there a general typology that can be created?</li> <li>- What is the process of interpretation, expansion, and compression of the narrative by prosumers?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is user-generated content related to the original story?</li> <li>- Does the project offer an element to the audience for them to take and incorporate into their lives?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Structure</b></p> <p>How a transmedia project is structured, how the elements are constituted, and how these elements construct a relationship with each other show the information and content flow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When does the transmediation begin? Is it pro-active or retroactive?</li> <li>- Does each extension serve as an independent element?</li> <li>- What are the possible endpoints of the project?</li> <li>- What is the overall structure of the organization?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aesthetics</b></p> <p>Design elements such as sounds, images, and interfaces have the potential to attract audience engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What kinds of visuals are used?</li> <li>- Is it a fantasy or a real environment?</li> <li>- Is there a specific design?</li> <li>- What is the role of the audio in the project?</li> <li>- What is the role of the images in the project?</li> <li>- How does the overall structure affect the design?</li> </ul>

Table 15. Gambarato's (2013) Analytical model for transmedia storytelling<sup>23</sup>

### **Analyzing transmedia participation**

Transmedia participation is analyzed on three levels in this research: interaction, engagement, and user-generated content. The transmedia interaction of participants mainly depends on how they navigated the transmedia projects, their opinions about the projects, and the ways in which they interacted with the information and content provided. The content created by the participants during the workshops is analyzed according to Genette's (1997) concept of "paratextuality" as conceptualized in the theoretical framework. Therefore the analysis takes into account the location of texts in the transmedia storyworld, their temporality (such as when they are created and what this means for the storyworld), the mode of the content-created meaning, in what ways the content was created and by whom, what the content means for the

<sup>23</sup> Source: Gambarato, 2013 (pp 89-95)

storyworld, and lastly the functions of the content in the storyworld. In the last part of the analysis, the types of engagement are identified. Engagement considers the actions taken and in what forms these actions are taken during the interactions of participants. Therefore, drawing on the interactions of students with the projects as well as their content creation process, different types of engagement are discussed at the end of the chapter.

### ***Analyzing digital inclusion***

Based on the literature and research on digital inclusion, four categories have been established for the analysis: dimensions of access, such as locations, devices, and socio-economic restrictions; the digital disengagement of participants and the reasons for and implications of this; digital uses and motivations behind the participants' uses of digital technologies; and transmedia literacy. Regarding transmedia literacy, I analyzed participants' transmedia skills based on the categories created by the Transmedia Literacy Project (Scolari et al., 2018). These include skills such as production skills, media and technology skills, management skills, narrative and aesthetics skills, and performative skills. After being guided by the Transmedia Literacy project categories, I also included data literacy as a category since my inductive analysis provided data regarding the skills of data identification and reflexivity among the students in this research.

### ***Analyzing the overall context***

At the end of all the analysis that resulted from only my ethnographic research, I thought I needed to emphasize some regulations and policies around ICT use and Peace Education initiatives in Rwanda. I included the ICT regulations under *Vision 2020*<sup>24</sup> (Republic of Rwanda, 2012) such as the National Information and Communications Infrastructure (NICI) plans (Republic of Rwanda, 2015a), the Smart Rwanda Master Plan (Republic of Rwanda, 2015b), the ICT Hub Strategy (Republic of Rwanda, 2018a), and ICT in Education Policy (Republic of Rwanda, 2016). I also analyzed the "Education for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda" (ESPR) initiative and "Integrating Concepts of Peace & Values Education into Rwandan Classrooms -

---

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/index.php?id=148>

Teacher Guidebook” developed by the Aegis Trust<sup>25</sup> in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Education Board. For the analysis, first I coded participants’ accounts based on their experiences and the ideas about ICT use in their schools and peace education that they encounter throughout the year. After coding all the data, I categorized them into themes and subthemes. I later compared their experiences with the aims established by the Rwandan government regulations. I also included my observations in the schools and classrooms.

---

<sup>25</sup> [www.aegitrust.com](http://www.aegitrust.com)





## 5. TRANSMEDIATIZING RECONCILIATION AND PEACEBUILDING

In this chapter, I aim to answer the questions related to the first objective of this research project, that is, to examine the storytelling projects about post-genocide societies and analyze the differences and similarities among them. I focus on the four selected transmedia projects about post-genocide societies in Rwanda, Guatemala and Cambodia: *Love Radio – Episodes of Love and Hate*; *20 Years after the Genocide: Portraits from a Changing Rwanda*; *Granito: Every Memory Matters*; and *Scars of Cambodia*. In the first section, I analyze the purposes and target audiences of the projects as well as their journalistic approaches to transmediatizing genocides. I then analyze the media platforms and genres that are used in the projects and their implications on the transmedia approach to telling post-genocide stories. I continue with Greimas' actantial analysis to understand the actantial models, narratives, and meanings behind the texts, and also consider the power implications and identity construction through self-narratives. After analyzing the actantial structure, I explain the transmedia narrative strategies utilized in the transmediatization of the projects. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of the characters (background, gender, age, among others), the audiovisual characteristics and structure of the transmedia projects, and the elements of worldbuilding in each storyworld.

<b>Components of transmedia projects</b>	<b><i>Love Radio</i></b>	<b><i>Portraits from a Changing Rwanda</i></b>	<b><i>Granito</i></b>	<b><i>Scars of Cambodia</i></b>
<b><i>Interactive webdoc</i></b>	X	X		
<b><i>Linear webdoc</i></b>		X		X
<b><i>Documentary film</i></b>	X	X	X	X
<b><i>Exhibition</i></b>	X	X		X
<b><i>Photo book</i></b>		X		X
<b><i>Sequels</i></b>		X	X	
<b><i>Webisodes</i></b>			X	
<b><i>Interactive story/photo-sharing platform</i></b>			X	

<i>Audiovisual slideshow</i>	X
<i>Educational resources for schools</i>	X

Table 16. Components of selected transmedia projects

## 5.1. Transmedia journalism, local collaborations, and mobilization

The selected transmedia projects about post-genocide societies have common purposes: to inform audiences through journalistic characteristics, to raise awareness, and to activate and engage people with the aim of bringing social change, among others. All of the projects consist of features of slow journalism in which the relevant information is collected over a lengthy period of time during which connections are made to enrich the content. Despite opposing the journalistic norms of deadline, market, and cost, these transmedia projects do not stand in stark contrast with the effort to achieve critical journalism, in parallel with the very purpose of the profession. Most journalists such as human rights journalists, advocacy journalists, and peace journalists embrace the profession with the hope of changing the world. The nonfiction transmedia projects overlap with these journalistic practices in the sense that they aiming to explore the topics in-depth and to inform their audiences. Specifically, with regards to such a complex topic as the post-genocide reconciliation process, the projects use strategies of multilayering and transmedia in order to present the context, to make analysis depending on the context, and to bring expert opinions, as well as different life stories, to the table. For example, *Love Radio* (2014), produced by Dutch photographer Aniek Steketee and writer/filmmaker Eefje Blankevoort, tells the complex story of post-genocide Rwanda by means of the producers' collection of different stories and opinions from various stakeholders. They present online episodes of a fictional story, continue with stories from Rwandans in relation to their experiences in the peacebuilding process, and also include articles written by experts to give a different perspective to their viewers. The project also offers a different kind of analysis of the current situation of Rwanda and of the role of the media in a community regarding the initiation and prevention of the conflict.

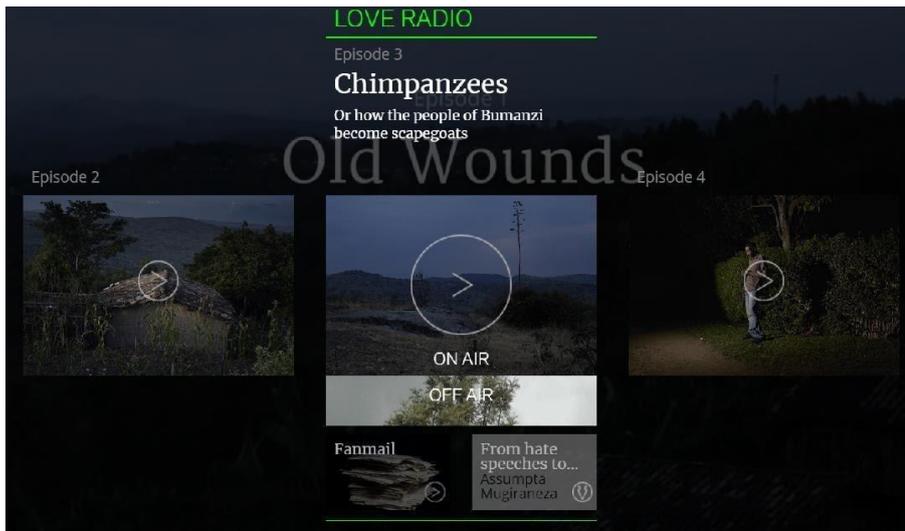


Figure 4. The interface of the Love Radio project<sup>26</sup>

The projects achieve a journalistic approach to transmediatizing genocides by not only informing, but also immersing audiences in order to find possible solutions to issues in conflict areas instead of simply reading the news or watching them on TV. The projects aim to compel people to question the factors behind the violence and the process of reconciliation and healing in post-genocide countries by presenting conflicting and contesting narratives, the traumas of people who experienced the genocide, the unfairness of the judicial systems, and the injustices that continue to exist in these societies. All of the projects in this study are therefore investigative, educative, and adopt a critical approach to their subject matters from different perspectives. These projects demonstrate long-term investigation and easily embed every detail of the issue and the continuation of stories on different platforms, although in some aspects this can be limited. For example, in *Scars of Cambodia*, a project carried out by French filmmakers Emilie Arfeul and Alexandre Lieber, there is only one character and the information provided in the project and analysis of the context does not cover every aspect of the conflict such as what happened, who the conflicting parties were, and so on. However, there were different reasons for this choice. Their project puts an emphasis on one man's intimate story and suffering rather than historical elements.

<sup>26</sup> Screenshot of the author from <http://www.loveradio-rwanda.org/episode/1/onair>

Emilie Arfeul met Tut, the main and only character in *Scars of Cambodia*, by chance during her travels in Cambodia. While she was traveling, she got lost and ended up on Tut's street. Tut stopped and invited her into his home. The two could not speak the same language, but Tut "almost immediately showed her his scars." Emilie had to leave, but returned to the same spot one year later with Alexandre Lieber to make a project about him (E. Arfeul, personal communication, May 9, 2018). As a result, a silent documentary about Tut's memories of the genocide during the Khmer Rouge regime arose from this encounter. The producers wanted to transmit his suffering and pain to viewers with only gestures and movements and make him the spotlight of the project. Instead of providing a lot of information about historical events, their strategy was to bring emotions into play and draw their viewers' attention to one individual's story and scars. Although their approach also had journalistic characteristics, the emphasis was on the artistic representation through photographs.

As has been mentioned, covering post-genocide societies in transmedia projects requires long-term research and collaboration with different stakeholders. In the case of the selected projects, the production and distribution process remained limited due to a lack of funding opportunities, which also impacts the engagement of target audiences. All of the projects use crowdfunding or donations, and in some cases the continuation of the project depends on local organizations. Therefore the sustainability of these projects is not secured since they are non-commercial projects and depend on crowdfunding and donations. For example, *Scars of Cambodia* was unable to create an interactive webdoc due to the lack of financial means. On the same note, distribution and expansion of the projects have been curbed for financial reasons, as well as political and safety reasons. The projects try to compensate and continue their activities through selling the documentaries online and photos and materials in exhibitions, among other small purchases, but they pale in comparison to blockbuster transmedia franchises.

Despite these financial limitations, some projects managed to find alternative ways of expanding their projects in different regions and contexts. For example, the project *Granito: Every Memory Matters* accomplishes this through local collaborators by, for example, giving the responsibility of collecting stories and creating an interactive map of them to a local organization, *Memoria para la Concordia*. This organization is also

involved in many local activities engaging citizens with the different educational content of the project. The project also has partners that play a key role in gathering memories and testimonies. For example, the staff of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation collected memories in the field during the exhumation process. Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala created a screening kit for the community and house meetings. The Maya-K'iche Organization of New Bedford, MA and the Central American Legal Assistance of New York also bring together memories collected within their groups. Although Skylight produced the Granito: Every Memory Matters platform project, which was originally a two-year project starting in 2012, the responsibility of collecting, sharing, and archiving memories was transferred to Memorial Para la Concordia, a Guatemalan organization which aims at lasting reconciliation and human rights in Guatemala. Therefore, collaborations with different organizations, especially local collaborations, have proven to be useful for the sustainability of some nonfiction transmedia projects. I believe the underlying reason behind Granito's success in becoming a long-running transmedia project compared to the others is its local collaborations as well as the transmedia mobilization of people through educational packages and activities.

Local collaborations and transmedia mobilization were carried out hand-in-hand, and thus mutually impacted each other. Since all of the selected projects in the study were created by outsiders to the local communities in Rwanda, Cambodia, and Guatemala, their links to local communities helped the projects expand and extend their content and potential for social change in the local communities. The projects' other aim is to carry these stories to the Western communities as well. Although most of the content is originally in English, the projects expand the scope through translations and multilingual productions. Thus, the projects try to involve different linguistic communities, both local and international, despite the limited opportunities for production and distribution. For example, in *Love Radio*, the radio soap itself is in Kinyarwanda with English subtitles, however, the main narration is dubbed in English. The interviews are in Kinyarwanda and French, but again with English subtitles. The slideshows and essays are all written in English. In an interview with Candice Jansen, Anoenk Steketee (2015) states that "[t]he language used in the radio soap itself is Kinyarwanda because that is the language most people speak in Rwanda. We used our own narrator because we had to find a way to make this story understandable to

a Western audience” (Steketee, 2015, July 18). Similarly, the project 20 Years after the Genocide tries to reach a worldwide audience by adding subtitles to the webdoc, translating the short stories in the photo book, and screening the documentaries at different festivals. Although the first webdoc is originally in Kinyarwanda and available with both French and English subtitles, the second webdoc is translated only into French. Additionally, the photo book is published in two languages: Italian and French. In addition to lifting language barriers, the projects use different platforms to reach different audiences. For example, in Love Radio, tap stories for smartphones are arranged for the people who would like to obtain information on the move. Considering the number of people using mobile phones in the African context, the tap stories also provide a contextualized engagement strategy for local communities.

Some cross-media extensions and educational objectives of the projects specifically target young people and intend to bring different generations together for a constructive dialogue. For example, screenings are organized in different educational settings such as schools and other educational organizations. The projects are structured to foster a common understanding and intergenerational conversations. One of these projects is the digital platform that targets the Guatemalan youth to encourage them to collect and share stories from their elder family members. The project hopes to construct a common historical narrative regarding the past and the future by reaching out to those in Guatemala and the Guatemalan diaspora. At first, the target of the documentaries was Americans, “most of whom know little about Central America, most of whom have never been to Central America, or who have been there only as tourists. So they knew little and are confused about the role of the United States in Central America and the war there” (Rosenthal & Yates, 1985, p. 7). However, later on, the Guatemalans and their diasporas were also targeted through the digital platforms and the Granito: Every Memory Matters (GEMM) project. Paco de Onis, the producer of the project, states that “when making the film *Granito*, we realized just how deep a lack of historical memory was in Guatemala and especially with the younger generation. We thought that with the GEMM we could create bridges between the generations and also find a way to archive these memories in one place, online” (Paco de Onis, personal communication, May 10, 2018).

The projects target online communities through dissemination and engagement on websites where they collect the information via social media accounts. The projects appeal to different types of viewers. For example, when Love Radio episodes were broadcast biweekly during the commemoration period, the project targeted *synchronous viewers*, that is, those who followed the episodes at the time they were broadcast. Similarly, the sequels of the *Granito* brought much attention and excitement among the viewers who synchronously monitored the development of the project. These viewers were mostly involved in transmedia mobilization activities where they shared their experiences in non-digital activities and meetings or online through hashtags and dissemination of the projects' extensions. They tended to be more reflective and navigational audiences who tried to understand every aspect of the content. There are also *asynchronous viewers* who find out about the projects or are introduced to the projects later. These viewers are usually limited to online content where they can watch webisodes or online transmedia documentaries, navigate through the provided content on the website, or look for extra information through intratextual navigation. The opportunities for these viewers to engage in transmedia mobilization are limited, although they can use social media to interact with other viewers and extensions of the projects. On the other hand, the topics in relation to post-genocide societies such as human rights, justice, peacebuilding, and the relevance of the projects will be long-term. However, for transmedia mobilization, the long-term sustainability of the projects, campaigns, and activities is needed for social impact and transmedia activism, as occurred in the case of *Granito*. But it should be added that the agenda of the producers makes a significant difference in the continuation of projects for transmedia mobilization.

## **5.2. Photography as a tool for transmedia narrativity and engagement**

The projects use a variety of media platforms and genres to reach different communities and audiences as well as to encourage engagement. But the use of photography stands out as a prevalent strategy in all the projects. Unlike entertainment transmedia storytelling, where photography "is a rarely used media form," nonfiction transmedia storytelling projects make use of photography as a part of their transmedia

strategy (Moloney, 2018, pp. 180–181). Three of the projects (see Table 16) organized exhibitions for the photographs they took and collected during their projects, and one (Granito) uses photography for its interactive storytelling platforms as well as its educational resources. The use of photography appeals to not only those who are interested in the stories of post-genocide societies, but also those who are interested in artistic expression. It is also inclusive since it goes beyond the restrictions of language and makes it accessible for everyone around the world to interpret and make sense of the content presented through photography. Therefore these images can provide different narrative structures or contribute to the storyworld at different points, function as a starting element for a transmedia project, as well as serve as a tool for engagement.

For example, the project *Portraits from Changing Rwanda* is primarily based on the concept of portraits. Although it seems like the web documentary is the starting point, photography is the dominant element for telling the story or engaging Rwandans to tell their stories for the interactive webdoc and documentary film. The project's photographer, Arno Lafontaine, used a 1937 Aero Ektar lens in order to take instant photos of people, which enabled him to give one photo to the people whose portraits he took and keep another for the project portfolio. The fact that Polaroid cameras can develop photos in minutes creates a bridge for exchange between the producers and Rwandans. The photos make up the exhibitions and an extensive 84-page photo book. Here photos play an important role since they turn out to be a tool for building dialogue between people and cultures, as well as bringing about more knowledge about and recognition of identities and personal stories. The photo stories were exhibited in many cities and brought together people who are interested in photography, history, and Rwanda. Polaroid portraits of Rwandans in the documentaries are also sold individually in different sizes and as a book collection with personal stories on them. The producers encourage visitors to buy the portraits in different sizes in order to engage them as participants in the project.



Figure 5. Image from the *Femmes du Rwanda* (Women of Rwanda) website<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, in *Scars of Cambodia*, a documentary film continues with an audio slideshow, exhibitions, and a photo book. Photography is the most dominant media used in the project. Embedding light and shadow, the documentary also intersperses still photographs that reflect the character's memories and scars between video segments. While the videos show the way he was tortured during the genocide, the photographs disclose and emphasize the traces of his past. At the beginning of the project, the producers wanted to produce a web documentary because they had come across many people with similar stories and so thought it best to have a web documentary in order to have an interactive online platform to combine these stories. However, after working with Tut for two days, they decided to continue with his story only because he represented "a brick in the wall" (Alexandre Lieber, personal communication, May 9, 2018). Since the project had a low budget, it was not possible to create an interactive project and engage people on online platforms. So they used photography in its purest form to engage people.

Emilie, one of the producers, says that, "at the end, it is still transmedia, there are a documentary, exhibition and the book, also an audio slideshow" (E. Arfeul, personal communication, May 9, 2018). The producers also emphasized that they tried to use the most suitable medium for the expansion of the project, which was photography, which would produce photographs that could be used in exhibitions. They unfolded the story so that viewers could experience Tut's personal story in the same way they

<sup>27</sup> Screenshot from the website <https://femmes-rwanda.tv5monde.com/index.html#menu>

had. They also created a photo book that includes additional pictures that are not presented in the documentary. These photos are metaphorical representations which nourish the story with artistic elements. The comparisons and artistic representation of Tut's tortures (as in Figure 6) become another tool for having transmedia narrativity and engaging the audience's imaginative abilities.



Figure 6. Images from the Scars of Cambodia photo book<sup>28</sup>

Another example of the use of photography as an element of transmedia narrativity is Love Radio's photos. The producers try to give a glimpse of Rwandans' life using artistic expressions of light and darkness. Depending on the course of the narrative, the darkness, moon, and clouds prevail on the screen. When the story moves forward and the narrative turns into a more peaceful story, the dark becomes lighter. This is also evident in the exhibitions, in which night pictures are displayed under dim light. The photos of listeners are mostly shot at night. Steketee points out that she "wanted to photograph listeners at the broadcasting time of *Musekeweya*. This was the time when people were at home, sitting around the radio or walking on the street with their little phones listening to the radio... it's also the time people are coming back from work" (Steketee, 2015, July 18). Taking the real lives of Rwandans as the hypotext of the transmedia world, the producers use elements from the Rwandans' lives in the photography. Another dominant image in the Love Radio project is the radio itself. We notice a variety of radios in houses, on tables, in people's hands, etc., which puts an

---

<sup>28</sup> Source: <https://www.emiliearfeuil.com/scarsofcambodia>

emphasis on the importance of radio in Rwandans' lives. The significant reason behind presenting radios fulfills the aim of the project to demonstrate the power of radio in Rwanda's past and present. The campaigns for killing "cockroaches" on the radio before and during the genocide are replaced by it being an essential tool for reflecting on the past, conflict resolution, collective memory, and civic engagement.



*Figure 7. The Love Radio exhibition<sup>29</sup>*

Photography is also the starting point of the project where transmediality is unfolded after the photography project. Aniek Steketee (2015) explains that they started the project with photography but they realized it was limited in terms of telling a complex story:

You cannot tell every story by using photography. We actually wanted to mix photography and film in the online documentary but felt it made no sense to use film and still imagery. We found that for the rhythm of the documentaries it was better to use only film and then in other layers create slide shows of photography (used for the mobile and online version) and also use photography

---

<sup>29</sup> Source: <https://www.prospektor.nl/love-radio-en>

in the exhibitions as another form of understanding the story” (Steketee, 2015, July 18).

In addition to being a starting point for the transmediality of some projects, photography also functions as a tool for transmedia engagement for the audiences. Granito: Every Memory Matters (2013) is a retroactive transmedia project because it was not produced as transmedia from the beginning. All of the project’s transmedia expansions, namely the digital project and the webisodes, are independent entry points, although the documentary series needs to be watched in order to make sense of the whole storyworld. The project uses social media as a tool to reach people and share the ongoing process of seeking justice in Guatemala. They share news, opinion articles, videos, and photos related to the Mayan communities and activism, as well as other events and texts about human rights and social change. Among the GEMM project’s engagement strategies, the project’s website is especially notable.



Figure 8. An example from the GEMM project website<sup>30</sup>

In the project, audiences share photos of family members who were killed during the genocide. Especially the photos of disappeared family members are commonly shared through local organizations that campaign to locate the bodies of people disappeared

<sup>30</sup> Source: <https://granitomem.skylight.is/>

during the genocide. The project also aims to create a collective memory archive given the negative impact of the genocide on the language and cultural heritage of the Mayan communities. The guidelines for sharing stories on the platform were prepared in Spanish and English to target Spanish-speaking and English-speaking viewers alike. The project was led and maintained by the Team Memory network, which assumed the role of bridging the gap between Guatemalans living in the country and the diasporas, especially in the U.S. The photographs that accompany the stories are shared on social networks as well as on the website with the help of the “share your memory” icon. All of this content is transferred to the *GEMM* website [granitomem.com](http://granitomem.com), where the photos, memories, and testimonies are categorized and archived by themes and date, and “rendered highly searchable through embedded tags and transcripts of the video and audio interviews, photos, as well as visualized in our wiki map and a rich data timeline” (de Onis, 2010, October 5, para. 4). Paco de Onis (2010) also notes that

GEMM is designed to highlight the effect of a multitude of individuals working toward a common goal. If each grain of sand is a memory, then we resurrect the disappeared by remembering them. A black screen is filled with animated digital “grains” that rise up and form the face of a disappeared person. Each of the grains is a rich data point where the user can access a memory, a map, a photograph, a video clip. (de Onis, 2010, October 5, para.8)

The faces of the disappeared people are a symbol of the struggle for justice in Guatemala. Thus, photography becomes a tool for transmedia engagement and mobilization where readers interact, comment on, and engage with the history and the stories of those who lost family members during the genocide. Therefore in this project as well, photography serves as a transmedia element for narrativity and engagement with the local community, as well as audiences who are interested in stories of post-genocide struggles, trauma, and reconciliation. Transmedia memory and photography go hand in hand in nonfiction transmedia projects. Both analog and digital photography is utilized for the construction and reconstruction of memory and identity, which contributes to transmediatizing genocides and post-genocide societies.

Except for the project Granito: Every Memory Matters, none of the projects overtly invite users to generate and share digital content. They make use of digital tools only for the dissemination of their projects. The sensitivity of the topic creates an additional problem for transmedia expansion by users in that the delicate subject of the projects might hinder the desired engagement with audiences. For example, in the interview I conducted with Paco de Onis, the producer of Granito: Every Memory Matters, he said that the digital platform project was not as successful as they expected because many people did not want to talk due to their inability to overcome their fear. In addition, in many cases technical difficulties occurred, which is why they engaged young people and the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation to collect stories from the elders and victims. There was an additional obstacle from the project's side: the producers did not allow people to share their stories immediately on the website. All content was reviewed by a team before publication because hate speech was one of the concerns they wanted to avoid in times of polarization. Although these projects seek extensive the engagement through interactive documentaries, exhibitions, and screenings, user-generated content related to projects is limited to commenting, resharing, and reposting. On the other hand, in addition to the photographs used in the projects, user-generated content extensively depends on photo-sharing such as selfies in exhibitions, which prove to be a significant tool for audiences to engage with the projects without transmedially expanding them.

### **5.3. Convergent world-building through exhibitions and screenings**

Worldbuilding in nonfiction transmedia functions similarly to the way it does in fiction, but it can be more difficult since the building of a known or real world requires more authenticity to draw attention and increase engagement. The nonfiction transmedia projects utilize worldbuilding by representing real-world stories using different strategies, aesthetic approaches, and audiovisual elements. One important aspect of nonfiction transmedia projects in this research that I would like to draw attention to is their use of exhibitions and screenings as a convergence zone for authorly and readerly worldbuilding and ultimately community building in physical spaces. Therefore, while the start of the worldbuilding process is built on the primary/real world, through exhibitions, screenings, and active audience participation the nonfiction

transmedia creates a hybridization and convergence of different dynamic interplays and worldbuilding processes.

The first screening and exhibition of *Scars of Cambodia* was held in the Bophana Center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and continued in other cities such as Strasbourg and Clermont-Ferrand, as well as in festivals. The story in the project takes place in Kampot, Cambodia. From 1975 till 1979, under the leadership of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge regime committed genocide, taking almost two million Cambodian lives. They organized killings of ethnic minorities, political enemies, former government officials, civil servants, and many others. The ongoing effects of the genocide still cause trauma among many survivors, among others. The dark history of the country is told through a fisherman's scars and has reached many audiences thanks to its expansions beyond the cinema, such as exhibitions. There were four exhibitions in total, which display photos of the character and allow visitors to interact with the story through video installations. The producers designed everything themselves in a way that represents their own encounter with the protagonist, which demonstrates an authorly worldbuilding process. When the exhibition rooms were bigger, the audience experienced the story slowly and little by little; when the exhibition rooms were relatively small, visitors experienced the violence through sounds and pictures in one breath. In the exhibition rooms, they deliberately keep out the sunlight and use small lighting to draw attention to photos so that viewers feel "as if in a cocoon" (E. Arfeul, personal communication, May 9, 2018).

On the other hand, the readerly worldbuilding does not happen in an order determined by the producers during exhibitions. In the exhibitions, visitors control which content they would like to consume first and in so doing reconstruct the story through their choices. While the documentary is linear, exhibitions provide a space for viewers to construct their own world. Since the storyworld is built on the primary world, the screenings and exhibitions that were held in Cambodia, where the story takes place, have become an educational site for young generations. When the film was screened in a university in Cambodia, many students discovered the events that happened under the Khmer Rouge for the first time through the screening. According to the producers, Emilie and Alexandre, talking about the subject is still taboo; they wonder if there it is more about moving on than looking into the past, "which is more

occidental.” The exhibitions that were held in France attracted the attention of the Cambodian diaspora, especially the young, who were there to learn about the history that their “parents never talked about” (E. Arfeul, personal communication, May 9, 2018). The exhibitions and educational screenings (in high schools, universities, etc.) will continue as long as the producers are invited to them (E. Arfeul, personal communication, May 9, 2018).

A large part of the audience of *Scars of Cambodia* came not for the topic but the transmedia and artistic part of it. The exhibitions attracted people who were not interested in the topic, but attended because of its transmedia features. “That is the good thing about transmedia,” says Emilie, because it draws the attention of people into a story since they are interested in the medium, “and then after, they discover the history in a more journalistic way through other sources” (E. Arfeul, personal communication, May 9, 2018). The project has been screened outside of Cambodia and has received many awards, including “Best Short Documentary” at MIDFF DOKER 2015 (Moscow International Documentary Film Festival), “Best Photography Award & Best Original Score Award” at the National Competition – Clermont International Short Film Festival 2014 (France), “Best Documentary Award” at Sediciorto 2014 (Italy), “Best International Short Documentary” at DOCS DF 2014 (Mexico), and “Best International Short Documentary” at 12th Tirana International Film Festival (Albania). Most of the user-generated content online comes from these screenings and exhibitions.



Figure 9. The Scars of Cambodia exhibition<sup>31</sup>

Similar to Scars of Cambodia, the Portraits from changing Rwanda project attracted viewers to its exhibitions not because of the stories they could learn about there, but due to their interest in its photographs. The story organized screenings and exhibitions using the Internet, TV, and print media in the form of a photo book. The storyworld of the project is geographically situated in a small village in the southeast of Rwanda where the consequences of the genocide overwhelm and sadden every resident and where its effects continue to be relevant and valid after 20 years. The documentary film *Rwanda 20 ans après* has been broadcast on channel France 24, and its expansion *Femmes du Rwanda* has been shown on TV5MONDE. Additionally, *Portraits from changing Rwanda* has been screened in many festivals such as the Festival Internacional de Cine por los Derechos Humanos (Bogotá, Colombia), the (In)Justice For All Film Festival (Chicago, US), the Las Vegas Black Film Festival (Las Vegas, US), the I Imagine Festival (New York, US), the Out of Africa International Film Festival (Nairobi, Kenya), and was selected as “Best Documentary” in the Open World Toronto Film Festival (Toronto, Canada) and “Best web documentary” in the RushDoc Film Festival (online). The Polaroid photo exhibition was held in many cities such as Turin, Paris, Rome, and Lugano. The exhibitions open up a space for discussion and imagination since they do not provide the full story, which gives viewers an opportunity

---

<sup>31</sup> Source: <https://www.emiliearfeuil.com/scarsofcambodia>

for cognitive worldbuilding if they do not have the background of Rwanda to understand the details of the photos, for example, the facial scars of the women.

The other project about Rwanda, Love Radio, has a different worldbuilding strategy. Love Radio's storyworld is built on a fictional story, but both fiction and nonfiction are used in the project. The narrative world starts with the radio soap *Musekeweya*, which has been aired on Radio Rwanda since 2004. Many episodes can also be accessed on their official website, which allows listeners to write comments, listen to the old episodes, and download ringtones. Furthermore, listeners also send letters to the radio to express their emotions and to give advice and testimonies. So the transmediality begins with the radio soap itself and the project adds another layer to it. The fictional narrative extends to a nonfictional one in the "Off Air" part of the webdoc project. Essays and slideshows are linked to the bottom part of the "On Air" and "Off Air," while there are also hyperlinks to the social platforms and other information related to the project. Viewers can also interact with the project by selecting the content they want to and creating their own cycle of narratives.

The project's first step is the interactive documentary and the cycle ends with the exhibitions and a mid-length television documentary. The first exhibition of the project was held from 11 July to 7 September 2014 in the Foam Exhibition Museum in Amsterdam and in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam until 18 January 2015. The photographs from Love Radio have also been exhibited in Rotterdam, Utrecht, the Addis Foto Fest (Ethiopia), the Lagos Photo Festival (Nigeria), and Cape Town Month of Photography (South Africa). Similar to Portraits from Changing Rwanda exhibitions, Love Radio exhibitions mostly include photography, although audiovisual installations are also placed in exhibition rooms. Moreover, the exhibitions allow the audience to experience a physical immersion. The project is limited regarding user-generated content; even though its users can engage with the story through comments on the posts of the official Facebook account of the project, hashtags on Twitter such as #loveradorwanda, engagement on the website of the project and social media revolves around comments, likes, shares, and retweets which are mostly about the exhibitions rather than the digital side of the project. Being based on a real story, this project shows that worldbuilding also comes with challenges. Especially in the context of post-genocide societies, problems such as hate speech, limits on the freedom of

expression, self-censorship, and fear can arise when expanding the storyworld. This is clearly evident in the Love Radio project when some interviewees avoid giving their real names, do not appear on the screen, and use pseudonyms. Additionally, some viewers might choose not to interact online due to these issues.

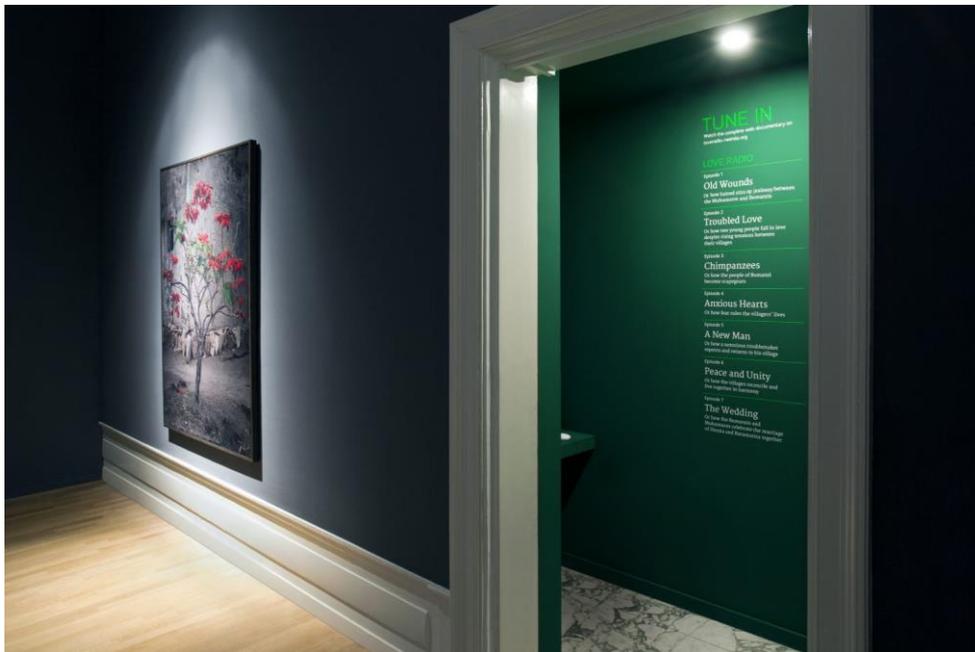


Figure 10. Love Radio exhibition rooms<sup>32</sup>

As in the Love Radio project, censorship and self-censorship occur in the Granito project. Engagement with the project is possible on the Granito: Every Memory Matters website since people can share their stories and exchange them with others. However, the online project is controlled by the monitors in the project. The content that is shared on the platform mostly comes from screenings of the project, especially in educational settings. Through the project, young people are encouraged to engage with their elders to record their memories and then to send them to the team. The staff of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation was trained to make videos of people who look for their disappeared relatives thanks to the foundation's work. The producers set up screenings and send people to high schools, organizations, community groups, workshops, and universities to gather stories and memories of the genocide for the digital project. A community discussion guide referring to the GEMM and a lesson plan for schools have been prepared to engage more people. In addition,

<sup>32</sup> Source: <https://www.prospektor.nl/love-radio-en>

Skylight actively uses social media such as Facebook and Twitter to promote their screenings and activities related to human rights and activism while engaging with their followers.

The storyworld is geographically situated in Guatemala, but it expands to include the United States and Spain as well. Thus there are different worlds overlapping with each other: the storyworld of the Mayans, political authorities in the United States and Spain, experts who are working on the case both in the field and outside, and citizens. The Guatemalan genocide targeted Mayan communities, who were seen as inferior. The harm caused by the genocide continues to impact Mayans, who were forcibly displaced from their lands and whose access to education and healthcare was prevented for years by the dictators who received support from the American authorities for their army. However, many people, such as lawyers, investigators, and archive experts worked alongside the Mayan community to fight against the brutal regimes and to stand up for their rights and justice. Since the storyworld is based on a historical event that continues to affect many people, it is robust enough to support expansions and worldbuilding/community building through individual and community stories.

All of the projects I have considered successfully expand through multilingual productions and worldbuilding, which is easier for projects of this sort due to the continuing relevance of the topics and their power to evoke emotions in their audiences. In this sense, worldbuilding in nonfiction is relatively easier than in fiction since real-life stories can provoke emotions and actions. And in the projects, the stories related to the genocides and their aftermaths have the potential to reach more people and encourage numerous extensions due to the continuing validity and currency of the topic, namely post-genocide reconciliation. In this way, the storyworld is always dynamic and alive, which promotes different entry points. The only drawback of these projects is the sensitivity of the topic, which can result in self-censorship, which is an obstacle for inclusive and diverse comments and experiences.

## 5.4. Common actantial models and enunciation

Accounts of reconciliation and peacebuilding are complex and multidimensional. The narratives in the projects tackle many discussions surrounding justice/injustice, vulnerability/resilience, and remembering/forgetting in post-genocide societies. In the narrative schemas of the main texts and their transmedia expansions, there were three common and intertwined actantial models: the communal, the judicial, and the welfare model. As an outcome, reconciliation depends on community members' relationships with each other (the communal model), on the justice system for justice and fairness (the judicial model), and the government's efforts on behalf of and support of its citizens in the reconciliation process (the welfare model). Most of the transmedia projects start with a communal model and then their expansions entangle the narrative and extend it to the judicial and welfare models, where we see transmedia activism, awareness, and mobilization. While the communal model refers to the community level of reconciliation and the welfare model to the state level, the judicial model is in an in-between space where the roles become complicated since the judiciary system involves not only official stakeholders, but also grassroots involvement.

For example, in the *Portraits from Changing Rwanda* web documentary, villagers in the southeast of Rwanda work to rebuild their lives after the genocide and seek better living conditions within the reconciliation process. The focus of the narrative is the struggles and inner and interpersonal conflicts of Rwandans living in a small village in the southeast part of Rwanda. Both perpetrators and survivors try to overcome economic, political, and social obstacles to reconciliation through different coping methods. The sets of interviews in the documentary reveal directly and sincerely the complex situation of a country whose past still stirs up the communities in which former adversaries live together and construct their future. We hear stories from different points of view; some criticize the authorities, and others state that "forgiveness is not the same in all hearts." But the narrative structure of the characters shows similarities: what life was like before the genocide, what happened during the genocide, what the struggles are now, and finally what the future holds for them. The narrative in the project resembles a net in that the stories are intertwined and connected to each other. The narrative cycle starts with Osée, a perpetrator who explains his financial issues after getting out of prison. At the end of his video, viewers are given two opportunities

to follow the storyline of two characters, Osée's friends Jeanne and Alphonsin. Along the same line, the next characters, Bonaventura, Andre, and Esperance are all related to the previous character introduced in the film. So we see a set of the narratives from six different testimonies that have an impact on one another, which is demonstrated through the structure of the documentary.

The narrative program in the first documentary is focused on community support, sharing, and exchange with neighbors by forgiving and making peace with each other. This was reinforced with the design of the project; the interactive documentary welcomes the user and directs them to connect the dots between the characters who are linked to each other in many ways. The director of the documentary seeks to represent people's points of view without any interventions through *cinéma vérité* with the aim of naturalizing the film discourse. The camera follows the characters in their daily lives while sitting in front of their small village houses, working on their lands, farming, and selling their crops at bazaars, etc. Even so, the documentary is not constructed as an exchange between the characters and the director; instead, it reveals the relationships between the characters and the various people involved in their lives. The viewers are being directly interpellated on the interactive storylines and the interface: "ENTER THE VILLAGE".

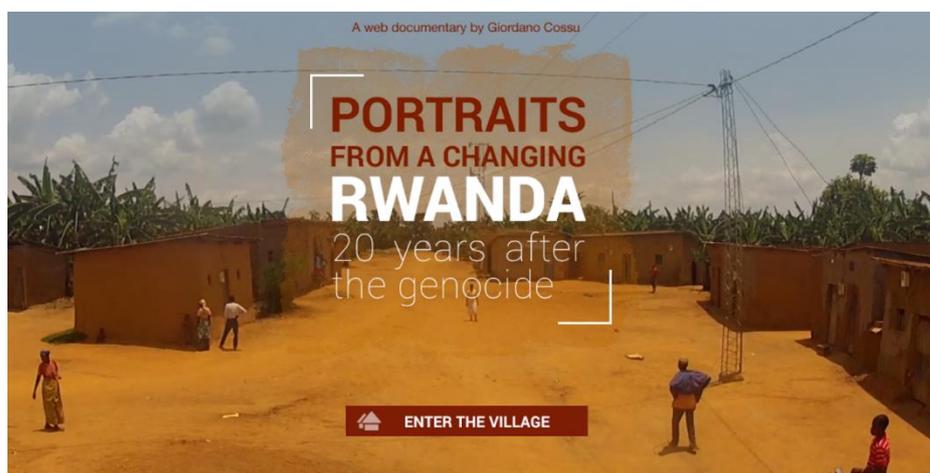


Figure 11. The "Enter the Village" interface of the interactive documentary<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Screenshot of the author from <http://www.rwanda20ansapres.net/en/>



Figure 12. The interface of the interactive documentary<sup>34</sup>

The second web documentary's narrative program adds different complexities to the reconciliation process. This time, we witness women's struggles in post-genocide Rwanda. Although the communal model still exists in certain individual narratives, the shift to the welfare model and judiciary model is also present. In addition to problems with government subsidies, land ownership and rentals, land problems, lack of trust in authorities, fear, and ongoing hatred (all discussed in the first documentary), we hear stories about misogyny, men abusing women, and struggles around being a single mother. The protagonist "I" is the primary structuring mechanism in the storyworld. In the personal narratives, we see a clear distrust in the authorities and obligatory submission to the government. People look for better conditions, but they fear the consequences if they stand up for their rights and ask for justice, which also contests the official narrative depicted by the government. The narrative is situated between the poles of vulnerability and resilience. The condition of citizens in the post-genocide rural area is positioned on either vulnerability or resilience partly depending on the state's help, their family heritage, or psychological help through sharing (protection) or the lack of it (helplessness). While the psychological support survivors give each other places them in the position of resilience for a brief period, not receiving the subsidies from the government might drag them back into vulnerability.

In both documentaries, the core idea of the judiciary model, namely the idea that justice systems sustain reconciliation and peacebuilding through trying the

<sup>34</sup> Screenshot of the author from <http://www.rwanda20ansapres.net/en/>

perpetrators, becomes a tool for revealing the diverse and contradictory elements in the text with regards to different perspectives of justice systems. In this case, discursive representation becomes an important aspect of intertextuality which sheds light on the ideological differences. For example, an exile returnee who is a Tutsi indicated that the Gacaca courts (grassroots justice system) were unity and reconciliation; on the other hand, one of the characters, Osée, was jailed after he was found guilty in a Gacaca court:

Here the investigation was carried out professionally and I thought that my case was treated well. In the other sector up there, there were many Tutsis, and they said that people from here had gone there to kill them. So if you said that you had not participated, they forced you to confess anyway, and if you refused, they could sentence you to 30 years of life imprisonment. I told the whole truth, but there was a moment when you were forced to plead guilty to get out of prison. (Osée, in the interactive documentary of *Portraits from Changing Rwanda*)

The judiciary model becomes very dominant in the Granito: Every Memory Matters transmedia project, which is situated between the poles of *justice* and *inequality*. The story revolves around the injustices and inequalities the Indigenous people have faced throughout the civil war. However, the Spanish National Court's opening of the way for a genocide trial against Ríos Montt and its acceptance of Mayan testimonies put them into a position of equality by giving them the option to share what they witnessed during the genocide. Afterward, the Spanish court found Ríos Montt guilty, which finally led to the justice the Mayan communities were seeking. However, Guatemala has refused to extradite him due to his impunity, which moved the situation back into injustice. The Mayan communities in Guatemala continue to seek justice for their disappeared family members and to fight against the destruction of their natural sources at the hands of the authorities. Indigenous people seek justice for the disappearance of their loved ones and the unequal treatment and discrimination by the government. In this case, both of the actantial positions of Sender and Receiver are taken by the Indigenous people themselves in their protests and calls to stop the violence and bring the responsible ones to justice. The expansion of the project, the 23-episode short film series *Dictator in the Dock* (2013), sheds light on the genocide

trial of Ríos Montt. Skylight filmed the trial from beginning to end, capturing the important historical moments in the national court when it sentenced him to 30 years of prison. When the Spanish court's order for the arrest of Ríos Montt was circumvented by the Guatemalan authorities, the story diverges from being one about a judicial case to one constructing the collective memory of the Mayans. So the documentary continues by depicting the actions of activist organizations, the stories of families of the disappeared, and bones extracted from mass graves, which become sites for commemoration. Thus the story does not end with the "nailing of a dictator" the title suggests, but instead shows the marginalization and oppression of Mayan communities. The participatory digital project speaks to all of its viewers but targets mostly Guatemalans: "Every Memory Matters is a space to share memories about the armed conflict in Guatemala so that through our collective memory we may open a dialogue about the past. We invite you to share your 'Granito de Arena' (grain of sand)." While the first "we" ("we may open a dialogue") is more inclusive and general, the second "we" refers to the team of the digital project and "you" to the viewers and Mayans who could share memories about past and present struggles and fights for justice.

Despite there being only one character in the project, the story of Tut in *Scars of Cambodia* revolves mostly around the communal model because the character is in contact with many people around him, as we see in the documentary. His life is placed in relation to the poles of remembering and forgetting. While the physical scars remind him of his past, his will to live a normal life and move on with daily activities with his community allow him to forget his traumatic memories. He would like to talk about his past for one time only in order to share it with his friends and the world so as to get rid of it and lead a normal life without past traumas. In this case, both the Sender and the Receiver positions are assumed by Tut himself, though he also represents all the Cambodians who suffered in similar ways during the genocide. The transmedia expansions of the projects include the judiciary and welfare models in that young people in Cambodia interact with the exhibitions and projects and seek social change.

With its use of both fictional and nonfictional narrative structures, the Love Radio project includes different parallels between fiction and nonfiction stories. These parallels usually serve to reveal the reality in Rwanda and the complexity of the

reconciliation process. The fictional part refers to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda without mentioning the word “genocide” itself. The names of the villages are fictional, but they allude to Tutsis and Hutus. By naming the “enemy” villagers “chimpanzees”, they draw attention to the word “cockroaches,” which was used to describe Tutsis during the genocide. In the fictional world, the authorities intervene in the conflict and bring justice to the villages, which moves the conflict to harmony, but full reconciliation is never achieved. Disagreements reoccur between villagers, which moves the situation to conflict with escalation. The nonfiction storyworld shows that the dynamics are more complex than reconciling and putting an end to the conflict. It also shows that the reconciliation is non-linear. For example, as in the case of the other Rwanda project, the Gacaca courts, established as a community justice system, can lead to reconciliation, but in some cases lead to conflict and friction.

In the fiction, the narrative structure adopts the three aforementioned models. Although there are different narrative structures in each episode, the main one is as follows: Villagers from two separate villages, especially the youth, would like to find ways for enabling reconciliation among the adversaries. So the villagers take both actantial positions of the Sender and Receiver to intervene in order to pacify the conflict and live in harmony. With the help of authorities, the justice system, and the youth, the villagers breathe a sigh of relief. A similar structure happens in the real context of post-genocide Rwanda. Rwandans discuss different ways of carrying out the reconciliation process and how to improve it. In this case, Rwandans in the post-genocide society take many actantial roles, thus adopting a communal model. While the radio soap *Musekeweya*, the authorities, the justice system, and religion take the actantial position of the Helper, divisionism, fear, the lack of freedom of speech, the corrupt justice system, and a lack of critical thinking become the Opponents in the narrative scheme. The overall narrative structure serves the diegetic objective that is focused on the disharmony of the various sub-narratives of the story. This is clearly seen through the transition in the language from “I” to an impersonal narrative or “us vs. them” during the conflict or its immediate aftermath and from an in-group “we” to an inclusive “we” during the peace process.

## 5.5. Transmediatizing different stakeholders in the peacebuilding process

One of the advantages of transmedia projects is that they allow different means to include different stakeholders in the dialogue. Thus, instead of approaching the topic with a binary of survivor/victim vs. guilty/perpetrator, the projects can offer online or offline spaces for dialogue. While some projects can fulfill this aim and use it to a great extent, some projects fall short in representing different groups of people in their projects. In this case, the main characters that are presented in the main text are mostly those who experienced the genocide. So the main text revolves around the experiences and opinions of the genocide victims or perpetrators. In some cases, this approach is reductive in the sense that the representation of the post-genocide societies is predicated upon the narratives that declare which side is guilty and which side is the victim. The multifacetedness of the post-conflict situation is ignored and neglected, which hinders further discussion on possible ways of reconciliation as well as further reflections on certain topics. For example, the Scars of Cambodia project is very limited in terms of characters and its transmedia expansions. There is only one character, a Cambodian fisherman, who tells his story non-verbally through acting and showing. Except for Scars of Cambodia, which lacks different viewpoints on the Cambodian genocide, all other projects yield some, though not enough, space for a conversation between conflicting narratives.

In the Love Radio project, the fictional world of the radio soap *Musekeweya* presents a different approach to the transmedia universe than the nonfictional world where Rwandans share their opinions and experiences. In the radio soap, we only hear the fictional characters and only see the professionals who give their voice to these characters. But in the second part of the documentary, we see these actors outside the studio, that is, as ordinary citizens who comment on the peacebuilding and reconciliation process in Rwanda. The fictional characters are vocalized through radio actors and actresses in the 'On Air' (fictional) part; for this reason, we only see these real-life personas alongside some listeners who will become protagonists in the 'Off

Air' (nonfictional) part. The presence of actors and actresses in both fictional and nonfictional positions, changing their role from vocalizing the fictional characters to being a protagonist/citizen sharing their personal experiences, falls under the category of thematic variations (Bertetti, 2014). Another example would be the radio soap listeners merely depicted as a radio listener in one episode later becoming protagonists in another episode. In nonfiction, there are many characters such as radio directors, scriptwriters, actors/actresses, and radio listeners.

The characters are not limited to radio soap actors, actresses, and the show's production staff, but also include ordinary people from Rwanda, including not only activists but also younger generations who did not experience the genocide first-hand, but who carry the legacy of the genocide. In addition, slideshows bring a more historical approach and essays provide the viewers/readers with the reflections of outsiders and academics about the history of the country as well as the reconciliation process. But they are not the main characters; they exist only in the expansions of the transmedia documentary. Beyond this, there is user-generated content in the form of (non-digital) letters from *Musekweya* listeners that sent fan mail to the radio. The project digitizes this content and uses it in their transmedia documentary. For instance, a *Musekweya* listener sent a letter to the radio with a drawing of the "Tree of Life" (see Figure 13) representing the coexistence of the three ethnic groups, Tutsis, Hutus, and Twas, during specific historical events. These fan mails enrich the story and expand it through personal narratives and intertextuality.

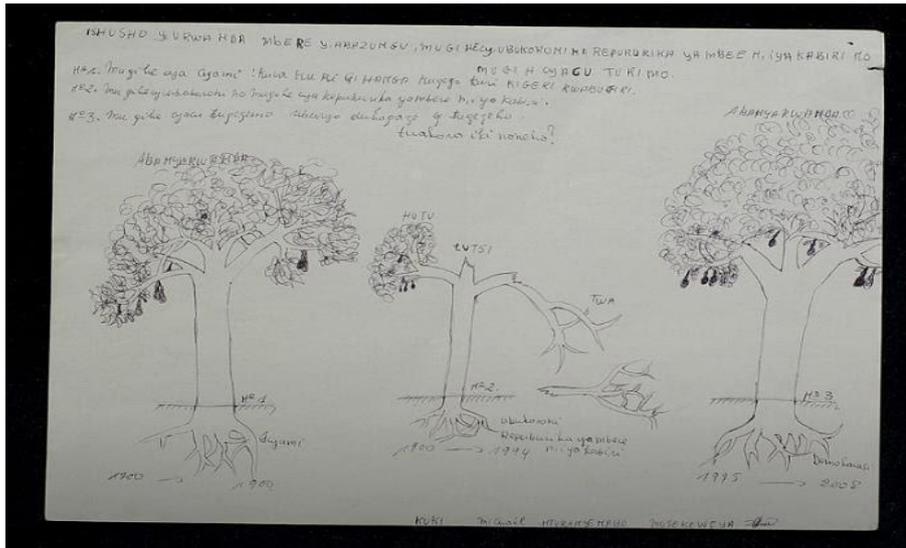


Figure 13. The “Tree of Life” sent by a fan of the radio soap<sup>35</sup>

The difference between the two projects on Rwanda, Love Radio and Portraits from a Changing Rwanda, is the differences between the characters’ backgrounds. While Love Radio appears to focus more on urban dwellers, the latter is made in a rural area. The characters are Rwandans who experienced the genocide first hand and struggled to rebuild their lives after it. They are inhabitants of a small rural village whose stories are all linked. The expansion of the characters starts inside the first web documentary when viewers “enter the village” and discover personal testimonies and memories of the genocide one by one. In each part of the webdoc, we see at least two characters who know each other, do business, or who are former adversaries. The range of the characters’ backgrounds includes survivors, perpetrators, the falsely accused, and exile returnees. The interesting point with this project is that its expansion of the documentary in the form of the second webdoc brings forward gender perspectives to peacebuilding and reconciliation. While the first one is about six Rwandans, both men and women, the second documentary uses the stories of two women and adds six more women characters, thus recontextualizing the stories from a different point of view, that of women.

The subject of both webdocs revolves around similar topics, however, in *Femmes du Rwanda*, the focal point is the burden of women in rural areas of Rwanda after the genocide occurred. Of the six main characters in the first webdoc, two, Alphonsine

<sup>35</sup> Source: <http://www.loveradio-rwanda.org/episode/2/info/slideshow>

and Esperance, also appear in the second documentary and the number of characters is increased by adding six more new characters. The first document depicts the narrative structure as an exchange and dialogue between survivors and perpetrators or the falsely accused with no emphasis on gender, but the second documentary deviates by focusing on women. It emphasizes only women by including two characters from the first documentary and adding new ones. The two women's stories are also expanded in terms of scope; for example, in the first documentary, we hear genocide survivor Esperance's forgiveness story, while in the second one her family's struggles, as well as gender-related struggles, are brought to the surface. Therefore, whereas Alphonsine and Esperance are merely a falsely accused person or a survivor, respectively, in *Portraits from a Changing Rwanda*, their role is determined by their gender, being a woman, mother, or wife in *Femmes du Rwanda*.

Although *Portraits from a Changing Rwanda* features less diverse backgrounds compared to *Love Radio*, the thematic change and focus on women offers an interesting perspective to the inclusion of women's narratives in the peacebuilding and reconciliation process. The *Granito* project also includes many characters in its storyworld. But these can mainly be categorized as Mayans who are seeking justice against the dictator Ríos Montt or activists and lawyers helping the Mayans in their fight. One of the main characters, Rigoberta Menchú, who won the Nobel Peace Prize after filming the first documentary, is the storyteller of *When the Mountains Tremble*. We see her in the second and third films of the series, but her role is lessened compared to the first one. On the other hand, the number of Ríos Montt's appearances on the screen increases as his trial nears such that he becomes one of the main characters in the last documentary, alongside his daughter, who is also a politician and defender of her father. The film's director Pamela Yates, forensic archivist Kate Doyle, and Spanish lawyer Almudena Bernabeu also appear in *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* for their fight in the Spanish courts. Another important character in *Granito* is Fredy Peccerelli, the director of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation, who excavates mass graves to identify the "desaparecidos" (the disappeared). The density of appearances of "Western" people in the documentaries is quite dominant.

Some parts of the film *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* are shot in a *vérité* style. Pamela Yates, the director and narrator of the documentary, makes an excessive number of

appearances on the screen. In this second movie of the series, she explains the time in which she made her first documentary and how she witnessed the genocide, which she did not know back then. Therefore the “I” is unavoidable since the first movie and its borrowed and non-broadcasted footage turn her into a privileged witness to history. This may be because the film’s purpose is to depict the Indigenous fight for justice and reflect the compilation of legal evidence to indict those responsible for the genocide. The film thus repurposes archival footage and the director’s journey as a model for transnational activism, which consecutively causes the director to gravitate naturally toward a more attached enunciative position. Since the first documentary results from the journalistic approach of Pamela Yates and her recordings, as well as the use of narrator “I,” it give her more visibility than the Mayans themselves in certain cases. However, the transmedia extensions in the form of digital projects allow Mayan activists, young people, and families of the disappeared to share their memories and experiences. For example, Rigoberta Menchú appears in the digital project as a Nobel Prize winner and activist on the streets, while in the first film she appears merely as a storyteller.

Transmediality allows producers to look at topics from different perspectives and dimensions, but these projects are sometimes limited in terms of representing the reality in these societies. For example, they sometimes discuss only a certain group of people to the exclusion of others. There are, however, different approaches taken by the projects in terms of characters included in the projects. While most of the characters are genocide survivors or perpetrators, the thematic reconceptualization of the peacebuilding process leads to different thematic variants of characters such as the change from a professional theme to becoming an ordinary citizen, the inclusion of women, autobiographical journalistic texts, or ordinary citizens turning into activists.

## **5.6. The body as a legacy of the genocide**

Transmediatizing the body becomes one of the main focal points of the transmedia projects in this research. The body is represented as the legacy of the genocide with enactments of characters’ past tortures, scars on their bodies, discovering mass graves with bones of the dead and the disappeared. It is also demonstrated in a way

that depicts the body in the movement towards reconciliation. Not only in the documentaries, but also in exhibitions, photographs, and user-generated stories, the body becomes a concrete representation to memories and experiences. In *Scars of Cambodia*, for example, Tut, a Cambodian living in Kampot, tells his story without any words and by only miming the tortures he endured during 15 years of imprisonment under the Khmer Rouge. He revives his memories, psychological traumas, and the physical traces of those years with movements and gestures, highlighting the brutal past of Cambodia. Not bearing any resemblance to classic reporting, since the producers did not interview the protagonist during the shooting, the documentary provides a visual and sensory feast to its viewers thanks to its lack of words and conversation. The producers use some of the strategies of fictional silent films in order to explain the topics that are avoided and not discussed. In other words, the testimony of the protagonist is not expressed directly with utterance or speech but described with the body, mime, and silence.

Accompanied by natural sounds and a time-to-time narrative soundtrack, the audience is immersed into the story through Tut's body as he experienced the physical pain during his imprisonment. In the absence of words, the viewer focuses on the protagonist as he reenacts the physical suffering: he sees an object and imitates what that object reminds him of. For example, he grabs a wooden beam and shows how he was beaten in the prison or he mimes how his nails were ripped off or he writhes in pain and then lies on the floor to demonstrate the sorrow he was in. But not only these memory-reviving moments, but also Tut's ordinary life, such as going to a wedding and doing karaoke, is depicted in the documentary. Therefore, his "forgetting" and "moving on" from the past is represented in the move of going to places and meeting with his community.

We see a narration without language, meaning that the story unknown to the viewers is enunciated by merely sensorial and non-semantic resources of sound and performance. The first language-based clue is the title of the documentary: *Scars of Cambodia*. We later see a prologue and an epilogue that explains the historical background of the Cambodian genocide and its consequences. The illustrative function of non-verbal narration conveys the message through facial expressions, body language, and music. In this case, due to the language restrictions between the

character and the filmmakers, Tut performs and reenacts the past tortures he was exposed to, thus translating his mental life into visible body movements; on the other hand, he uses signs and writes dates on the floor with water, and thus the film internalizes language by showing intra-diegetic objects delivering written messages. In these scenes, the filmmakers use slow-motion and zoom techniques so that the viewers have adequate time to search for narratively meaningful attributes.

The body movements of the character can transmit a message to the viewer that is new to the subject without the help of extra knowledge, but its ability to do so can be limited. *Scars of Cambodia* circumvents this through the prologue, which gives additional information about the background. But the film's attempt to humanize a genocide survivor falls short and risks reducing his life to his scars, and therefore his body. Although the filmmakers try to avoid this with the scenes where he moves on with his life, these scenes are also limited. The film is successful in provoking deeper thoughts about Cambodia and its violent past but objectifies the character through the camera's focus on his body parts. The filmmakers did not use interviews, a translator, or subtitles as a tool. They could have done so, but preferred to use body language and the character's reenactments to create a more direct, emotional, and sensorial representation of his memory.

Like many other efforts to document and depict the psychological trauma of genocide survivors, this documentary also puts forward various intertextual components related to the history of the country, the genocide, and life after it. In the case of *Scars of Cambodia*, we see an example of horizontal intertextuality in terms of genre. After watching the movie, the viewers who have watched *The Act of Killing* by Joshua Oppenheimer will immediately resonate with the story, but on the opposite side of the survivor-perpetrator continuum. In the documentary, *The Act of Killing*, the perpetrators of anti-communist mass killings in Indonesia reenact the slaughter they carried out. Although the film reflects the perspective of the perpetrators, it resembles *Scars of Cambodia* in its use of acting, performance, and body language to convey its message, for example when we see a survivor reenacting the tortures he underwent. Both films allow their characters to reconstruct their past—their tortures in the case of *Scars of Cambodia* or their crimes in the case of *The Act of Killing*—and thus turn into an agent of truth, memory, and justice.



Figure 14. Scenes from *The Act of Killing* (on the left) and *Scars of Cambodia* (on the right)<sup>36</sup>

In *Scars of Cambodia* as well as in the other projects, artistic elements and aesthetics burst into prominence to make the body stand out. We also witness slow-motion and zoom techniques that emphasize the scars of the genocide survivors. Especially the use of colors and light provide significant factors for storytelling. The visitors in the exhibitions experience a dark space with lights reflected on photos to make an emphasis on bodies. Additionally, mostly close shots are utilized in order to reveal the emotions of the characters. The more emotional the scene is, the more rhythmic and fast the music gets, thus accompanying the bodies and movements. The most distinct feature of the documentaries are the close-ups of faces, which bring forward an emotional bond between the audience and the story. In one of the scenes in *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator, When the Mountains Tremble* is screened in a small space in a Mayan village. The camera zooms in on the faces of spectators to show their emotions as they see the parts of the film where corpses lay on the ground and survivors mourn them. However, not all the projects use bodies to tell only the stories of genocide, but also those of the reconciliation process. For example, in *Love Radio* interactive documentary, we don't see characters in the fictional part. There is not much action so that the audience has enough space to imagine the story as they want to. Usually, the camera sits still, shows a village, tree, or hill, and the person speaking is heard in voice-over. A piece of relaxing music is accompanies visitors as they read the essays and scroll through slideshows. On the other hand, we see people moving in the fictional part, which representing reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda.

Similarly, in *Portraits from a changing Rwanda*, the documentary shows the characters in action, busy with their daily routine while they discuss "moving on" and "reconciliation." When they tell their stories of the genocide and how they suffered,

---

<sup>36</sup> Screenshot of the author from the documentaries <http://www.scarsofcambodia.com/>

however, close-up shots focus on the scars of their bodies. The visuals in the documentary are selected carefully according to its aim. Especially the setting of the interviews reinforces the message of the documentary. The characters are depicted as workers or owners in the fields and as mothers carrying kids, among others. The prevalent image of the characters is mostly based on their daily actions and workplace context, such as farm, village, bazaar, bar, or home. Traditional Rwandan music is played throughout the documentary so that viewers are more immersed in the story. In spite of the pessimistic tone of the narrative, the music transmits a feeling of hopefulness.

Another use of the body as the legacy of genocide and the way of reconciling is the discovery of mass graves. While some narratives in other projects briefly mention how the authorities find new graves every year and its importance for the families who find the bodies of their loved ones, the Granito project extensively focuses on the mass graves as a means for justice and reconciliation with the work of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation and its director Fredy Peccerelli. The foundation tries to find the graves to use them as evidence of the crimes committed during the genocide against the Mayans. Thus they persevere in their search for the mass graves of those killed by the military despite receiving death threats. We also see the families as they find the bodies and properly bury their dead, which gives them a bit of comfort. As a result, the discovery of mass graves becomes a tool for bringing the perpetrators to justice that the families look for in order to be at peace. The photos of the mass graves are also shared in the digital project with explanations from the families in order to educate the younger generations about the genocide.

## **5.7. Overview of the results**

This objective of this chapter was to analyze transmedia projects related to the genocides in Rwanda, Guatemala, and Cambodia in terms of their production, distribution, content, expansion, narratives, and user-generated content. The results reveal that the projects used journalistic and educational tools to inform and create edutainment activities for their audiences. Local collaborations are very significant in efforts to expand the transmedia storyworld in the case of these nonfictional

transmedia storytelling projects. Photography is one of the strategies the projects use for expansion and as a participation tool. Exhibitions of photography and screenings of documentaries offer a convergent world-building between audiences and producers of the projects. As for the semio-narrative analysis, there are common actantial models in the projects such as the communal model, judicial model, and welfare model. The reconciliation process requires community efforts (communal model), an effective justice system (judicial model), and the government's supports of its citizens (welfare model). Additionally, transmedia projects effectively tell the stories of the different stakeholders involved in the peacebuilding processes since they expand the storyworld through different platforms and different stories. With regards to visualizing the post-genocide reconciliation, transmediatizing the body as a way to tell stories of those who experienced the genocide becomes a significant tool in the projects.

Although the nonfiction transmedia projects in this research were able to tackle post-genocide reconciliation and tell the stories in diverse ways, they were limited in terms of user-generated content and encouraging users' online engagement. The following section takes these transmedia projects to Rwanda and analyzes young Rwandans' interactions with them in order to understand how young people engage with them and make sense of the information provided. Analyzing nonfiction transmedia projects only gives us a one-sided account of the whole transmedia world of these projects. Taking into consideration that the transmedia projects were limited in terms of encouraging user-generated content, the next section emphasizes the importance of users and user-generated content as well as their role in expanding the universe.





## 6. UNPACKING TRANSMEDIA PARTICIPATION

In this chapter, I focus on the second objective of this research project: to analyze the different levels of interaction and participation of the research participants with the transmedia project, as well as the user-generated content they created. Transmedia projects provide spaces for users to navigate through different platforms, obtain information, or leave their traces on the transmedia world by contributing to it. Regarding contribution to community building or worldbuilding, transmedia offers various opportunities for participation through different media channels and participatory environments for audiences. In this sense, to fully comprehend how this community or worldbuilding is generated and sustained, it is crucial to understand users' behavior during their interaction in addition to analyzing the transmedia projects and their expansion. But the analysis must go beyond discerning or observing how and why users interact and engage with digital technologies (Scolari, 2009), as their interaction is also determined by many factors, such as the interfaces and the quality or lack of devices that are used in the process of participation. "Transmedia participation" in this research is used as an umbrella term and includes three layers: interaction, engagement, and user-generated content. The interaction will be considered as the surface layer of the transmedia participation, while the analysis of engagement requires a deeper understanding of the types and outcomes of interaction. Lastly, the user-generated content will be analyzed as paratexts for civic engagement.

### 6.1. From transmedia learning to transmedia performativity:

#### Layers of interaction

The participant's (un)willingness to interact with transmedia projects (interactive documentaries, audiobooks, websites, etc.) and produce digital texts based on these projects depended on a number of factors. Building upon the data collected during the fieldwork, five layers of interaction were identified: *Observer*, *Enquirer*, *Contributor*, *Influencer*, and *Performer*. Although these layers seem hierarchical, the participants in this research were not obliged to go through every level of the interaction process.

However, with just a few exceptions, all of the students followed these steps during and after workshops.

### ***Observer: Witnessing the storyworld***

The transmedia experience started with the participants reading and watching the content provided in the transmedia projects. At this level, their initial interaction was either with the linear documentaries that are a component of the transmedia projects or with the interfaces of the websites where the interactive documentaries are presented. At this point, the participants became familiar with the content and design of the projects but did not commit themselves to further interaction. In these initial interactions with the projects, the students entered the storyworld by observing and witnessing what the story was about, who the characters were, and what kind of topics were included in the storyworld. Since they were familiar with the Rwandan background, their observations in the interaction process differed from those in the projects about Guatemala and Cambodia. For example, in a focus group discussion, students discussed how the projects about Rwanda depicted life there:

*Marie (female, 14):* Even the pictures, doors and houses and music, it really looks real.

*Gianna (female, 16):* And it's a really relatable act actually here in town. I can tell it's in Rwanda.

*Marie (female, 14):* Like, it actually portrays it nicely with nice colors and visuals. They talk about a village in the second one [project]. You don't see, like, the houses from the city actually look like a village. (Focus group #3)

Marie and Gianna's desire to continue observing was correlated with their interest in aesthetics, familiarity with the topic, or the visual components of the projects (in the case of the projects related to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda). The use of doors in Love Radio, for example, drew the attention of some students, who tried to understand the meaning behind their use. One student told me later on how he had not given any attention to the different styles of doors in his neighborhood. The stories from the villages in *Portraits from a Changing Rwanda* were also particularly interesting to some participants. Some of them had lived in Kigali their whole life and had never

“experienced” village life. They expressed how it was useful to listen to their stories and see what conditions they live in. Since the genocide, the government has attempted to narrow the gap between rural and urban life. However, the distinction still exists and the accounts of students towards the rural population demonstrate that they believe most people in these areas attended the mass killings during the genocide and that there are still people holding “genocide ideology” living there. Another common opinion among the students was that many “uneducated” people were involved in the killings. Since both projects mostly show life after the genocide in the villages, their ideas were strengthened with their observations of the project.

Moreover, the participants’ eagerness to learn about other genocides and curiosity about new topics such as the genocides in Guatemala and Cambodia (which they had never heard of before) kept their attention and led them to engage with the projects while watching or reading the presented information:

For me, it was a good experience because personally, I didn't know anything about the genocide of Guatemala and yeah, I learned a lot and I hope we can do more. I want to know more. (Isabella, female, 17)

Like Isabella, many students were especially interested in the Guatemalan genocide after learning how long it took, that the genocide was not acknowledged by some populations, and that excavations in search of bodies of the disappeared during the genocide are still ongoing. Since these topics, such as discovering new bodies or genocide denial, are current discussion topics in Rwanda, the participants also felt inclined to do more research on the Guatemalan genocide. The documentary about the Cambodian genocide caused a different kind of interaction among the participants. Since there was no talking in the documentary, the students did not get any information with regards to the background of the genocide. They could only observe the protagonist using his body to show what happened to him during the genocide period, which triggered students to focus on topics such as trauma in post-genocide societies where survivors still struggle to overcome what they went through. They discussed their families’ stories and similarities to that of the fisherman in the documentary about Cambodia.

After observing the storyworlds for the first time and witnessing different stories from post-genocide societies, the participants began to evaluate the circumstances in order to decide whether they wanted to engage with the projects for the next level of “exploring.” This evaluation included their assessment of the knowledge, skills, emotions, time, and resources required, as well as the complexity of the interfaces, their quality, or their lack of devices. During the workshops, some participants left the project because they were demotivated by the complexity of navigation and the length of the interactive documentaries, which meant that they could not exploit the interactivity to its full potential due to their lack of enthusiasm, time, or skills. In addition, one student decided to leave the workshop due to having had personal trauma with one of the projects (Love Radio). Later on, during the individual interview, he said:

My grandfather used to listen to this radio. And then he died. So when I hear it, it brings him again to my mind. Sometimes I cry. Sometimes I think of him. That's why I didn't want to participate. (Jean Pierre, male, 14, individual interview)

Other than personal reasons, such as a lack of enthusiasm for and curiosity about the projects, the main reason for abandoning the overall project, though, was linked to the infrastructure problems in the schools. Due to the poor Internet connection in one school, the students could not use the Internet to navigate the storyworld and gain more information about the genocides.

### ***Enquirer: Navigating the storyworld***

After the first observations, the students dived into the projects thoroughly and navigated through the websites, extensions of the projects, and also the intra-textual components of the projects. They spent time on the interactive documentaries, fabricated their order of the story, and became more familiar with the content, characters, and timeline. They began to make sense of the historical events, different characters, aesthetics, and narratives. Curiosity was an important factor in their comprehensive exploration of the projects. Almost all students had never heard of the Guatemalan and Cambodian genocides and therefore eagerly searched for more information in order to grasp what happened in these countries. Finding out that

Rwanda was not the only country to experience genocide, the participants such as Aimée navigated the storyworld:

We are not the only ones who got the genocide. We are not the only ones who struggled. We're not the only one who has the scars. That's why it was interesting. (Aimée, female, 18, individual interview)

With respect to the projects about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, although they already knew about it to a great extent, the digitalization of the documents and information, as well as interactive maps, made the content more engaging for the participants. The Love Radio project, for example, resonated with them since their parents or relatives were listening to it on the radio; on the other hand, they themselves never listened to it or had any kind of interaction with it. However, familiarizing themselves with the project on digital platforms led them to reflect on the radio soap and have a connection with their elders. They also tended to stay on the fictional part of the *Love Radio* documentary ("On Air") while skipping the nonfiction part. When I asked some students why they preferred the fictional story, one student stated that they heard many interviews similar to those on the nonfiction side and wanted to discover the fictional story. Especially during the commemoration period, many Rwandans listen to interviews, talks, and speeches about peacebuilding in Rwanda. Since the research period fell during this period, the students preferred to skip the nonfictional part where Rwandans talk about the aftermath of the genocide, victims, and survivors. However, the "Off Air" part of the project included certain "controversial" statements such as the extensive surveillance of citizens by the government in the country. Therefore, most of the students did not interact with this part, while those who watched these episodes did not mention it. Those students who interacted with the nonfiction part also said that they did not see the parts under "Off Air," where short written information and photos related to the topic of the episode and articles by experts were presented. Thus, this "hidden" information, as one student suggested, was considered unfriendly to the users. Since the interface was complex to some students, they preferred to explore the *Musekeweya* through other texts and websites, which resulted in inter-text interaction.

Similar to the case of Musekeweya, the Scars of Cambodia project led some students to visit various websites such as Wikipedia or to explore the topics they were interested in on Google:

It was kind of confusing. Because there are no words, no subtitles about what was going on ... were kind of confusing by the use of actions, that's why I had to search on Google. (Innocent, male, 17, focus group #6)

Some students found the extensions of the projects more interesting than the original production of the storyworld. For example, the Granito project had video recordings of the trials against Ríos Montt where the victims of the genocide told their stories. One of the students compared the testimonies she heard in Rwanda to those of the Mayans in the court who explained their stories. The participant gave examples from what she heard during the commemoration period on television and other activities she attended. The participants enjoyed watching the trials since they were presented “purely” and so they felt as if they were there in Guatemala attending the trials.

Another interesting factor during their navigation through the storyworld is that almost all participants tended to check the social media accounts of the projects. Some projects such as Scars of Cambodia placed links to their social media accounts on their website, which made it easier for the students to go and check their posts. Their interaction with the projects deepened as they delved into the social media accounts of the projects, liked photos on Instagram, and followed their Facebook page. However, they were disappointed in some cases when they saw the producers were not as active as the students imagined them to be. The only project that uses social media, in this case, Facebook, is the Granito project, where they share recent updates about the disappeared in Guatemala and current political events surrounding women's rights and Mayans' rights. Some students also discussed how the projects' Facebook account was promoting women's rights, which was seen by some students as essential for peacebuilding in post-genocide societies. They also compared these initiatives to that of Rwandan initiatives for the inclusion of women in peace and women's rights.

Yet, there were also some participants who did not go more deeply into the projects and stopped interacting after seeing, watching, or reading one component of them.

There were many reasons behind their decisions, such as the wide scope of the projects, or a lack of time or interest. Those who continued their further engagement at this level were not committed to producing their own digital texts yet and started evaluating whether they wanted to go further to the contribution phase. In the evaluation process, the students' motivation or discouragement for passing on to "producing" and "contributing" relied upon the content, the lack or quality of technological devices, skills, and knowledge. For example, regarding content, the participants were very enthusiastic about learning about other genocides and comparing them to the one that happened in their own country. Recognizing intertextual elements with projects motivated the students to go further in the interaction process and reflect more on the topics.

On the other hand, there were many drawbacks that led students to put an end to their interaction cycle. The quality of the computers and Internet connection in the schools' computer labs created difficulties. Additionally, the regulations with regard to the prohibition of phones at school hampered the students' aspirations to contribute to the overall transmedia storyworld in some workshops. At some schools, I gained special permission from the school administration for participants to bring their phones to school for the sake of the workshops. In addition to these factors, a lack of access to digital technologies and a lack of digital skills were significant factors in some participants' decision to abandon the overall project. However, some navigated through these handicaps by acquiring new skills, receiving help from their peers for creating digital texts, or contributing to the storyworld through offline means and platforms such as writing a poem or making a drawing.

### ***Contributor: Expanding the storyworld***

After observing and navigating through the transmedia projects, I asked participants to create any kind of story they wanted to. It was a voluntary task and I made it clear that they did not have to do it if they did not want to create anything. While some participants opted out, most wanted to contribute to the storyworld by imagining, designing, and creating digital texts with reference to the transmedia projects individually or collectively. Some of the students created texts in a way that represents their daily use of digital technologies. Aligning the task with their daily uses helped

them become more comfortable and to enjoy the creation process further. At this level, political participation, emotions and digital skills also played a significant role in the action to take place. During the phase of contributing to the transmedia world and producing texts, some students felt proud of their accomplishments due to having created digital texts they had never produced before. For example, some students created Internet memes for the first time in their lives, even though they frequently see memes online and even follow meme accounts on their social media accounts. In an interview, one student said about her experience: “I have never done it before. I felt creative. Like Yeah! I can make a meme!”

One of the reasons for contributing to the storyworld was the collective experience the students engaged in. Their interactions with each other in the workshops created a discussion atmosphere, which had an impact on their decision-making process in terms of the way they created stories. Some of the participants in the workshops were also happy about “inspiring” and “spreading nice messages.” The pleasure of creating and inspiring others was a common reason for participants to share their opinions through digital or non-digital texts. Having digital production skills and knowledge of popular culture had a major influence on the students’ participation during the producing phase. While some students could translate their existing skills into producing and contributing, others struggled to go forward in the engagement. Also, the familiarity with popular culture and digital platforms gave certain advantages to some participants, while some needed further explanation.

However, in some cases, students adapted their skills to create stories. For example, in the workshop with public school students, they did not want to create digital texts on their phones since some of them were not social media users. One of the participants, who was a guitar player, had brought his guitar because he was coming from a class. When I asked them if they would like to produce something together or individually, one student said that he would be interested in rapping. The guitarist student invited him to make a song together at that moment. After he started playing, the others also joined the duo. They all knew the song’s chorus, which was called “Never Again,” but when the chorus was over they started improvising raps one by one. Since singing and rapping was their hobby, it became a fun activity for them to contribute to the storyworld. It was their present to the Cambodian survivors.

After individually or collectively creating a digital text, participants evaluated possible further engagements with the projects. Their assessment for sharing their texts was based on the comments and criticism they would possibly receive on their productions, the possible interaction they would have on their posts such as likes, as well as external factors such as the quality of the Internet connection or the lack of mobile devices. Some students wanted to keep their digital texts to themselves or sent them individually via email because they were “shy,” “not comfortable with sharing,” or “not confident about it” and they did not want to be involved in a discussion with someone who did not think along similar lines. Thus self-censorship prevented their engagement with the projects beyond producing. At the workshops where students were not allowed to bring their phones, another problem was that they could not upload their texts on Instagram since the web version of Instagram did not allow them to share their posts. While some students ended their engagement with the projects at this level, some continued with their commitment through sharing and interacting with others.

### ***Influencer: Working for community-building***

After they created their own texts related to the topics of transmedia projects, the participants went beyond creating and decided to share their digital stories online. Each group discussed how to do this and came up with their own strategy for sharing their content. For example, in one group, we decided to have an Instagram account, since all the participants were frequent Instagram users. The participants shared their memes on the Instagram account and even used the story feature of Instagram to share stories and selfies with their friends in the workshop. At this level, the participants committed themselves to the transmedia storyworld not only by participating individually, but also by sharing their digital texts online, thus encouraging and helping others to make a contribution. They either aroused interest by sharing their work or teaching others the skills they needed for the contribution to take place and helping them through group work and brainstorming. In this process, they asked questions for clarification, sent links to each other, inspired one another, and discussed related topics.

In one workshop, for example, the participants who did not know how to make a meme received help from the other workshop attendees, which led to peer-to-peer learning. Some students guided others by sending website links for generating memes. The memes that were shared in this workshop also indirectly influenced the following workshops in other schools where I showed the Instagram account as an example. After sharing their digital texts and socializing with other participants and peers, the students looked for further engagement possibilities and evaluated the time, skills, and knowledge needed for them. Their assessments were based on curiosity about engaging with people other than classmates or peers, going beyond borders, creating a bigger community, and contributing to social change, which led to transmedia performativity.

***Performer: Advocating for social change in community-building***

At the level of interaction, the participants embodied the aims of the transmedia project, internalized them, and acted accordingly. They wanted to become a character in the nonfiction transmedia storyworld. This level of interaction also required going beyond individual participation, but unlike influencing and inspiring, performing called for initiating the building of a digital community through re-sharing the digital texts on platforms different from the original platform they were shared on, and asking for likes/shares/reposts, which was influenced by the desire for spreading a message, triggering a dialogue, obtaining recognition, and building a community. For example, in one of the workshops, a participant had brought his guitar, thus participants decided to sing together as a contribution to the transmedia storyworld and created a music video where they sang a song called “Never again genocide” and added spontaneous rap verses that expressed their emotions and opinions about the violence and genocides. After the workshop, the guitarist student sent me a WhatsApp message with a link to a YouTube channel which turned out to be his own channel where he shared his covers. He also posted the video he created with other participants and asked for likes/followers/sharing. Likewise, some students intentionally used hashtags to increase the visibility of the posts on Instagram and bring together people who were interested in similar topics.

Justice for Guatemala hashtag. I remember that was a thing #prayfor. So whenever we see things like this happen, because we can relate to them, or because they've happened before, we immediately find a place in our heart to sympathize with. (Olivier, male, 16, individual interview)

There were also performances and practices of civic imagination where they thought about various plans and projects for peacebuilding. For example, after using the hashtag for Guatemala, one student wanted to create a project to bring young people from Guatemala and Rwanda together to discuss peacebuilding in online communities. Therefore, at this level of transmedia interaction, the participants' transmedia performance included encouraging community engagement, activism, seeking recognition, contributing to social change, and creating empathy with other communities that had gone through the genocide, as well as planning projects for peacebuilding that were led by civic imagination.

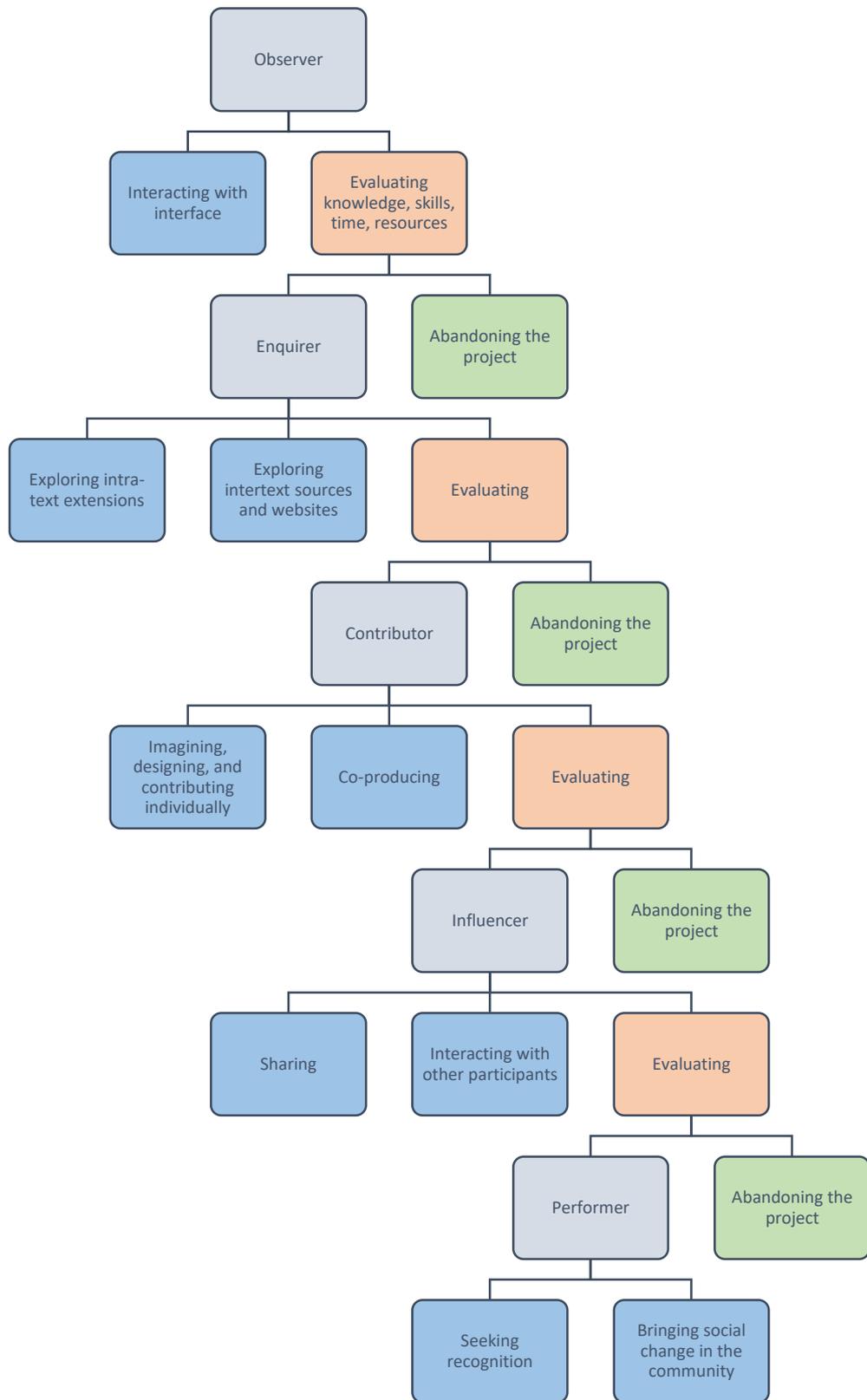


Figure 15. Participants' transmedia interactions with the projects

<b>Observer</b>	Interacting with the initial or main components of the transmedia projects; Watching, reading and witnessing the storyworld; Becoming familiar with the content, interface and the storyworld
<b>Enquirer</b>	Navigating the storyworld and engaging with it thoroughly; Making sense of the different historical narratives and characters; Making connections with the other storyworld
<b>Contributor</b>	Expanding the storyworld through creating stories; Designing and creating narratives individually or collectively
<b>Influencer</b>	Going beyond creating a story by including and encouraging others to contribute to the storyworld; Working for community-building; Sharing their content among each other
<b>Performer</b>	Going beyond the community-building and expanding it to advocating; Re-sharing the content on different media and platforms for social change; Incorporating civic participation and civic imagination for community engagement

Table 17. Layers of interaction with transmedia projects

## 6.2. Vernacularizing genocides and peacebuilding

This section examines the user-generated content created by the workshop participants in terms of how they appropriated and contextualized the content from the transmedia projects combined with their opinions and experiences. I use the defining features of paratextual elements for the analysis: in other words, “its location (the question *where?*); the date of its appearance and, if need be, its disappearance (*when?*); its mode of existence, verbal or other (*how?*); the characteristics of its situation of communication – its sender and addressee (*from whom? to whom?*); and the functions that its message aims to fulfill (*to do what?*)” (Genette, 1997, p. 4, emphasis in original). Inspired by Rodríguez-Ferrándiz’s (2017) chart, based on the aforementioned categorizations and Genette’s definition of paratexts, I first explain when this nonfiction transmedia user-generated content was created and disseminated (or not), and what it means in the context of worldbuilding. I also focus on where this user-generated content is located in the worldbuilding and what it suggests for the transmedia participants. Later, I consider how they were created and what this implies for the transmedia world. I also analyze the sender and addressee,

who created it, and what the target audience was. Finally, I analyze what kinds of functions these contents possess and the aims of these functions. My analysis mostly centers on the Internet memes, since most of the UGC created in the workshops took this form, although from time to time I give examples of other content as well.

### ***Temporal: On-the-spot content, external factors, and self-censorship***

Each workshop I conducted with the students differed from the others due to many factors, which also impacted when the user-generated content was created and posted online. There were a few contents created during the interaction between different parts of transmedia storytelling projects, which I refer to as “inserts.” These inserts were usually generated by the students inside the workshops. For example, one participant took a selfie and made a video of himself while interacting with the webisodes of the Love Radio transmedia project and then continued his engagement by exploring the website and other components of the project. During our individual interview, he said that he had posted it in his classroom’s WhatsApp group, where his post received attention and he was asked questions about the project. He sent the link of the project to those who asked it so that they could watch the webisodes too. Thus, his temporal intervention served as a promotional text as well as a way to encourage his friends to interact with the content he was watching. This kind of user-generated content became an initial entry point to the transmedia world for the other users. Some of them also showed interest in joining the second workshop.

Although there were few “inserted” user-generated contents created by the participants, most of the contents were produced in the post-viewing phase due to the very nature of the workshops. However, these contents also differed from each other in certain ways. For example, some participants created “immediate reaction” contents, where they expressed their in-the-moment feelings through different digital content, especially Internet memes due to how easy it is to use them to create rapid reactionary posts. These immediate reactions do not directly relate to the content of the projects, but rather are linked to the quick searches the participants did about the genocides or their responses to their friends in the workshops. One of them, for example, is the “Mocking SpongeBob”<sup>37</sup> meme (see Figure 16) as a criticism of, and

---

<sup>37</sup> All the names and explanations of the memes are taken from the website [knowyourmeme.com](http://knowyourmeme.com).

response to, another participant in the workshop not knowing the geographical location of Cambodia. Another student created a “Minor Advice Marvin” meme (see Figure 17) about her feelings about the number of genocides that happened in the world after learning about the Guatemalan genocide that she had never previously heard of. She was curious to learn about other genocides and checked the Wikipedia to see how many other genocides that occurred to date. After her quick research, she turned her immediate reaction into a meme where she expressed her disappointment in the school system for not having taught these genocides.

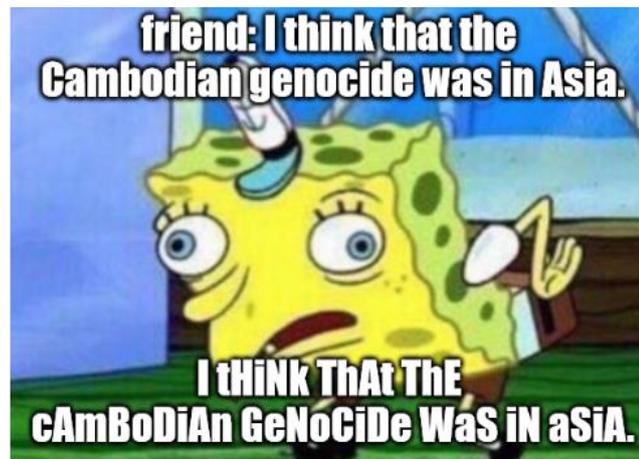


Figure 16. “Mocking SpongeBob” meme on the Cambodian genocide

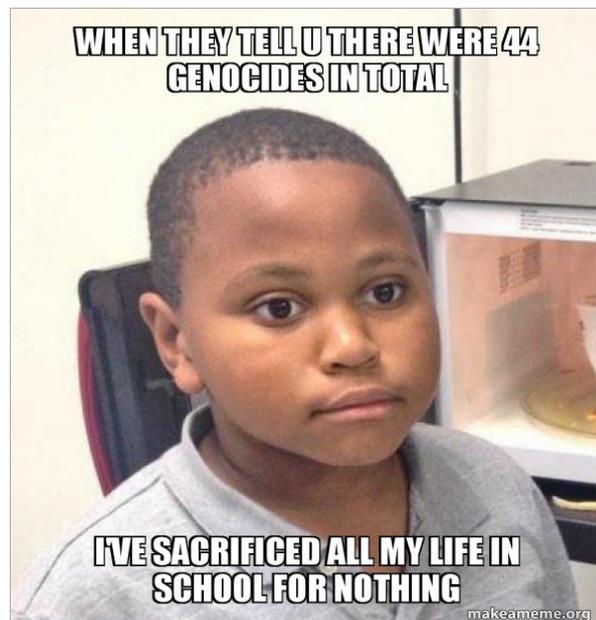


Figure 17. “Minor Advice Marvin” meme on learning about genocides

Another category identified in terms of temporality is the content created not right after the interaction but after the focus group discussions. Some students in the workshops did not want to create their own digital content immediately after watching and reading the transmedia storytelling content. As mentioned before, at the end of each workshop I conducted focus group discussions, so some students preferred to think over what they would like to create after the discussions. This content, which I refer to as “premediated text,” was created as an afterthought response to certain discussions that were held in the focus groups. The discussions related to the topics the students encountered in the projects enabled students to reflect on “taboo” topics such as the authoritarian regime of Rwanda, the ethnicities, and the involvement of foreign countries in the genocide, among others. Although they were limited in number, some students criticized the government and its policies and questioned the dominant discourse with regards to the reconciliation processes, even if these sentiments were not directly presented in the UGC. For example, in the “Confused Nick Young” meme (see Figure 18) with question marks around the head, smiling but bewildered, the dominant discourse of genocide being initiated by colonialism is mocked and challenged, and blame is directed at the Rwandans themselves. When I asked him about his inspiration for creating it, the participant said that the discussions in the focus group had led him to question the historical background of the country and he wanted to respond to his friends who thought that the genocide was caused by the Belgians only. Another example is the “Distracted Boyfriend” meme (see Figure 19), where the Rwandans are criticized for holding the genocide ideology. The participant who created this meme later told me during the individual interview that his inspiration was the focus group discussion, where “some claimed the genocide ideology doesn’t exist around them;” in his opinion, this was not true and there were still some Rwandans holding a grudge against “a certain group of people” (Joseph, male, 17, individual interview).



Figure 18. "Confused Nick Young" meme about Belgium



Figure 19. "Distracted Boyfriend" meme on genocide ideology

Immediate reaction or afterthought response posts were not possible in some cases due to external factors, such as the lack of digital technologies in the computer labs where I conducted the workshops. For example, in the middle-class private school, the Wi-Fi connection was not good enough for students to go on the Internet and create content. Therefore, most of these students sent their digital texts after the workshops, which I refer to as "delayed," following Genette's (1997) typology. These delayed user-generated contents were more complex in terms of content since they were created after reflection on and discussion of the topics in detail in the focus

groups. One example is a poem written by a student based on a discussion in which the students debated how Rwanda would be right now if the genocide had not happened. He was interested in rapping and told me in the interview that he regularly writes poems and plans to rap his poems in the future as a professional rapper. Thus, he took some time to work on his poem with the aim of turning it into a long-term career goal.

Most of the user-generated content created during the workshops was either posted on the common Instagram account on-the-spot during the workshops or shared among the participants in WhatsApp groups they created together. However, there were also some texts created by the participants that were never shared online due to the participants' preferences. Some students shared their content only with me in a private message on WhatsApp or through email. I was intrigued to find that these participants did not share them publicly due to the judgments they feared they could face from their peers. The "Confused Nick Young" meme (Figure missing?) is one example of this type of UGC. Self-censorship hampers further engagement and constructive dialogue in online participatory spaces. Although the research participant who created the meme could openly debate about this topic among his peers, he felt sharing these opinions online would put him in an uncomfortable position. His "delayed" content also resulted from his negotiations with himself with regards to whether he was willing to share it or not.

Even long after the workshops, some students sent me additional memes or videos they had created related to politics or other discussions, as well as news and articles they encountered online about Cambodia, Guatemala, and Rwanda. This is significant because it means the temporality of their engagement through creating paratexts or interacting with other paratexts has the potential to be longer through transmedia participation. The temporality of nonfiction transmedia user-generated content tends to be longer since these topics are still in the phase of ongoing discussions. Similarly, the temporality of users' engagement through creating content is likely to remain longer due to their enthusiasm for civic engagement.

### ***Spatial: Between text, users, and local realities***

The user-generated content created by the workshop participants directly mentioned the text or slightly alluded to it. In many cases, the content was linked to individual experiences and local realities rather than the original text (in this case the transmedia projects in question). This was, somehow, inevitable since there was a close relationship between the original text and the represented world in the original text, meaning the real world of the users. For example, the students' perception of the transmedia projects about the 1994 genocide in Rwanda depended on their interpretations that resulted from their interaction with the local realities surrounding them.

Some content was closer to the original text than others. For instance, one student shared a photo from the Love Radio project with different Instagram effects, a caption to describe the project, and hashtags to promote the project. This kind of "centripetal" paratext, as McCracken (2013) calls them, brings the audience to the original text. However, this kind of paratext was very rare among the students. Since the topics of discussions in the original text relate to their everyday life, the students tended to create content in which they voice their opinions or discuss their experiences. Therefore, some of the content about Rwanda moved away from the original text and thus carried the audience away from it to different contexts and spaces that the projects did not mention. Following McCracken's (2013) categorization, I call these paratexts "centrifugal." One example of these is the meme created by a student on the recent conflict between Uganda and Rwanda:



Figure 20. "Angry Walter" meme on the Uganda–Rwanda conflict

The conflict between Uganda and Rwanda was based on the border conflict between the countries which occurred when I was doing my fieldwork in Kigali. This provided me a chance to observe and read media outlets, where President Museveni, the president of Uganda at the time of this research, was blamed for “protecting” the genocide perpetrators who “would potentially beget violence again” in Rwanda. Therefore, Uganda became one of the topics that came up during focus group discussions and that turned out to be material for user-generated content. Students articulated criticism toward Museveni for “wanting to invade Rwanda” and “not giving up his power and title” as a president for years both in our conversations and in the memes created during the workshops. For example, the following meme criticizes Museveni for still being in power in Uganda:



Figure 21. "Waiting for OP" meme about Museveni

Transmedia experience does not acquire a strict beginning or end since users can interact, connect, disconnect, disengage, or reconnect and re-engage with transmedia stories whenever they please, which can strengthen and reinforce the perception of nonfiction transmediality being in closer relation to real life than to the storytelling in the original text. The user-generated content such as the memes above moves the reader from the original text to the local context that intersects with different issues that the participants are exposed to, which I refer to as "intersecting paratexts." These intersecting paratexts can include personal experiences, but, in the case of the content created by the participants in this research, they were more likely to reflect the dominant narratives in the Rwandan society.

Another category of spatial paratexts are "canonized" paratexts. Some participants made sense of the original text or the local realities presented by other participants through their interaction with user-generated content posted on the common Instagram account. These participants found it more interesting to scroll through the posts than to watch the whole documentary about Rwanda. Therefore their content creation process depended on their interpretation of the content created by other participants. For example, the meme about Burundi (see Figure 22) was created by a student who saw the memes on Uganda and decided to create a similar meme using

Burundi. Thus, the meme about Uganda becomes canonized by becoming an entry-point and an inspiration for other content.

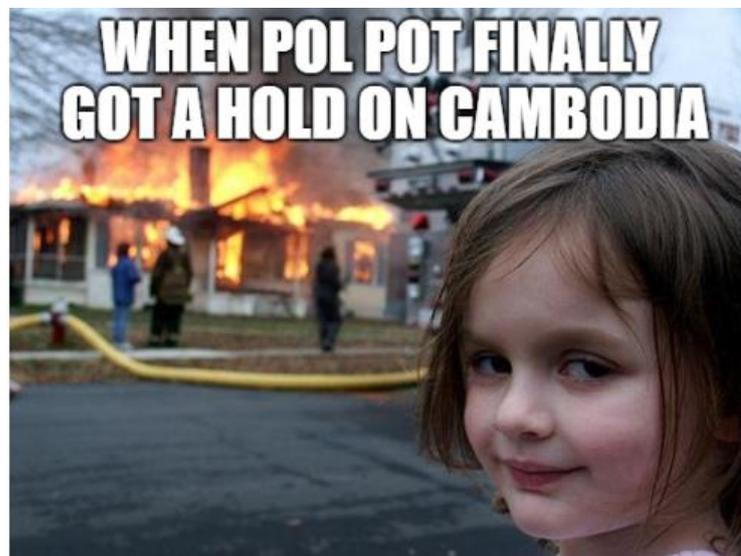


Figure 22. “Left Exit 12 off Ramp” meme about Burundi–Rwanda

Mememes such the one about Burundi present a spatial negotiation of the peacebuilding and reconciliation process. It can be said that the spatiality of the text has an impact on its interpretation with regard to local realities. For example, the user-generated content created about the Cambodian and Guatemalan genocide reveals a positioning that is attributed to these places from the Rwandan participants’ perspective. The way they debated about Guatemala and Cambodia provides certain opinions and ideologies with reference to Rwanda and its approach to coping with post-genocide issues and the reconciliation process. Therefore, the comparison of the genocides entailed a certain criticism or appreciation of how the peacebuilding process was and is unfolding in Rwanda.

The notion of “leadership” was one of the prominent elements of user-generated content about Cambodia, even though the documentary they watched mentioned Pol Pot only once at its beginning and in small written text. While they navigated through the transmedia project on its website or other resources, the primary information they searched for intended to answer the questions of “Who fought against whom?” and “Who was the leader?” Their urge to find an answer to these burning questions essentially depended on their apprehension of genocide and history education. The

comparison between the two countries with regards to how the leaders at the time of the genocides handled, operated, or governed the “atrocities” brought about sarcastic reflections on Pol Pot’s regime. For instance, one participant created a “Disaster girl” meme (see Figure 23), in which a girl is smiling with a house burning down behind, thus appearing to be simultaneously guilty and happy. Thus, metaphorically, the caption indicates that Pol Pot is held culpable for the destruction of the country and seemingly content about the consequences. In this case, the content moved away from the original text about Cambodia, where Pol Pot was mentioned briefly. The participant focused on the “leadership” detail based on his interpretation of his own reality in Rwanda. Thus it becomes a centrifugal paratext that simultaneously intersects with another storyworld.



*Figure 23. “Disaster Girl” meme about Pol Pot*

The space the paratexts hold in the transmedia storyworld offers a negotiation between the representation of the real world in the original text, users’ positioning, and their local realities. These negotiations in the nonfiction transmedia user-generated content create a diversity and dialogue space in digital media. Therefore, the text and its paratexts guide, support, and complement each other, as well as confront and conflict with each other. Gray (2010) sees paratexts as essential elements that permeate “the triumvirate of Text, Audience, and Industry”, thus “conditioning passages and trajectories that criss-cross the mediascape, and variously negotiating or determining interactions among the three” (p. 23). Parallel to his approach, I

consider user-generated content in nonfiction transmedia as paratexts that occupy the space between Text, User, and Local Realities, contesting dominant narratives, aligning with them, informing our reading, conceptualizing and contextualizing controversial and difficult issues, shaping perceptions and expectations, and encouraging civic engagement, dialogue, and political participation.

***Mode: Digital/digitized content, memes, and humor***

The participants in this research created digital content such as videos, Internet memes, and multimedia texts by using their laptops or phones or used non-digital tools to express their ideas and feelings by writing poems or making drawings. But the latter were also digitized when, for instance, one of the participants who wrote a poem later shared it in a Whatsapp group consisting of his friends, and then another participant shared it on her blog. Another student took a picture of her drawing and shared it on her personal Instagram account. Most of the content, however, was the macro-image Internet memes which reveal certain approaches to the peacebuilding process in the country.

Surprisingly, most of the content created was Internet memes. I did not expect them to create humorous content in relation to the genocides. They were free to create anything they wished. During the workshops, they were not directed in any way. After one of the students indicated that he had an Instagram account where he creates and shares memes, he wanted to use his “daily practices” to reflect on the genocides and peacebuilding processes. The other participants were hesitant at first; they thought it might not be appropriate to create humorous content on these topics. However, after watching their friend using a website to make a meme and laughing about it, they decided to create memes as well.

Looking closer at the form of memes should go beyond which types of memes or visual elements are reappropriated to convey a message. This is because selecting a certain type of image to spread the content requires further evaluation on why it is preferred over others, and in what ways they are created. To start with, there are several reasons why the participants created memes to discuss a serious topic. Even if not every online meme is playful or humorous, humor is one of the pillars of memetic success (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Shifman, 2012). However, the participants’ use of humor has two-

sided characteristics for this research. First, they are a part of and familiar with a global digital culture where people generate and disperse humorous content using popular culture. Second, humor is used as a response to the intergenerational conflict in which the youth's approach to certain topics differs from that of their elders. For instance, some of the students thought memorial events, discussions, and speeches regarding peacebuilding and the reconciliation processes in the country were not "forward-looking" or "creative," but instead "so serious" and "depressing." This is why it is no surprise that during the workshops in which they created digital texts about genocide, peacebuilding, and reconciliation, most of the digital texts they produced were macro-image memes which they used to comment on and laugh about serious topics. One of the participants stated that talking about the genocide or its aftermath is not only for adults, but also for young people like herself:

It felt like, I don't know, it [creating memes] felt more relatable kind of, like, I don't know, like, it's something that's not just for old people now because I can look at it through memes. (Aurore, female, 16, individual interview)

For Aurore, memes have become a tool to talk about the genocide in a way that is more engaging. The participants were also very critical of Rwandan society, and especially their elders, in the sense that their approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation was limited:

What scares me is that Rwandans don't really have this culture of writing, they write, create, and distribute less and less [...] That's why we [youth] have to write more, be creative more, and imagine more. (Gianna, female, 16, focus group #3)

Gianna also said that she felt very creative while creating memes, which she had tried for the first time in her life. For some, like Gianna, creating memes marked their first experience of talking about genocides and the reconciliation process in a humorous way. The "polyvocality" of memetic practices is revealed both in the memes themselves (creating different memes with various discourses on a single topic) and in the deeper analysis of Rwandan societal structures (the youth refusing the accepted standard ways of commemorating and discussing the genocide). Furthermore, these memes not only serve as a response to intergenerational conflict, but also function as

a tool for “civic imagination” by debating how society should deal with post-genocide issues. Thus, popular culture enables Rwandan young people to express themselves about an issue that affects their lives but which habitually becomes an adult topic from the very beginning, even though the prevalent discourse claims otherwise.

Not all the recipients of a meme can understand every aspect of it. In this sense, the meme-making process with a group of students in the workshops paved a way for peer-to-peer digital, meme, and subculture literacy learning. For example, one participant created a “Mocking SpongeBob” meme (see Figure 16) where she was not only equipped with the literacy required to create a meme, but also became familiar with the subculture of the meme, which uses alternating uppercase and lowercase text to demonstrate a mocking tone. During her creation process, I overheard the conversation she had with her classmate sitting nearby. Her classmate did not understand what the meme meant or why she used upper and lowercase letters, and so she explained to her friend the intertextual, semiotic, and subcultural factors of the meme. In some cases, though, everyone can understand the meaning without knowing the origin of the meme. For instance, the “Ancient Aliens” meme was understood by every participant in the group thanks to its semiotic elements, but the maker of the meme was familiar with the History Channel’s series and explained the background of it to his friends.

Meme literacy requires the subcultural knowledge of memes or what kind of language or template should be used for certain memes. But who decides if the meme is generated in a “right” or “wrong” way? Milner (2012) argues that it is the memetic community that discusses and negotiates if the language is used accurately, which is neither a clear-cut nor a definitive process. From the experience and observations I had during the workshops, I can say that using the “right” or “wrong” language depended on two factors: (1) the students knowing (or not knowing) the template of the meme, and (2) content and stance were more important than applying the “right” convention of a meme. For example, “The Most Interesting Man in the World” meme (see Figure 24) did not apply the “right” template which required a phrase of “I don’t always X, but when I do, I Y.”.



Figure 24. "The Most Interesting Man in the World" meme about Rwanda

When asked what her inspiration was for creating this meme, the student stated that the character seemed defiant and self-confident, which aligned with her message. Another example is the "Angry Walter" meme (see Figure 20) that uses the phrase "Am I the only one around here?" accompanied by an unpopular belief. However, the student adhered to the semiotic message given in the picture, an angry guy holding a gun, which was associated with his idea of Rwandans' reaction to Ugandans "trying to invade" Rwanda. Therefore, "some conventions about memes may be widely held, but none are ubiquitous" as Nissenbaum and Shifman (2017, p. 94) articulate. Thus, the localization, adaptation, resemiotization, and contextualization of memes was acceptable as long as the message that was to be conveyed was presented. For the young people in this research, memes became a powerful tool for incorporating irony, sarcasm, humor, and popular culture into their expressions of their opinions in an enjoyable way. So the aspects of life they appreciate and have fun with turned into a departure point for political participation they normally shy away from or hesitate to take part in because they deem it suitable only for adults or it becomes too serious or uninteresting for them.

### ***Actorial: Positioning, identity, and imagined audiences***

With regards to paratextual elements, Genette (1997) also emphasizes the actorial characteristics by asking about the addresser and addressee. Who created the user-generated content and who is the target audience? During the workshops, the

participants made their contributions voluntarily. I told them that they didn't have to create anything if they didn't want to. However, most of them created stories either individually or collectively. Through this content, the participants negotiated their social positioning in their society, constructing their individual and collective identities and refusing to partake in existing and deliberately forced norms on them. Most of the content were examples of paratexts from individuals performing social positioning, critique of societies, self-criticism, or advocacy, among others. There were also collectively created content that provide information about how young Rwandans take up certain positions that the government and the elders in the society attribute to them. For example, in one of the workshops, the group of students singing a song called "Never Again" in Kinyarwanda added spontaneous and improvised rap verses in English addition to the original song. The rap verses consisted of "we" referring to the "youth" of Rwanda, thus creating a collective identity of young people as "the future of Rwanda" and a "generation of peace advocators." Their message of peace was directed to all other Rwandans, thus making it *collective to collective* user-generated content.

Another example is an Instagram story which is the demonstration of a youth discourse in the colors of the Rwandan flag (see Figure 25) posted by a group of friends. This post shows how young people internalize their position as "the generation to continue the legacy of the RPF." Consequently, their definition of being Rwandan youth is simply defined by the policies and ideologies of the government.



Figure 25. Instagram story about the Rwandan youth

Similarly, being “Rwandan” is also demonstrated through creating content. As mentioned before, the government’s policies and regulations attach great importance to the elimination of the “ethnic” groups “Hutu,” “Tutsi,” and “Twa”, which are seen as a European colonial tool for dividing the nation. As a response to this de-ethnicization process, participants collectively created a “Drakeposting” meme (see Figure 26) where facial expression and hand movements referring to the idea that they disapprove of and avoid the “ethnicities” and embrace the collective identity of “Rwandanness.” The reconstruction of collective identity does not remain limited to the positioning of Rwandan youth as the future leaders, but also includes the elimination of ethnic categories in the society. Although there were some participants who challenged these positions, due to the government’s pressure and their fear of talking about ethnicities in the society, none of these students created online content that aligned with their opinions. One participant who openly criticized the government regulations about forbidding the ethnicities, for instance, was involved in the creation of the “Drakeposting” meme. When I asked her about it during our interview, she said she did not want to be a “cry-baby.”



Figure 26. "Drakeposting" meme on the "ethnicities" in Rwanda

Another important question must be asked in any analysis in terms of identity: Which memes are used, appropriated, and modified, and why are these specifically selected? There are several reasons discussed in the literature regarding the choice of memes (see Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Milner, 2018; Phillips & Milner, 2017; Shifman, 2014; Wiggins, 2019) such as the availability and simplicity of use of memes thanks to meme generator websites, familiarity with the intertextual and subcultural elements of memes, and their relevance to the topic of the discussion. But in this case, another influencing factor arises: that of the "imagined audience" and black identity. Some studies show how meme-creating and sharing contribute to systemic and structural racism and bolster prevalent narratives of racial identity (see Dickerson, 2016; Yoon, 2016). The approach to memes in terms of racial identity in this research is based on the representation of Black people in the memes and the participants' process of selecting the memes that speak for their black identity. Because they wanted to let their imagined audience know who was making these memes, they were negotiating, demonstrating, and pointing to their identity while bearing in mind the white community who would interact with this content through my research; my presence as a white researcher also possibly had an impact on what they said and how they said it.

While creating memes in the workshops, the Rwandan students used meme generator websites where macro-images are accessible and available to be modified quickly and

easily. While some of the students were experienced in creating memes, some had never created one before. So they went through different images and tried to pick one that was relevant to the topic and that matched their identity. After spending some time on a website, one female participant stated that she could not find any image of a black girl that did not look unintelligent or bewildered. So she decided not to create a meme and made a multimedia text instead. On the other hand, other students used memes containing black people such as “Drakeposting,” “Minor Advice Marvin,” “Confused Nick Young,” and “Confused Black Girl”. Milner (2012) indicates that “[p]articipatory media collectives have, historically, been white and privileged” (p. 70). Thus, knowing who made these memes subverts the circumstances and enables Rwandan youth to negotiate their black identity in online participatory spaces. These memes can be used as humiliation or negative stereotypes, such as stupidity or illiteracy towards black people, but in this case, become a form of representation of the self.

With regards to “imagined audiences,” the participants also created content to criticize the Western community. Some of the students, especially from privileged backgrounds, had either visited or lived in Anglo-Saxon countries such as the USA, UK, or Canada. Therefore, most of their criticisms were towards people from these countries. For example, Chantal, who lived in the USA with her parents, created the “The Rock driving” meme (see Figure 27) where she criticizes the ignorance of outsiders who think there is still a genocide happening in Rwanda. She also comments on making memes about it to change people’s mindsets:

I feel like it’s a way of showing people that Rwanda is actually OK. Rwanda is fine, we are OK, it’s a peaceful country. Because there's this one time I had a friend. So I told her about Rwanda. She said “Oh, the country with the genocide.” I'm like, no, it is not only about the genocide. Yes, the genocide happened, but it's over now. It’s OK. But it’s hard for people to believe it. So I believe that if we make it more fun, it creates another mindset to other people. (Chantal, female, 16, individual interview)

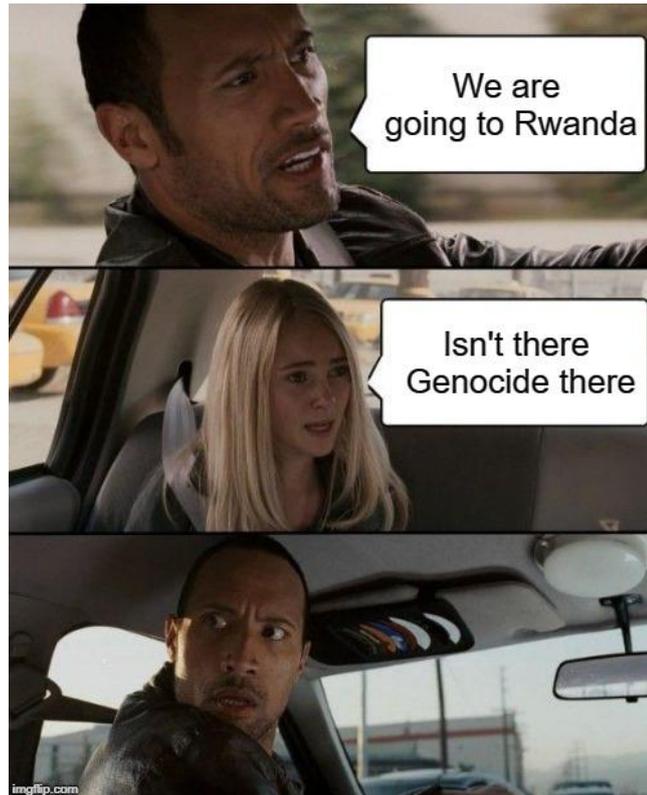


Figure 27. “The Rock driving” meme criticizing outsiders

Upon encountering outsiders’ narratives that do not align with their local experiences, through these paratextual elements, the students reject the statements that oversimplify the situation in Rwanda and what happened in the genocide. For example, after interacting with one of the transmedia projects about Rwanda, one student in a focus group commented on the “narrow approach” of the project because it failed to focus on different perspectives, the complexity of the genocide, or areas of development since the genocide. After having this conversation, another student from the same focus group created the “Ancient Aliens” meme (see Figure 28) to describe how hard it is to explain the genocide to a foreigner, thus using the intertextuality with the “Ancient Aliens” television show, where people try to explain the inexplicable. A tension also appears to exist between the Rwandans and other countries/communities (mostly Western countries) in terms of how Rwanda is addressed with reference to the genocide, as well as the way they approach it from a Western point of view. Although the legacy of the genocide is performed by young people in their everyday actions, the youth of Rwanda want to move on and are weary of the image Western communities have of the country. They are aware that the reconciliation is an ongoing slow process, but how Rwanda is perceived by non-Rwandans and how difficult it is to explain the

complexity of it are revealed in a sarcastic and funny form by the students through the use of intertextual and semiotic elements.

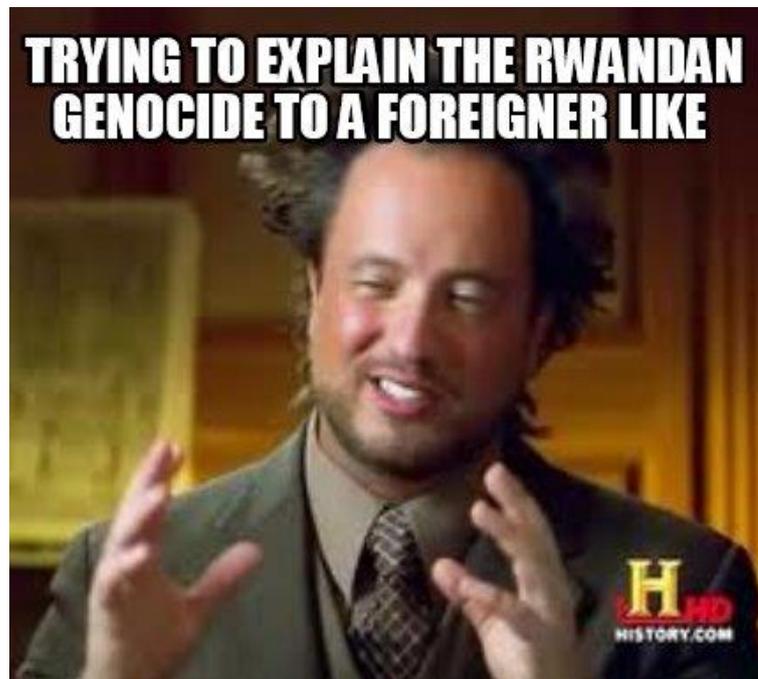


Figure 28. "Ancient Aliens" meme

Although young people in this research are critical about some aspects of government policies, when it comes to responding to these policies through creative practices online, their participation is mostly perfunctorily and ideologically loaded. We see some patterns in the discursive practices and content, because a community familiar with the context and background constitutes a complementary or similar approach to the problem in question, thus allowing the community to reconstruct their collective identity. The paratextual elements created in the workshops as a response to both projects and local experiences serve as a tool for positioning and identity negotiations as well as a space for reacting to imagined audiences. But, the limitations of participatory spaces and the surveillance over existing ones, where there is pressure to conform to the dominant discourse, prevent young people from having their opinions communicated, negotiated, and diversified through creative paratextual practices.

### ***Functional: From user-generated patriotism/nationalism to user-generated solidarity***

The user-generated content resulting from interactions with the transmedia projects functions in different ways as paratexts in the transmedia storyworld. First of all, these paratexts were mostly *transmedial* in their application of different strategies to expand the story based on *time* (expanding the lifetime of the content, making the past present, filling the gaps in the timeline, connecting present-day issues with past atrocities), based on *space* (expanding the debate to different geographical spaces, for instance, the memes about Burundi and Uganda), and based on *actors* (users adding themselves as a character to the transmedia world, reflecting on their personal lives and experiences in relation to the original text). Some of these contents were closer to the original text by functioning as promotional paratexts. The original text was directly mentioned with the aim of presenting, promoting, and publicizing it. For example, one participant shared a picture from the *Rwanda 20 Years after the genocide* with the caption “You should watch no matter what your age is” on the shared Instagram account. Some of the content created by the participants aimed to evaluate the situation in Rwanda or the information provided in the transmedia projects.

These user-generated contents as paratexts also function as commentary or activist content. An example would be the Instagram post shared by one of the students on the Guatemalan genocide after watching the documentary *Granito* where she shared a photo from the documentary and explained briefly how the genocide unfolded, added some comments on similarities between the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the Guatemalan genocide. The participant also used #justiceforGuatemala, which turned her post into transmedia activism calling for action. Additionally, the memes created related to the Cambodian genocide where students criticized Pol Pot’s attitude towards the citizens of Cambodia and his governance during the genocide after watching a Cambodian sharing his testimony through his body language was created with the purpose of advocacy for social change. All of these functions of transmedia user-generated content as paratexts offer an opportunity for civic engagement among the young people in this research.

These paratexts and their functionality serve as a space for community building or transmedia worldbuilding that guides the interpretations of audiences. On the other hand, this space contributes to the nation-building and national identity-making process using different semiotic elements. For example, the “Angry Walter” meme (see Figure 20), where there is an image of a man holding a gun and whose caption says “RWANDA WAITING FOR UGANDANS TO DARE TO CROSS THE BORDER LIKE,” was created by a student who saw news on a WhatsApp group about “Uganda’s plans to invade Rwanda.” This meme shows the readiness of Rwandans to fight to protect their country’s borders if necessary. Similarly, the meme about Burundi (see Figure 22) refers to a preference for Rwanda over other neighboring countries, as well as its “superiority.” Neither of the transmedia projects related to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda discussed relations with neighboring countries, however, the students reflected heavily on them during the focus group discussions in the workshops as well as through the user-generated content they created. For them, comparisons of these countries shed light on how Rwanda had become “more” developed and peaceful after having experienced such a devastating genocide. Thus, the reconciliation process was affiliated with socio-economic development and the power a country has in regional and geographical politics.

Some participants created content pointing to the development of their country in terms of security, which identified the reconciliation process in current Rwanda as effective and successful. The “Donald Trump’s First Order of Business” meme (see Figure 29) made by one of the students expresses Rwanda’s development, and other countries aspiring to be at that level, including the USA, while the USA is associated with conflict and unsafety. Once again, semiotic elements show Trump holding power with an open folder displaying text signed by him, and wearing “Thug life glasses,” representing him being free of worries; but when these elements are juxtaposed with the textual element, ironically, the power shifts to Rwanda and so the USA is put in a lower position in terms of security and peace.



Figure 29. "Donald Trump's First Order of Business" meme on the development of Rwanda

While showing Rwanda as superior by explicitly comparing it with other countries was common, there was also similar content that implicitly indicated the difference between Rwanda and neighboring countries. For example, one student created the "Waiting for OP" meme (see Figure 21), which shows a skeleton sitting on a bench as a metaphor reflecting the persistence of Museveni, the president of Uganda at the time of this research, and expressing criticism for his ruling the country for too long. During our interview, I asked the participant what his inspiration was and why he used this meme. He explained that Uganda was not a democratic country and Ugandans could not elect a new president in democratic ways. When I asked him what he thinks about Rwanda, he said, "There is still a need for improvement, but we are more democratic than Uganda." Therefore, this meme is also linked to the concept of development of Rwanda in terms of democracy and its superiority over Uganda.

The content generated about Cambodia and Guatemala revolved around justice, leadership, and genocide denial, which are also topics directly related to the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. While these contents were created with the aim of "solidarity," they also included elements that show the students' approach to the peacebuilding process in post-genocide Rwanda. They reflected on the Guatemalan and Cambodian genocide from the point of the genocide their country has experienced and also with reference to the dominant discourse of the RPF-led government. For

example, one of the “Distracted Boyfriend” memes (see Figure 30) is a reflection on the approval/disapproval of Guatemalans toward those who acknowledge or deny the genocide. This is also linked to the “genocide denial” debate, which has become prevalent within and outside of Rwanda. The “Distracted Boyfriend” meme is not inherently political, yet with the semiotic tools such as metaphor, synecdoche, or intertextual references, it acquires a political discourse, thus becoming a tool for the participants to show solidarity toward Guatemalans whose genocide is denied by certain groups.

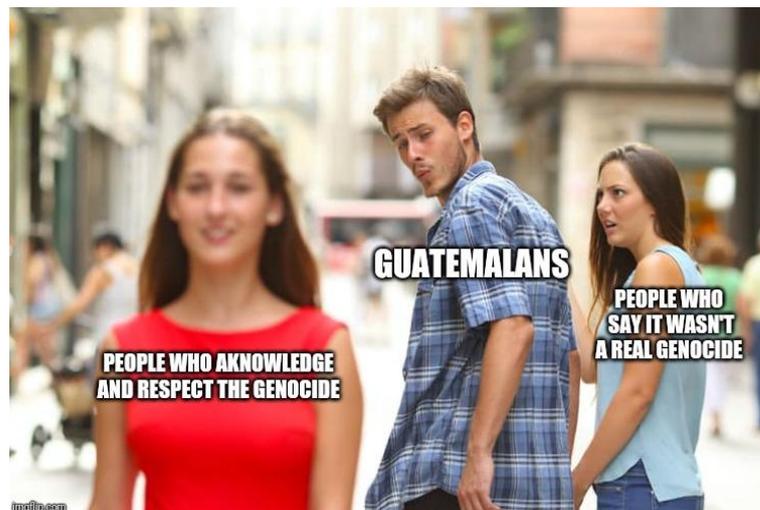


Figure 30. “Distracted Boyfriend” meme about the Guatemalan genocide

Another subject for solidarity was the justice system and punishment in post-genocide societies. After the participants learned that Ríos Montt continued to be actively involved in politics after the genocide and that he was never jailed during his lifetime, a group of students reacted to it with the “Facepalm” meme (see Figure 31). This meme reflects the disappointment of participants over the escape of Ríos Montt, the President of Guatemala during the genocide, from being punished. According to the participants, punishment is seen as essential for the relief of victims in genocides. The focus group discussions also displayed the participant’s idea of justice, which they believe includes the punishment of genocide perpetrators as well as forgiveness of genocide victims. Similar to the “Distracted Boyfriend” meme about Guatemalans, this meme was also used to show empathy and solidarity with a country that experienced similar atrocities in the past.

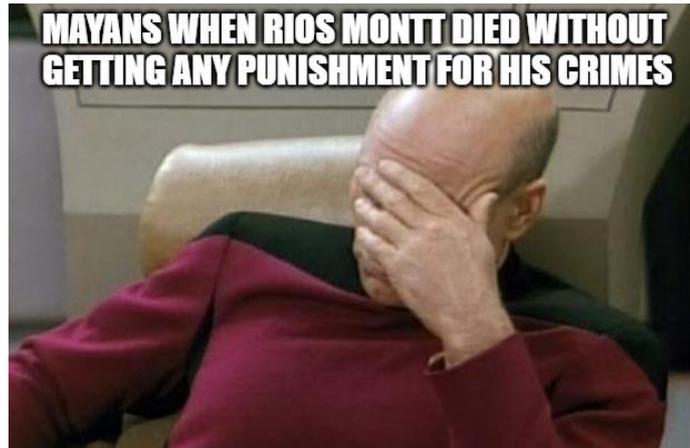


Figure 31. "Facepalm" meme about justice in Guatemala

Considering the user-generated content created about Rwanda, the participants appeared to shy away from sensitive topics such as Kagame’s leadership or judicial practices regarding perpetrators of the genocide. Moreover, they aligned with the prevailing rhetoric of the Rwandan government. Therefore, there were inevitable differences between the UGC made by students about Rwanda versus those made about Guatemala and Cambodia. The memes they created about Guatemala or Cambodia were more sarcastic, while those they made about Rwanda widely focused on more “acceptable” topics. It is clear that some young people are capable of resisting certain discourses, while others amplify them. In this sense, the Internet memes in this research carry a crucial role, especially regarding authoritarian regimes, in “contemporary formulations of political participation” (Shifman, 2014, p. 172). All in all, it can be concluded that user-generated content functions as a tool for civic engagement through transmedial expansions, promotional texts, evaluative texts, commentaries, and activist engagement, which creates a space for (1) legitimizing dominant ideologies, (2) demonstrating nationalistic and patriotic virtues and values, and (3) showing solidarity.

Features of Paratexts	Typology	Characteristics
Spatial (where?)	Centrifugal	Moves away from the original text
	Centripetal	Stays closer to the original text
	Intersecting	Intersects with another diegesis

	Canonized	Creates its own diegetic world; bottom-to-bottom user-generated content
<b>Temporal (when?)</b>	Inserted texts	Content created in spaces in the interaction process, e.g. between episodes, webisodes, etc.
	Immediate texts	Post-viewing texts created immediately after interacting with the project
	Premeditated texts	Post-viewing texts where participants reflected and thought over the content before creating them
	Delayed texts	Post-viewing texts created later on due to self-censorship and fear of being judged
	Digital	Content created by digital means: videos, memes, selfies, multimodal texts, social media posts (Instagram stories)
<b>Mode (how?)</b>	Non-digital	Content created without digital means: written stories and poems, drawings
	Digitized	Content created without digital means but digitized later on
	Collective	The sender as a collective, referring to community building, nation building, and national identity
<b>Actorial (from whom? to whom?)</b>	Individual	The sender as an individual, referring to identities in the making
	Experienced	The sender is an experienced creator of digital texts
	Amateur	The sender is a first-time creator of a specific mode of text such as memes
	Transmedial	Texts that expand the narrative program
<b>Functional (to do what?)</b>	Promotional	Promoting the original text or promoting ideas
	Informational	Giving information about certain topics discussed in the original text
	Evaluative	Commenting on different topics, criticizing certain aspects, self-criticism; evaluating relations with the original text
	Activist	Campaigning or advocating for social change

Table 18. Typology of user-generated content as paratexts

### 6.3. Experiencing transmediality: A typology of nonfiction transmedia engagement

I consider engagement as a deeper level of interaction where participants' transmedia experience becomes longer and profound. After analyzing the data and my observations in workshops, schools, and extracurricular activities with the participants, eight types of engagement are identified in the students' interaction with the transmedia projects. However, they are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are intertwined and can exist together.

---

<b>Social Engagement</b>	Socializing within the transmedia world through creating and disseminating content on digital platforms, as well as socializing with peers through debates and content creation while engaging with transmedia narratives
<b>Spatial Engagement</b>	Engaging with the transmedia storyworld in different physical spaces and different mental engagements that influence their stances towards the narratives and characters in the world, as well as their positioning towards to the topic and different storyworlds
<b>Temporal Engagement</b>	Engaging with the transmedia storyworld at a specific time and within a period of time, which represents the level of engagement as well as the specific limitations that affect the timeframe of engagement
<b>Sensorial Engagement</b>	Engaging with the transmedia storyworld multi-sensorially, which affects the understanding of the world based on the sensorial engagement, since some of the sensorial engagements are strengthened while others are limited
<b>Perceptual Engagement</b>	Representing, portraying and comprehending the transmedia storyworlds in a sense that determines, changes, and challenges their perceptions of narratives and characters
<b>Creative Engagement</b>	Engaging with the transmedia storyworld through involvement in creative productions while understanding and learning about subcultural characteristics of digital environments as well as acquiring digital skills through peer-to-peer learning and trial-and-error methods

---

<b>Critical Engagement</b>	Encountering different historical and contesting narratives and characters, making sense of these elements, and critically assessing and engaging with them through researching, synthesizing, comparing, problem-solving, and decision-making
<b>Civic Engagement</b>	Engaging with the transmedia projects and creating content related to these projects in order to reflect on issues that affect local realities as well as global issues

*Table 19. Types of transmedia engagement*

### **Social engagement**

The social engagement of the participants with and inspired by transmedia projects occurred in two ways. Firstly, their interactions allowed them to socialize within the projects' transmedia universe by navigating through the interactive documentaries and intratextual elements of the projects. In so doing, they assessed the interfaces, tried to understand the logic of the design, made connections, and adapted to the elements that were required by the interface of the interactive documentaries and the websites of the projects; they also adopted different strategies that fulfilled their curiosity, needs, and expectations. For example, while navigating through the transmedia documentary *Love Radio*, some students decided to navigate the fictional part only, while others followed the documentary's suggestion to watch one fictional episode and then continue with the nonfiction story. Those who followed the fictional part tended to shy away from the discussions about the genocide and peacebuilding process in Rwanda. However, the participants who also interacted with the nonfiction part of the story tended to engage socially in the debates and in the overall worldbuilding individually or collectively.

The interactions encouraged social debates, that is, discussions about topics that are central to the storyworld, which went beyond the classroom or in-group and took place on online platforms as well. For example, those who posted stories and images on Instagram continued commenting on the images, using hashtags to connect with other users, tagging some friends for them to see their content and make comments. Some of the social engagement went beyond the workshops and workshop participants. Some participants shared the content they created with their friends through

WhatsApp groups they have, which created a dialogue between workshop participants and their classmates or families who did not attend the workshops. There were also offline discussions that the students had with each other and their classmates. For example, in one of the schools, while I was having conversations with students during their break time, one student who had not attended the first workshop commented on her interest in joining the second workshop after talking with one of the participants about what they had done during the workshop and the kinds of conversations they had had about digital technologies and peacebuilding in Rwanda. Therefore, some students were drawn to engagement with transmedia projects not only due to social debates, but also for social online engagement where they could interact with the projects and create content with friends.

### ***Spatial engagement***

The participants' engagement with transmedia projects unfolded spatially in three ways. Firstly, their site of engagement was not limited to the workshops and schools. Some continued their engagement, which is navigating the projects and looking for more information online, after the workshops in their homes or other spaces such as libraries. Some students even sent me links and messages on WhatsApp with regards to the topics they engaged with during the workshops even after my fieldwork stay in Rwanda was finished. The second form of spatial engagement dealt with their stance towards the subjects about post-genocide reconciliation and peacebuilding and how they negotiated or not the transmedia projects' ways of representing the story. This kind of engagement focused on how they positioned themselves in different kinds of communication practices, whether digitally or offline, in relation to how the projects approached the genocides and peacebuilding both in design and in terms of content. For example, some students thought the Scars of Cambodia project was limited in its lack of providing more background information about Cambodia.

Positioning themselves in the communication practices also included "being a young Rwandan" who did not experience the genocide like those who were included in the projects. Therefore, for some participants whose parents did not experience the genocide either, the engagement and immersion in the stories was in some ways more detached than those who had parents who experienced the genocide first-hand. The

third form of spatial engagement was linked to this kind of detachment, but in relation to the other genocides in Guatemala and Cambodia. Their transmedia engagement with the projects about these genocides and their peacebuilding processes yielded different results in the digital creation process. As seen in the memes created about Guatemala and Cambodia, the participants' approach to these post-genocide settings was more critical, ironic, and uncensored.

### ***Temporal engagement***

The duration of the time the participants engaged with transmedia projects as well as when they engaged with stories depended on different contextual factors. Engagement with some projects lasted longer than with others. Especially the interactive documentaries were more interesting to the students, therefore they spent more time with the projects that included interactive documentaries. Some students also reported that they continued to check the projects after the workshops. Additionally, their interest in certain topics such as justice systems in different countries led some students to have longer engagement with projects. For example, after the workshop one student watched the trials of Ríos Montt, which was a transmedia extension of *Granito: Every Memory Matters*, and he even texted me to ask if I could provide him with more documents or information about it.

When we think about temporal engagement, we should also take into consideration the time frame within which the workshops and this research project were conducted. Since it was during the commemoration period in Rwanda, their engagement with the stories in the projects also led to different conversations in relation to remembrance and forgiveness. Therefore, temporal engagement can be associated with the experience of the users, which was shorter or longer, as well as with the time period in which they engaged with the projects. The fact that the projects are very relevant due to their topic can turn transmedia experience into a long-lasting engagement. When users engage with the transmedia projects, it can be either momentary or deeper, extended in time.

### ***Sensorial engagement***

Transmedia interaction requires multi-sensorial engagement. And while some sensorial experiences can increase or strengthen, others remain limited. Pratten (2015) observes that “audiences are at first suspicious of new content and ... if we are to draw them in and lead them to the highest level of engagement – contributing to the canon – then we must resolve their reservations and satisfy their needs at each stage” (p. 138). From the design point of view, the participants firstly smelled and tasted, in other words, discovered the content of the projects. Later on, they experienced the stories through the sense of touch while navigating the projects and seeing, viewing, and engaging with them while navigating through them. Finally, they explored them by listening and participating in the storyworld.

The participants’ sensorial engagements differed in the projects depending on their design and the content. For example, as a silent film, *Scars of Cambodia* offered a visual language of silence where the storyteller shared his story through body movements and mime. Some students stated that it was an interesting experience to just watch the moves and to try to understand what he went through. The mystic story behind the movements and the participants’ lack of background knowledge about the Cambodian genocide led them to navigate the storyworld and engage with their auditory sense by watching other videos they found about the genocide in order to gain more information. In another project, Love Radio, the fictional part of the story did not offer any visual content for the story, which allowed the participants to use their imagination to depict the story.

### ***Perceptual engagement***

Perceptual engagement can be understood as the representation and portrayal of what is perceived through senses; therefore how participants engaged with transmedia projects determined, changed, or challenged their perceptions and also allowed them to compare and contrast these with their own experiences and knowledge. For example, the participants watching the documentaries and reading and navigating through the related texts with reference to the Guatemalan and Cambodian genocide changed their perception of the concept of “genocide,” which had formerly only been linked to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda that they knew about.

On the other hand, their knowledge of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda allowed them to analyze and create transmedia texts in relation to their perceptions while interacting with these projects. It also generated certain emotions such as sadness, pride, or empathy. The participants recognized and identified the emotions in what they read, watched, and created. Apart from the content, we see perceptual engagement during the process of digital text production in the workshops, where the participants recreated and reconstructed these emotions in a different perception by amalgamating sadness, anger, empathy and humor through memes. The transmedia engagement also changed the perception of those participants who had thought that memes could not be created about such sensitive and serious topics as genocide. There were also negotiations of perception based on epistemics (realistic vs. unrealistic), which deal with what is presented and perceived, but which are also linked to whether the topic is presented (un-)realistically.

### ***Creative engagement***

“Creativity” in digital spaces is contested in certain cases. For example, making a collage or creating a meme with easy production means such as meme generator websites might not be considered creative by some people. I argue, however, that understanding the subcultural characteristics of digital art and engagement in making memes, collages, and videos require creativity in digital spaces. Using and recontextualizing content in a way that requires creativity and vernacular understanding was one of the main skills that the participants in this research had. The digital tools enabled or drove them to use their creative skills. For example, when one of the students declared that he wanted to create a meme about genocides, other students were shocked to hear that he was going to create a meme about such a serious topic. However, after the students observed the creative process of making memes, they also started to learn and create various memes using humor, creativity, vernacular knowledge, and digital tools. During this process, the participants brainstormed and created digital content to address central topics and underlying aspects of the projects through inventive methods such as remixing, appropriation, adaptations, imitations, etc. This process is directly linked with the transmedia competencies they have or those required during their interaction. Thus creative

engagement does not only refer to the creative process itself, but also to how they create, make sense of, and share the content.

### ***Critical engagement***

Critical engagement is one of the key elements of transmedia engagement where users come across different kinds of information, stories, and opinions. While critically engaged with the transmedia projects, the participants acquired or developed the ability to gather, make sense of, and use knowledge in an adaptive and flexible situation through exploring, researching, synthesizing, problem-solving, and decision-making. First of all, the participants were exposed to different knowledge or facts through transmedia navigation that they would not otherwise have been exposed to in traditional settings due to the sensitivity of the topic or the authoritarian regime. For example, some participants in the workshop discovered contesting narratives that did not align with the dominant discourses in Rwanda. Some of them did more research into these narratives and immersed themselves into stories that they had never been taught or that they had never heard.

In some cases, critical engagement was topic-dependent. For example, the stories about justice systems and practices were very interesting to some participants. One participant engaged herself in the transmedia expansion of the Granito project where the webisodes about the trials of Ríos Montt were presented. She discussed them, did research, and created content about the justice system and its importance for the peacebuilding process in post-genocide societies. She criticized and reflected on different systems and their advantages and disadvantages. Critical and creative thinking, as well as self-awareness, were essential elements of this process. Through their critical engagement, the participants could voice their concerns and opinions related to it. In addition, using humor as a tool for critical engagement was a dominant aspect of transmedia engagement with relation to peacebuilding. How the participants depicted genocide and the peacebuilding process through memes revealed their approach to the reconciliation process and criticism of the elders' approach to dealing with peacebuilding in post-genocide societies. Furthermore, critical engagement included reflections on the technical and ethical problems they encountered during

their human-computer interaction and on their acquisition of research and problem-solving skills.

### ***Civic engagement***

In the transmedia storytelling workshops, none of the students were forced to create digital content. I explicitly told the participants that they could create anything they wanted to if they wished to do so. Most of the participants were enthusiastic about creating something, either on their own or after encouragement from their friends. The content they created was related to topics such as peacebuilding, justice, and forgiveness, which were relevant to their communities. Their narratives built an ecosystem of content and networks that contributed to the transmedia universe of the projects they engaged with. Additionally, the content they created was addressed to various stakeholders in their communities, leading to community-building for social, political, and cultural purposes. Although not all practices of online civic engagement did so, some of them led to transmedia activism. Not all nonfiction transmedia projects are designed for activist purposes, but the user-generated content with reference to them can have activist attributes. For example, some participants in the workshop used hashtags such as #justiceforGuatemala or shared their singing video “Never Again Rwanda” on YouTube with quotations from peace activists and also hashtags such as #peaceforever. Therefore peace activism became a part of their online civic engagement where they built a community for sharing and exchanging their opinions about what peacebuilding means to them and what it entails.

## **6.4. Overview of the results**

In this chapter, I discussed how the young people who were participants in my research interacted and engaged with transmedia storytelling projects in different ways. I also analyzed the user-generated content they produced in terms of how it occupies a place in the transmedia world by building on Genette’s (1997) notion of paratextuality, as well as its content to understand how the young people negotiated the meaning and characteristics of peacebuilding and reconciliation through these transmedia narratives. But in order to see the big picture of how young people participate in digital spheres or with digital technologies, a deeper analysis of digital

inclusion that considers the accessibility and affordability of digital means, transmedia competencies, and political and social contexts is needed. Therefore, the next chapter is an ethnographic approach to digital inclusion. Drawing on focus group discussions, individual interviews with participants, and also observations made at schools and other relevant spaces such as students' homes and internet cafes, the following chapter examines the important factors surrounding the (non-)use of digital technologies and their implications in society. It also touches upon the socio-economic and political circumstances in Rwanda and their impact on the digital inclusion of Rwandan youth.





## **7. BEYOND ACCESS: THE DIGITAL INCLUSION OF RWANDAN YOUTH**

After addressing how the participants navigated the transmediality, engaged in the narrative in various ways, and contributed to the narrative by generating the content, this chapter aims to answer the questions related to the third objective of this project: an analysis of the different levels of digital inclusion of the young Rwandans who participated in this research and the implications this has for the peacebuilding process in Rwanda. Thus, this chapter goes deeper into their participation in digital networks by analyzing different factors that influence the digital inclusion of youth in Rwanda. Firstly, I focus on the dimensions of access: where the participants access the Internet, what devices they use to access it, what platforms they use, and what all of this means from the point of view of access. I take into consideration the inequalities among young people, such as socio-economic differences and their consequences on the accessibility and affordability of the Internet and digital technologies. In each subsection, external agents and restrictions will be also discussed. Later, the analysis shifts to digital disengagement, that is, cases in which youth with access and affordances reject or resist using digital technologies for various reasons. I believe including digital disengagement in the analysis of digital inclusion brings out a different perspective to the use of the digital because although the reasons for this disengagement can be unprompted and deliberate, they can also be unconscious. The third section analyzes the participants' different uses of digital technologies based on personal and situational interests. Finally, I explore the transmedia skills the young people need to have in order to navigate the digital environments.

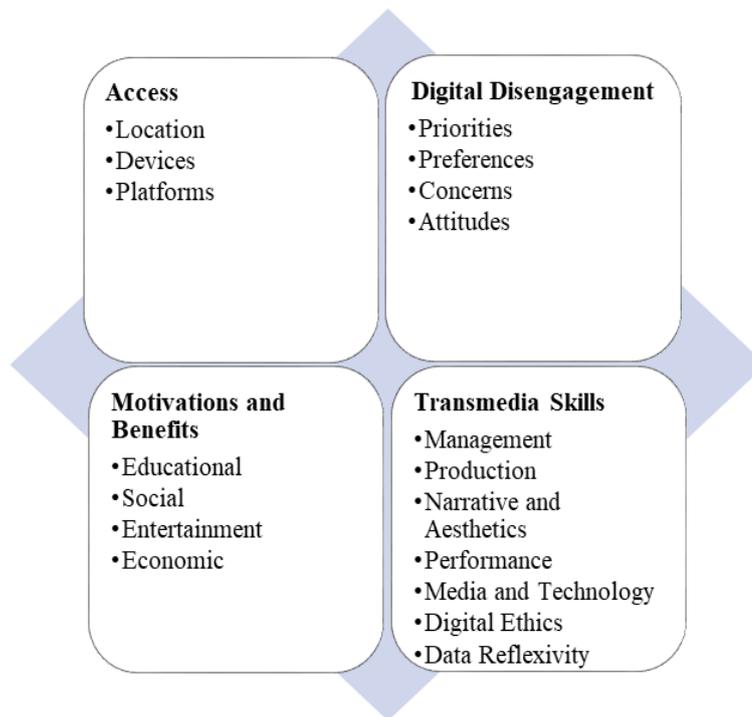


Figure 32. Facets of digital inclusion

## 7.1. Dimensions of access: Inequalities and restrictions

Having access to digital technologies and the Internet is the initial step to digital inclusion (Ragnedda & Mutsvairo, 2018). Examining how and where people have Internet access (or not), which devices or platforms they use, or the quality and/or quantity of their access reveal the structural inequalities, needs, and interests of users or external factors that have an impact on their acquisition of certain digital skills. In this section accessibility and affordability will be examined in terms of three elements: locations, devices, and platforms. The data from the questionnaires will be corroborated with the qualitative analysis of the interview, focus group data, and observations I made during my interactions with different stakeholders throughout the fieldwork.

### ***Between home and school: Locations of access***

While accessing the Internet at home allows students to familiarize themselves with digital technologies and media according to their own pace and conditions and facilitates informal learning processes (Livingstone, 2003), schools also play an important role in enabling young people, especially marginalized ones, to have access

when they do not otherwise have opportunities to do so on a daily basis. All of the schools I collaborated with during my fieldwork were equipped with an Internet connection and computer labs. However, there were some differences regarding the infrastructure and the rules that the students had to obey. As was mentioned earlier, one of the five schools was public while the rest were private. Being a private school did not necessarily mean high-quality technology or Internet access. For example, one of the private schools, which appealed to middle-income families due to being much more affordable than the other private schools, provided students a lab with desktop computers. However, during our workshops, we faced many problems such as a slow Internet connection or computers not working. When I asked them if the computer lab was always like this, the participants asserted that the school did not fix the computers despite the students's requests for them to do so. Similar problems also occurred in the other schools. Additionally, regarding their use of computer labs, most students complained about the restrictions and lack of hours in their school schedule to use the computers to do research. For example, Cynthia, a student at a private school, stated:

I use complab that has Wi-Fi like, once a month. Can you imagine like 20 minutes? They say "Go on, search. After 20 minutes that they come and their Wi-Fi is really low. When you're searching takes like five minutes to load. (Cynthia, female, 16, individual interview)

Like Cynthia, I also experienced the low Wi-Fi quality during the workshops I conducted at schools. According to the participants, few students are allowed to use the computer labs available at schools and for a very limited amount of time. This is the case also in private schools, where the use of ICTs is promoted and applied more than in public schools. For example, at the private boarding school where I conducted my research, the students stay throughout the school term in dorms and are not allowed to have phones or computers. In this school, only ICT students or students taking computer classes take advantage of the computer labs and visit the labs regularly; when other students want to use the computers, they need to go through a lengthy permission process to do so. Sandra, one of the students at a private school, mentioned that since she doesn't study ICT, her use of computer labs is limited:

At school, for me, I study history, economics, and geography. So it's HEG [History, Economics and Geography], so we don't often study ICT, so we don't use the computer lab. And even if we used to, it's just for some research from school like history. So we use it for like 30 minutes or something. (Sandra, female, 15, individual interview)

Many participants like Sandra also complained about the fact that generally, it's boys who study computer science. This was also a discussion topic in one of the focus group discussions in which two of the male participants studied ICT; they agreed with this assessment. Since ICT and computer science classrooms predominantly consist of boys, this results in a gender divide in technology use at schools. Private schools tend to prioritize the use of ICTs in the classrooms more and have more means to support their students, while the availability and use of digital technologies and equipment is more limited in public schools. But the use of these devices and the Internet is restricted to school work and research even in private schools. As Isabella, a 17-year old girl studying at a private school, mentioned, the students are not authorized to do personal research.

A lot of schools, including mine, have Wi-Fi. But the students are not allowed to use them. Like even if you go to a computer lab, you do what they told you to do. Not any personal research, not any, like you do just what the teacher told you. And I don't say this only for the people who study computers. I'd even say a person who studies tech tells the person "Please go to the computer lab and search this." No, that's not how it works. Only people studying computers use the compound. And I think others should too because they really need the research. (Isabella, female, 17, individual interview)

Isabella's comments are similar to the opinions of other students about the use of computer labs being limited to ICT students. She also adds that personal needs cannot be met because they are generally not authorized to use digital technologies for their own necessities, but only for the work that is given by their teachers. Indeed, social media apps and sites are blocked from the Wi-Fi network for the students at school. Some students, such as 14-year old Daniel, do not agree with these rules:

They probably don't even check, they just say, "Oh, this is YouTube, students have fun on this, let's block it." You know, we should have fun through school, so yeah. (Daniel, male, 14, focus group #2)

This came as no surprise to me since when I visited the schools and explained my research to school principals, their first reaction was to announce how content they were with the new regulations regarding the prohibition of phones at schools. My informal conversations with teachers also revealed this attitude: they would complain about how addicted their students were to mobile phones and the Internet, and how these technologies distracted them from studying and obtaining good grades. On the other hand, they were unaware of how and why students utilize their phones. However, some students had come up with their own strategies to "hack" the school system. For instance, during our interview, Victor (a 16-year-old) admitted that he uses a VPN to break the rule of social media prohibition at his school:

Like when you're in school. The Internet doesn't work to go to YouTube. Sure, you turn the VPN on and use it.

Victor studies at an international private school in Kigali. Even the private schools have to follow the prohibition of mobile phones, but his school allows students to bring their personal tablets and laptops. So he uses a VPN regularly to access social media on his tablet or computer. He also sometimes shares his tablet or computer with his close friends who do not use a VPN or haven't bought one because they are afraid of their parents' reactions. Neither Victor's parents nor his teachers are aware of his use of a VPN at school. When I asked him about his teachers, he said:

They probably don't even know these tricks. They use the laptop just to teach us and probably when they get home they just throw it and stuff.

Coming from a prominent family, Victor was one of the most privileged students in my research who had an unlimited Wi-Fi connection. Unlike him, many participants did not have Wi-Fi or unlimited Internet access in their homes. Therefore, an even larger digital gap appears when it comes to home access. Even those who had Wi-Fi would tend to have limited access because of the high prices or their parents' concerns about the overuse of the Internet. They purchase "internet bundles" on their phones, which

include limited data plans where students rely on the pay-as-you-go tariffs. When they do not have bundles, they depend on other family members to share their Wi-Fi.

It's only my mama has Wi-Fi and then we can actually control, like when she's out of the house, you don't have Wi-Fi, she comes back late at night. So you use your phone for like two hours if you don't have money to buy a bundle. (Gianna, female, 16, focus group #3)

As Gianna says, some students depend on their parents' connections for the Internet. When it comes to restrictions from parents, it was not very common for parents to curb their digital use. But this mostly depended on how the students performed at school. There was a constant negotiation with the parents. For example, when asked about her parents' restrictions, Diane (a 14-year-old female) said, "No, they [parents] don't [restrict my use of it]. It doesn't actually affect my studies because I perform well in class. So they can't complain." In general, families are less likely to restrict their children from using digital technologies; on the contrary, they try to support them and give them responsibility in terms of managing their time and online interaction: "Before they used to [restrict us], but after they realized we also need it, and they are like, 'as long as you don't overuse this and study it is OK.'" (Michelle, female, 17, individual interview).

In most cases, home is the place for unrestricted engagement with digital networks, while the school provides infrastructure and devices for those who don't have them, but implements regulations to control and moderate the use of digital devices and the Internet. Besides their homes and schools, the Kigali public library is a space where students frequently went to in order to use the computer and unlimited Internet access. Most of the students who participated in the workshops stated that they go to the library to use the Internet and computers. However, geographical limitations emerge when they live far from the library and do not have the time and resources to go and use the facilities. Although they were very few, some students also go to their friends' houses to use Wi-Fi. There were also some who visited Internet cafes, such as Cynthia:

I go to internet cafes. Mostly I found there boys. I don't know why I find only boys there [...] they go there for updates. They go there to see some news about

football and basket. But for girls, there are few going there. (Cynthia, female, 16, individual interview)

However, some of these spaces can be limited, as Cynthia shared. Internet cafes are places where mostly boys go to play games or upload applications. I had the chance to observe these spaces, which were close to my home. I needed to use these “cybercafes” when my home access was not good enough to download documents or when I needed to print them. I had informal conversations with users of these spaces who helped me when I was struggling or when I asked them how things worked, among other situations. It was apparent that almost all of the visitors were young men who came together with their friends to play video games. But from time to time, I would see a young women who only came for a short time.

In terms of locations of access, the complexity of context enables students to adapt to different circumstances and adopt certain skills to navigate through these complexities. In some cases, they apply particular tactics to turn things to their advantage. However, socio-economic inequalities and social exclusion determine to a great extent where young people can have access, or not, and how they strive against the disadvantages they face in order to take advantage of opportunities in an unequal fight.

### ***Mobile youth: Devices for access***

Turning now to the devices the participants used, the results of the questionnaire manually filled in by participants show that young people from high-income households make use of a diverse range of technological devices such as laptops, tablets, and the latest model mobile phones, but those from low-income families are less likely to personally own a device. Figure 33 demonstrates the gap in device ownership between private and public school students.

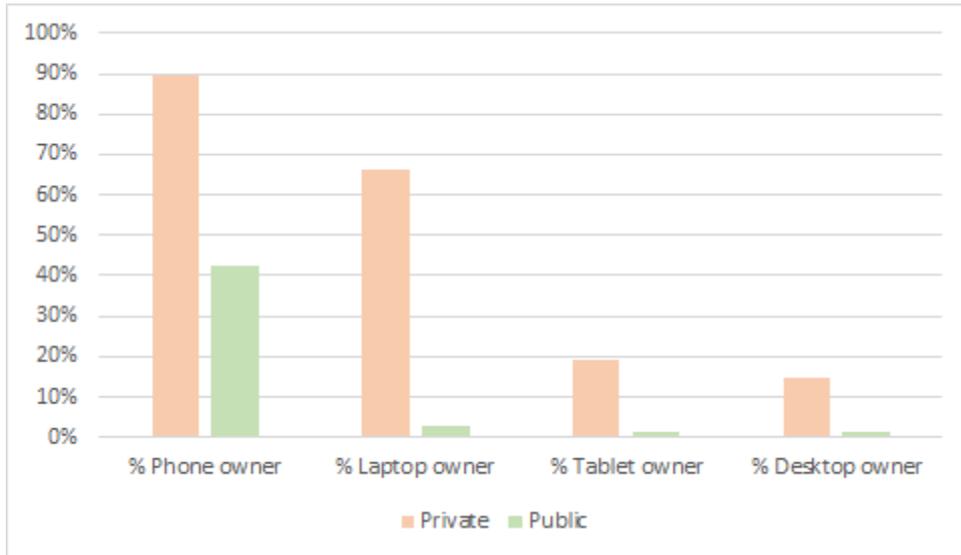


Figure 33. Survey results for device ownership by school type

When the school data is analyzed separately, the gender difference in terms of device ownership was revealed to be greater in the public school, where none of the female students owned laptop, desktop, or tablet and the rate of phone ownership was very low compared to that of males (see Figure 35). On the other hand, in private schools, there was no significant difference between genders (see Figure 36). In fact, female participants' ownership seemed to be higher than that of the male participants. This could be due to the fact that some of the male participants were the youngest ones in the group and as a result, their parents tried to control their usage of phones more. However, even though they didn't own a phone, they had at least one of the other devices and used it regularly at home.

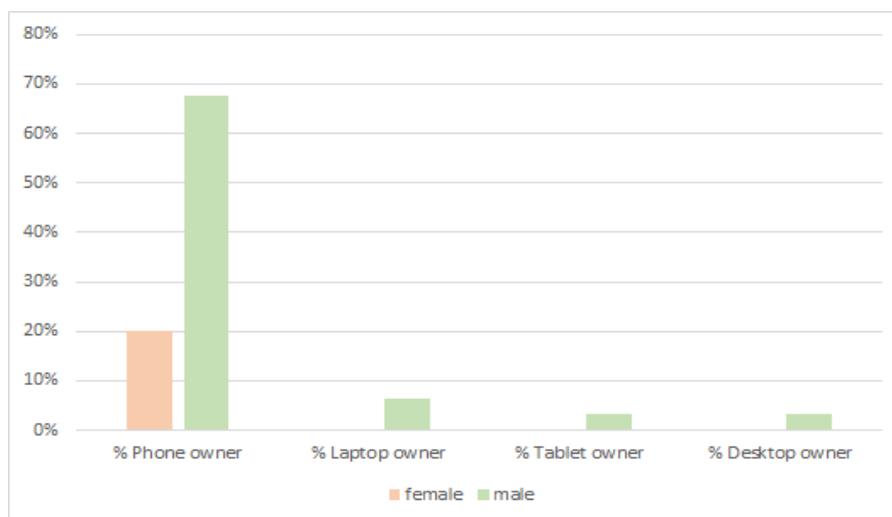


Figure 34. Survey results for device ownership by gender in the public school

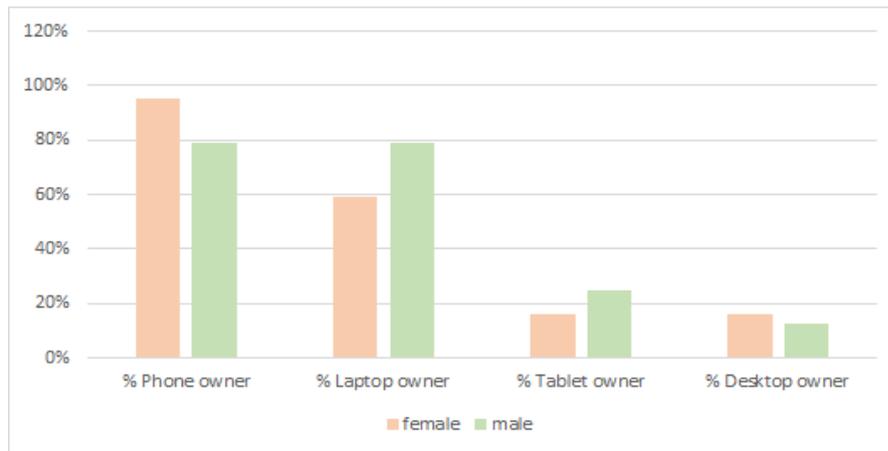


Figure 35. Survey results for device ownership by gender in the private schools

In terms of ownership of devices, female participants from low-income households were the most vulnerable group. But this did not necessarily mean they didn't have any access. During my informal conversations at school with students in the public school after I received their questionnaires, I realized they had ticked the boxes of social media platforms they used but at the same time had indicated that they did not have a device. So I asked some of these students how it was that they used these social networks. One of them, Sonia (a 15-year-old girl) answered, "No, I don't have a telephone but I use my dad's." Therefore, those from underprivileged backgrounds were more likely to share devices with family members. Consequently, the socio-economic status of an individual creates a gap in digital inclusion, which is more likely to echo the social inclusion levels in the society. In the case of Rwanda, gender equality exists for the privileged and elite.

When it comes to those who enjoyed a variety of devices, their use of different tools was determined by their locations of access as well. For instance, students were more likely to use phones at home than computers. Even if they owned a laptop, they used their phones for chatting, researching, studying, and watching videos, among other activities.

But I use it [the computer] mostly at school. Yeah. Because when I'm home, I prefer using my phone most of the time when it's not a huge task. (Chantal, female, 16, individual interview)

Although students prefer mobile phones in general, the use of digital devices is regulated at schools. For instance, the “Prohibiting students from using mobile telephones” directive was put in practice in July 2018 by the Ministry of Education. It applies to both private and public primary and secondary schools. The instructions state that “A student is prohibited from using a mobile telephone at school or during extracurricular activities” and continue with this statement: “The management of the school and parents must explain to students the risks of using mobile telephones at school such as the distraction, attraction to drugs and other misbehavior attitudes.” These measures overlook the potential benefits and skills the student might acquire by using mobile while emphasizing only the negative aspects of it. Additionally, instead of focusing on how to eliminate negative outcomes and turn them into positive actions, the government prefers to remove the overall use of mobile phones.

When I was at the schools, I was usually given a space in the teachers’ room to store my equipment, so I had the chance to have conversations with teachers about the school regulations. Although some teachers strongly agreed with the rule, others did not find it practical for various reasons. One conversation, in which a teacher at a private school told me that most students came to the teachers’ room after school to call their parents and let them know if they had any extracurricular activities that day, was particularly significant. One day she showed a student the landline phone they have in the office and told him he could use it to call his parents, but the student did not know how to use it and was perplexed for almost 10 minutes until he asked for help from his teacher. So it is obvious that there is a general gap in terms of the use of digital technologies and it is the older generations who implement restrictive measures on young generations whose use of these gadgets and tools differs from theirs.

After I realized the young people were interested in using mobile phones, I received special permission for workshop attendees to bring their phones to school in the second workshop, which resulted in a more vivid, fun, and interactive experience compared to the first workshops, where the students could only use computers. The Rwandan youth appear to be mobile in terms of their use of digital technologies; this is not only because some cannot afford desktop computers, but also due to the fact

that even those with laptops prefer to use their phones to do homework, prepare school presentations, and watch TV series and movies.

Regarding the prohibition of mobile phones at school, the participants were unanimous in the view that the rule was not meaningful since they could use other devices. For instance, in a focus group discussion, Anita (a 16-year-old female) said, “they didn’t help us by taking them away because even a laptop can distract me. And then the funny thing is they let us have tablets, so it doesn’t make sense.” Some students also associate it with the “old mindset” that the school administration and the authorities have about mobile phones. They also question this decision:

So as preventing phones, that was kind of their old mindset kicking in. They just think, like, phones are distraction. I think there is more to a phone than just being a distraction because phones have helped us with a lot of stuff. If they are going to take that away from us, they should give us a more tangible reason than just being a distraction. (Pacifique, male, 15, individual interview)

All in all, in terms of device ownership and the use of devices, Rwandan young people preferred to go mobile rather than to use computers. However, this preference only existed among those who have the resources to afford a variety of devices. The participants from low-income households were forced to do so since the primary device that the families purchased or owned was mobile phones. While private school students had personal ownership of devices, public school students, especially female participants, tended to share devices with their parents and siblings.

### ***“Facebook is outdated”: Platforms and trends***

With the emergence of new technologies and new social networking platforms, young people have more options to socialize, produce content, engage in, and benefit from them. However, as in the case of places of access, quality of access, and owned devices, the digital platforms that are used among the participants in this research reveal that cultural capital and socio-economic class continue to differentiate the opportunities that young people have (or lack). Different platforms are used among Rwandan youth, yet again differences prevail between public and private school students. Why these platforms are used and what kinds of benefits young people

obtain from them will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Here, on the other hand, I will try to shed light on the consequences of the lack of opportunity to expand online participation due to the gender divide and socio-economic inequalities, which results in sharing phones as well as difficulties with keeping up with trends.

As is seen in Figure 36, the most used social networking platform among public school students was Facebook, while private school students preferred Instagram as their interaction site. The social networking sites were more likely to be diverse among those from high-income households, however, there was less diversity and more unidirectionality among the students from low-income households. Therefore, being “digitally included” on social networking sites is not only closely linked to access to devices, but also depends on the trends among different social classes.

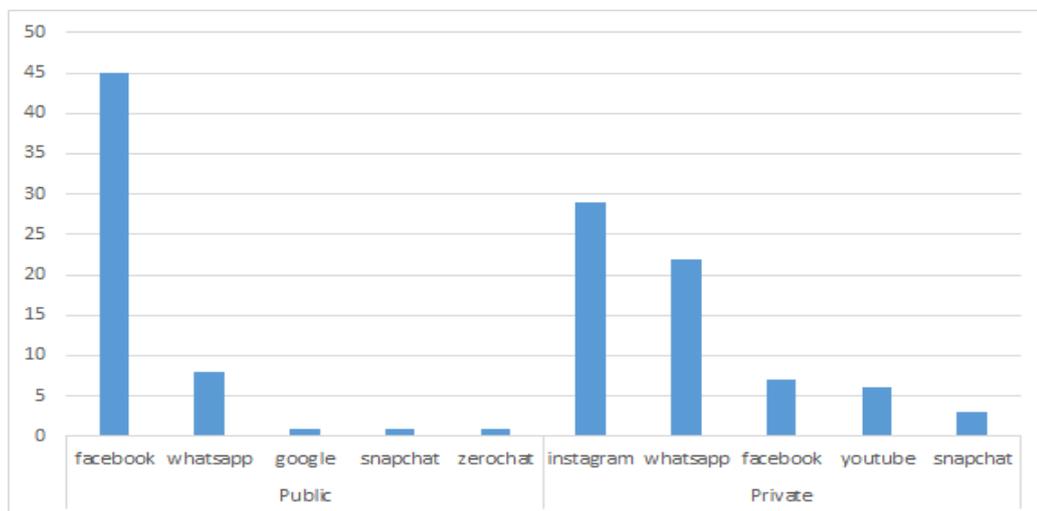


Figure 36. Survey results for mostly used digital platforms and apps

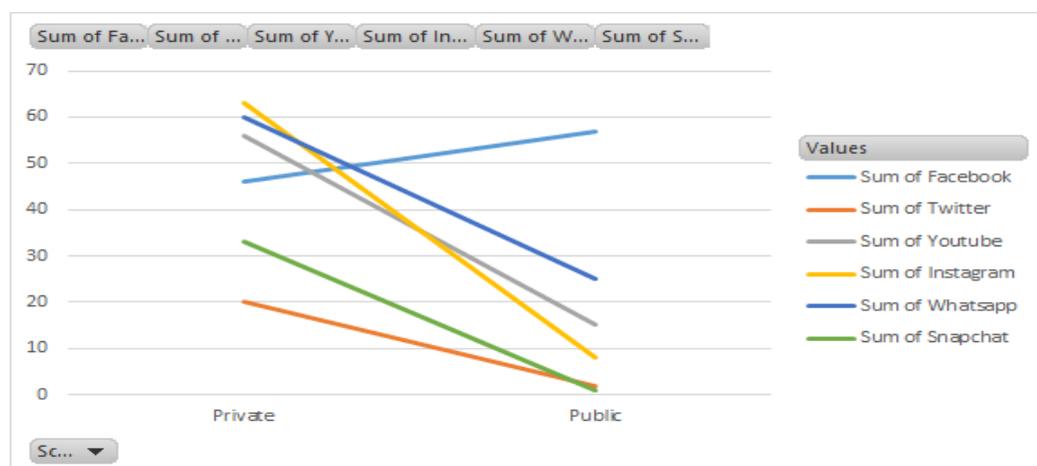


Figure 37. Survey results for the use of digital platforms

While Facebook was popular among public school students, many private school students stated that Facebook was “out of fashion”, “for old people”, “not trendy”, or “cheap”:

I used to use Facebook. You don't use Facebook anymore. Like, OK, some people do. But, like me and people my age rarely use Facebook. (Joseph, male, 17, individual interview)

Many students like Joseph pointed out the generational differences of Facebook use when they stated older people such as their parents and teachers use it. For them, it was not as “trendy” as it was for the older generations since there were new applications they used such as Instagram and Snapchat. Although some participants did not use Facebook or did not even have an account, others who did have an account used it, though not often, for some information-gathering such as checking the birthdays of their acquaintances:

Facebook is just kind of outdated. I don't use it much. I use it every now and then. Like, just to check whose birthday it is. (Patrick, male, 16, individual interview)

However, among those who did not own any device, who were mainly public school students, 90% of male participants and 70% of female participants stated they used Facebook or WhatsApp. This was a result of phone sharing in families, which allows young people to connect to the Internet and social media from time to time. But most of the time that meant they had to use the social networking sites that their parents had on their phones. Additionally, apps such as Snapchat require posting regularly or being connected frequently to catch up with the posts, which might not be possible with phone sharing. Using these platforms also heavily depended on the trends among their friends. For instance, Isabella admitted to using other applications such as Instagram to communicate with her friends:

I don't use Facebook anymore, I don't know, I just feel like all my friends how I used to communicate with people on Facebook. They all use Instagram, they use Snapchat and WhatsApp, so that's why I quit Facebook and I talk to them and on other social media. (Isabella, female, 17, individual interview)

Thus students sharing phones had to conform to their parents' trends, while those who owned devices and regularly connected to the Internet and social media adapted to the new trends defined by the people surrounding them. There were many reasons for adopting certain kinds of spaces, devices, or platforms among young people in this research. Socio-economic differences, gender inequalities, measures taken by the authorities, popular trends, and rapid change of the media ecology and how quickly people adapted to it were all intertwined, thus creating a complex setting for different uses of digital technologies. Consequently, there is also a need to analyze how participants in this research engaged or disengaged with digital environments. In the following section, I will focus on the perceived disadvantages of digital technologies among the participants, where they stemmed from, and how this affected their disengagement with digital technologies.

## **7.2. Digital disengagement: Voluntary non-use and attitudes**

In the previous section, I presented the access the participants have in different locations, the devices they use, and their impact on their use of social networking sites as well as the impact of socio-economic status and the gender divide on these dimensions. In this section, I will touch upon the reasons young people disengage themselves from digital technologies following Kuntsman and Miyake's (2019) research on digital disengagement. Digital disengagement can be influenced by factors that users cannot avoid or overcome, such as a lack of infrastructure or unavailability of digital technologies, as well as users' own choices not to use these technologies even though they have the means or skills to exploit and take advantage of them (Helsper, 2008). Socio-economic inequalities and restrictions at home and schools were already mentioned in the previous section. Therefore, this section will be focused on the voluntary non-use of digital spheres where those who have access and tools don't use certain digital networks and technologies not due to restrictions but their own volition. I will explain how participants interpret or regard the "disadvantages" of digital technologies and whether this impacts their attitudes towards their use of the digital devices and platforms.

### ***Perceived disadvantages of digital technologies***

In many conversations about digital technologies, the participants in this research discussed the disadvantages of digital technologies that affect their lives and the lives of people around them. I identified six common themes: digital technologies as a *distraction* in educational settings, an *obstacle for socialization* in offline spaces, places for encountering *inappropriate content*, a threat to one's *safety*, a reason for deteriorating *mental and physical health*, and, lastly, a tool for *division*.

Distraction as one of the disadvantages of digital technologies was the most common element brought up by the students. Apart from the use of mobile phones and their prohibition at school as mentioned in the previous section, the students mentioned how computers and tablets can also become a distraction both in classrooms and at home while doing homework or preparing for exams. Therefore, some students disengage themselves from digital technologies during their exam period or when they need to work hard for school lectures and get good grades. For example, one student mentioned how she was tempted to check her social media accounts while she needed to be studying.

If I was given the freedom to use and to go on social media, between in-class hours or even at night where we are supposed to be reading, I would not read. Go online instead. Because there are very many temptations: "What did my friend say about this topic? What did she comment?" Yeah, it's distractive. (Gloria, female, 19, individual interview)

A similar view was echoed in another participant's comments: "In the exam period, I actually need to, like, focus, and most of the time I use my phone. So, like, I delete the things that take much more time. I also delete Instagram. I don't use it" (Claudine, female, 16, focus group #1). Thus they prioritize their educational achievements and accomplishments over the time they spend online. However, further conversations revealed that this kind of disengagement originated in the pressure parents and teachers exerted on them regarding success at school or on national exams. Almost all of the students enjoyed spending time on social media, but they also faced dilemmas regarding their academic success; this was mostly encouraged by their parents and the school administration, especially when they were preparing for

national exams. Thus the idea of “distraction” was not something all the students experienced individually, but was rather a statement they heard from their elders. Some students also commented on distraction by stating they can be distracted by anything or that they learned about some topics in different classes through visuals or videos on YouTube.

Another of the six common themes was that of digital technologies as an obstacle for socialization in offline spaces. Some students prioritized socializing and spending time with their friends and families outside without a phone or computers. They believed that online networks are not as impactful as offline spaces for spending time with friends, among others. For example, in our interview with Chantal, a 16-year-old female participant, she stated that she would prefer to socialize with her friends without social media and that they deleted Instagram. When I asked her the reasons for this, she explained:

We have all spent our best moments with our friends at school. Like away from your phone, we get up in the morning, you leave your phone at home when you come to school. Personally, I've had my best moments with my friends. And I don't think I've had any very nice moments on Instagram. [...] So basically, like away from the phone, you can learn about somebody, you learn more about somebody talking to them than you learn more about somebody chatting on Instagram. (Chantal, female, 16, individual interview)

Besides making friends and spending time with them, interacting with family members was also regarded as important. In Rwanda, family life is considered sacred. Therefore many discussions pointed out the importance of the well-being of family life. For example, Robert (male, 16), stated that:

[Digital technologies] make family members busy. So, technology somehow can destroy the happiness of family. For example, you can find your father is busy chatting on Messenger without discussing about the issues of family. Yeah, that is somehow it is a disadvantage (Robert, male, 16, focus group #5)

Robert made this statement in a focus group discussion with his friends. Although it seemed like it was a general statement, later on in our individual conversation, he

explained that his own father prefers to use his phone to spending time with him and his younger siblings. Therefore, taking his father as an example, he disengages himself from digital technologies to spend more time with his siblings in the absence of his father. Therefore, it can be inferred that disengagement stemming from prioritizing socialization with friends and family in offline spaces results from socio-cultural factors. For instance, using digital technologies while elder family members are present is regarded as “disrespectful” by the family members. One student mentioned that when she visits her grandparents in the village for holidays, she does not take her phone for almost a month as “suggested” by her parents.

Another reason some participants cited for their disengagement from online networks was the possibility of interacting with inappropriate content. This was mostly mentioned by young women in this research. For example, while discussing the disadvantages of digital technologies in a focus group, Aimée (female, 18) said that

It destroys the youth minds because there are children or the youth in general even grown-up people who use it to show their nakedness on websites on some social media like taking pictures dancing naked, and that's part of the generation.

Aimée thinks that Rwandan youth, especially women, use social media to show off their bodies. When I had an individual interview with her, I learned that she was a mother to a baby girl and she stated that she wanted to be a “good model” to her. Thus she stopped using social media apps, especially Instagram, because she did not appreciate the “nakedness” that was displayed on these platforms. Her disengagement was caused not only by her disapproval of “naked” bodies, but also by her self-positioning as a mother with values. In this category of disengagement, watching pornography was often mentioned as a disadvantage by the participants. But this time, there were general statements with regards to porn saying it is bad. During individual conversations, most participants mentioned the religious side of watching pornographic content. One student whose father was a priest in a church said he did not want to use digital technologies because of the “dangerous” content. When I asked him what he meant by “dangerous,” he said “sexual things that are religiously bad.” So although it seems like his disengagement seems voluntary, external factors, and most

probably parental restrictions, led to his disengagement.

Digital technologies as a threat to one's safety was another reason the participants in this research mentioned when explaining why they digitally disengaged themselves. Topics such as pedophilia, kidnapping, and terrorism came to the fore during these conversations. For instance, some students mentioned how terrorist groups were "recruiting" young people and "infecting" their minds through social media accounts. Moreover, "kidnapping" girls was thought to be very common, which was why most of the female participants held themselves at a distance from social media.

There are some people that end up pretending to be other people, especially when it comes to the kidnapping. For most girls, it's when they apply for jobs online, especially like modeling jobs or the actress. Like the acting jobs. They usually pretend to be this well-organized company and stuff. But when you end up going to meet them, they end up kidnapping you. (Rita, female, 17, focus group #5)

However, none of these experiences such as Rita's were experienced individually by the participants. When asked if they had experienced such things, the participants asserted that they had either heard it from someone else or had read it on the Internet. Therefore, these reactions towards digital technologies mostly took their source from the "media panic" discourses, that is, emotional and exaggerated criticisms that parents or teachers, as well as people on the Internet, have around the media where young people internalize these narratives. This kind of discourse also prevailed in the discussions about mental health and media among the students. For example, one student stopped using social media after watching a show where there was "a child who is 12 years old and the child spent 21 hours on their phone so they tried to take his phone for about three hours. And the child was basically almost dead and he was [so] depressed he couldn't breathe." (Aline, female, 15, focus group #2). So the notion of addiction and its impact on mental and physical health was brought up many times in the discussions around the disadvantages of digital technologies. However, these discourses were mainly internalized by either younger participants, who tended to interact less with digital technologies due to socio-economic restrictions, or young women, who were seen as more vulnerable by their elders to these kinds of acts such

as “kidnapping” or emotional distress. The latter is also directly associated with the heteropatriarchal characteristics of Rwandan society.

Finally, digital technologies as a tool for division among people was another component considered as a disadvantage of digital technologies that some students cited as a reason for their digital disengagement. This reason might go back to the use of media in dividing the people during the genocide, which all the students were taught about in school. This criticism was targeted at almost all social media applications, but mainly Twitter. One student mentioned that people shared everything on their social media accounts and “showed off” their possessions, which they considered “unnecessary” and a tool for dividing the haves and have-nots. So this student had decided to stop using social media accounts because she did not approve of this kind of behavior.

In some cases, conflicts among people on digital media caused disputes among friends. One example was provided by a student who had had an argument with his friend after his friend shared an anti-vaccine tweet. He deleted his Twitter account after his friend refused to talk to him following this discussion. I asked him whether that would be the case if they had discussed the anti-vaccine issue face-to-face instead of on Twitter, to which he responded, “probably not, maybe I wouldn’t be that harsh.” So most of the digital disengagement induced by the belief of digital technologies “dividing” people resulted from participants’ own emotional and uncalculated reactions to social media. Another example of this happened in one of the workshops where students discussed #pineappleonpizza, #blueandblackdress or #whiteandgolddress (on the suggestion of some students), and #yannyorlaurel on Instagram, which resulted in a heated discussion among the participants. Although one student said “I lost my faith in the Internet, maybe I should quit it,” fortunately, the division did not last long and to my knowledge, none of the participants digitally disengaged after this occasion.

While some of the participants’ digital disengagement stemmed from the perceived disadvantages of digital technologies, there was one category that can be considered to be the result of a more external and sensitive topic: the very nature of the authoritarian regime in Rwanda. In the context of Rwanda, digital disengagement is

also associated with concerns with regards to content sharing or avoiding social media networks because of state surveillance. In this case, the participants' political or civic disengagement online depended on the current situation of the country, where freedom of speech is on shaky ground and the fear of surveillance prevails (Purdeková, 2011), which causes many to move towards self-censorship. As a result, they do not feel comfortable expressing their opinions on political topics and are afraid of sharing news or posts related to them. Some of the students said that they did not feel "comfortable" or "ready" to share anything related to the genocide. For example, a few students told me they did not want to publicly share the content they had created and so instead sent them to me through private communication channels such as WhatsApp or email. Pacifique (male, 15) was one of the students who criticized the government and its regulations with regards to the peacebuilding process in the country. When I asked him if he would share any of his opinions online, he said:

I'm pretty scared that my content might trigger something [...] so maybe I can post something that is not in line with somebody's idea and that might actually start something I don't really like, like probably an online argument. (Pacifique, male, 15)

Another student reported her fear of sharing and engaging online politically due to the government's surveillance of social media platforms:

The digital media here in Rwanda, when you give kind of information like that [against the government], they go and hack you because they can see where you have written it. They can start tracking you and when they find you, very big trouble. So in order to live in peace you just keep quiet. (Cynthia, female, 16, individual interview)

So their digital disengagement in terms of political participation in online spheres is influenced by the political characteristics of Rwanda, where the authoritarian regime and its regulations intimidate some of the participants. In addition to the political reasons, there were also socio-economic and cultural reasons behind students' disengagement from online networks. Additionally, the response and reactions of students towards digital technologies were occasionally shaped by popular discourses or widespread arguments over the impacts of digital technologies on young people's

daily lives. Sometimes their disengagement stemmed from the implications on their elders or that the media presented, especially with regard to social media and the use of phones and their perceived disadvantages. This led to ambivalence among the students, who also believed in the advantages of digital technologies, but rejected and resisted them for many reasons.

By saying that these young people avoided social networking sites because of “moral panic,” I do not mean to make light of the dangerous and harmful uses of digital technologies. It is certain that digital technologies come with advantages and disadvantages, but instead of isolating oneself completely from the digital networks, a more nuanced approach to eliminate the danger of these networks could be adopted individually, institutionally, nationally, and internationally. The young Rwandans in this research either disengaged themselves from the Internet altogether or acquired certain skills to manage their online presence and participation, which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

### **7.3. Use of digital technologies: Motivations and benefits**

The participants who have access and affordances use digital technologies for different reasons and motivations. They incorporate digital devices and media into their lives based on various interests. In this section, the main motivations and interests of these young people will be discussed. Based on the data collected, four groups of uses have been identified: *social use*, *educational use*, *entertainment-related use*, and *economy-related use*. These categories are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are closely intertwined and transversal. The perceived advantages of digital technologies are directly related to the participants' use of digital technologies and media and the benefits they derive from them.

#### ***“Cheaper than getting a flight”: The social use of digital technologies***

Based on the participants' responses, it appears that most of them used digital technologies as a means of communicating and socializing. The results show that social networks such as WhatsApp were a key communication platform the youth used to have conversations every day. They used their mobile phones, messaging, and

video calling apps and social media to keep in touch with their friends and families and to have one-to-one or group calls, which allow them to maintain and strengthen their relationships. Many participants had friends or family members living abroad, which made it difficult for them to see each other face-to-face; therefore digital technologies enabled them to reconnect, as they were “cheaper than getting a flight,” as one of the students said. The young people from higher and middle-income households enjoyed these conveniences more than those who were from low-income families. However, even those who shared phones with other family members took advantage of the socializing aspect of digital networks.

I talk with my friends on Facebook and I talk with my cousins and my family on WhatsApp cause some of them who are not in Rwanda, outside of Rwanda, I use my daddy's phone to talk with them and communicate with them. (Sonia, female, 15, individual interview)

The young Rwandans commented on posts or liked them with the aim of supporting, creating content, and sharing it on digital networks to provoke interaction and gain recognition, to watch movies and TV series together, and to play video games offline or online as a way of spending time together among others. Furthermore, for some of them, digital environments had become a tool they used to turn their offline disadvantage into an advantage. For example, Michelle, a shy student I interviewed in the garden of the Kigali public library, stated that “I consider myself an introvert. So it’s easy for me to talk to people on the internet” (Female, 17, individual interview). It was true that she was very silent during the workshop and focus group discussion, but she made a meme and shared it on the Instagram account that was created for the workshop. She was happy with the likes she got on her meme. Thus, it can be said that for her, digital technologies have become a way for socializing since she struggles to do so in offline spaces.

This social use of digital technologies as an alternative and cheaper way to physical communication was the most extensive use the participants made of these technologies. Through their communication and the strategies they adopted in online communities, they managed self-presentation by content creation and by sharing, especially on Instagram and Snapchat, maintained or strengthened interpersonal or

intra-group relations with chatting apps such WhatsApp, or created WhatsApp groups to construct belongingness, along with likes, comments, following, befriending on social networking sites, co-creating videos, co-viewing visual content, and playing games together, among others.

***“Now I watch people talk to each other”: Entertainment-related use***

The second most common use was related to the entertainment aspect of the digital networks. The young people in this research listened to music, watched TV series or movies, made videos of themselves singing and dancing, and played video games. YouTube was the most used site for listening to music and watching videos when the Internet was available. Otherwise, they listened to the music they had already downloaded on their phones and accompanied it with their dance: “I use my phone to listen to music and like to dance sometimes” (Sandra, female, 15, focus group #1). Some students also indicated that they spent more time watching videos online than socializing with their friends. The following statement by a student is an example of this case:

Instead of going outside, before you would go outside for entertainment and talk to people and have some fun outside, but now I watch people talk to each other on the internet. People have fun and like “Oh, this is fun.” (Ava, female, 16, individual interview)

Therefore, entertainment through watching videos about people socializing in digital environments drew more attention from some than did socializing in offline and online spaces. Playing games was another common practice and use of digital technologies in terms of entertainment. Moreover, the lack of access did not prevent young people from enjoying the games. As Figure 38 shows, most of the students played games whether or not they had digital devices or access. As mentioned before, many participants stated that they went to the Internet cafe or used their parents’ phones or computers to play games. Games they played included complex video games, mobile games, and offline card games, among others. In some cases, they used the social aspect of digital technologies and included their friends in their games in the form of cooperation, collaboration, and competition.

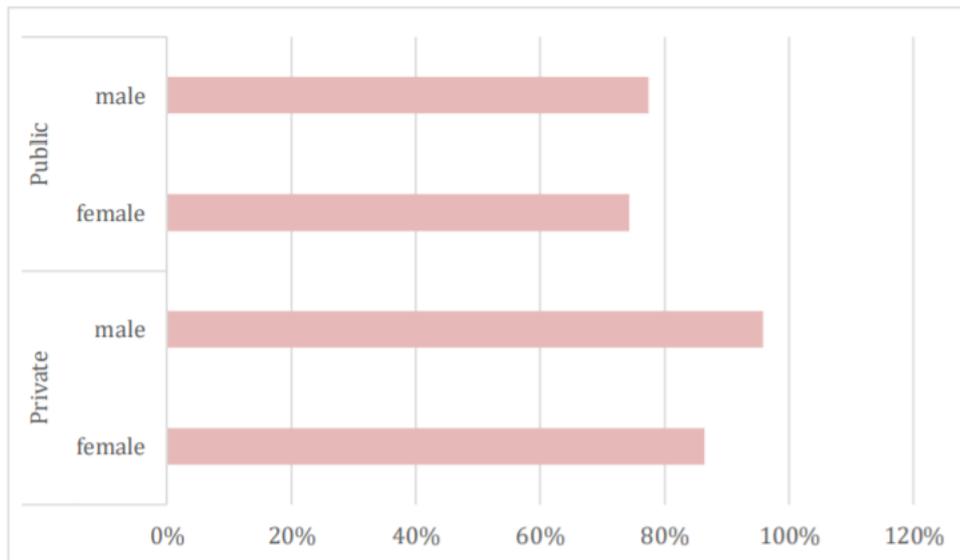


Figure 38. Survey results for playing games by school and gender

Entertainment-related use of digital technologies also allowed young people to explore their hobbies, gain in-depth knowledge, and receive up-to-date information about their passions. One of the students said that he learned mostly everything that he knew about cars through his phone and computer, where he watched videos and followed the news on the recent developments. As well as watching videos related to their passions or with the aim of learning the new trends, watching vlogs was very popular among the students “just for fun.”

*Patrick (male, 16, individual interview):* I watch vlogs.

*Researcher:* What kinds of vlogs do you like?

*Patrick:* David Dobrik, he is wild. David Dobrik. Yeah, he’s wild. Basically he does funny things. And they entertain me. I also watch technology videos. Like, latest phones.

YouTubers also occupy an important big space in the participants’ entertainment-related use of digital technologies. Most of them followed at least one YouTuber account, whether it included prank videos, travel vlogs, the daily lives of celebrities, and so on. In some cases, their interactions were limited to pure entertainment, but in most cases, it turned into infotainment activities, where they enjoyed the shared content, but also learned from it.

### ***“Google is Papa Internet”: The educational use of digital technologies***

According to the responses of the interviewees, they also made use of digital technologies for formal and informal educational practices due to the flexibility of the technologies in terms of the locations they could use them. The ease of carrying the digital devices everywhere with them put “the world and knowledge in [their] hands,” as Martin (male, 17, focus group #5) said. The students used the Internet and the features of different apps and platforms for doing homework, reading their textbooks, using various ways of visualizing data, watching videos about a topic when they were not into reading, using language apps such as Duolingo to learn languages, and following the news. They mainly used the educational aspect of digital technologies as a support to their formal education: “The internet helps us to add more knowledge about what the teacher told us in class.” (Jerome, male, 17, individual interview). In this sense, many of the students used Google as the primary tool for educational purposes: “Google is for everything. Google is Papa Internet” (Gianna, female, 16, focus group #3).

The educational use of digital technologies was also supported by some teachers in that the participants’ homework required them to do research online. In addition, many students stated that they get higher grades when they were able to include information not included in their textbooks. Another educational use was related to finding schools abroad and applying for them. All the students I interviewed expressed their desire to go abroad to study. Thus, those in their final year of school were spending time online to research the departments of universities abroad and how to get accepted to them: “I don’t use [social media] a lot, I am more into my GPA<sup>38</sup> trying to find schools on the Internet” (Martin, male, 17, individual interview).

As was mentioned earlier, mobile phones were the most used digital device among the young people in this research. According to the participants, mobile phones facilitated their interactive group work through WhatsApp, the exchange of homework, the exchange of knowledge and questions for exams, receiving school news from their

---

<sup>38</sup> GPA: Grade Point Average. This number reflects the students’ overall grade in a course year.

friends, among other uses. Their responses indicate that mobile phones had become support tools in their formal education and in their informal learning process.

### ***No digital knowledge means no gain: Monetizing digital technologies***

Some students reported using digital technologies for economic and career-related reasons. This was quite common among those who came from middle-class households, who turned their digital use into offline outcomes. For instance, those who had many followers on Instagram advertised for big companies in Rwanda and earned money in return. Teta, a 17-year-old participant from a middle-class family, was an Instagram phenomenon who had been earning money through advertisements on her Instagram profile:

I have 36k followers. We started this with my sisters, sharing photos and videos together dancing and singing, but I have the most followers... On my feed I share pictures of myself, but on my story, I share pictures if a company asks me to advertise their things, I just share them on my story and they pay me. (Teta, female, 17, individual interview)

Another example is Sandra, whom I interviewed sitting on the terrace of her family's house. She is a 15-year-old Rwandan girl who described her family as "neither poor nor rich". She told me she was helping her mom sell clothes from her shop through WhatsApp. She also said she loved modeling on Instagram wearing these clothes. Besides earning money through advertisements or modeling, or helping their parents with their business (such as making a logo for the family business or providing support for online banking), some students also use do-it-yourself videos for economic reasons, not to earn money, but rather to save it:

*Researcher:* What kind of YouTube channels do you watch?

*Chantal (female, 16, individual interview):* It's more of... It's more of five-minute crafts I don't know if you know about it.

*Researcher:* Do it yourself kind of thing?

*Chantal:* Yeah, do it yourself. Yeah. I like watching that. Because it actually gives you more ideas and how there are so many things that will waste that are quite useful. You don't need to spend money on new ones.

Like Chantal, there were also other students who watched DIY videos to find “tricks” to spend less money on certain products. For instance, one of the students stated that she watched “natural skin care and make-up” tutorials to learn how to use different fruits, veggies, and flowers to take care of her body. Although she came from a high-income family, she did not want to spend her weekly pocket money and instead used the tricks from these YouTube videos to save her money for other uses.

Overall, there were individual differences, preferences, and motivations for using digital technologies. Social and entertainment-related uses were the most common ways the participants used digital technologies. Educational uses were widely practiced by the youth from high-income families. They tended to spend time online for educational purposes, online courses, school and course applications, and to study together for exams. In addition, the interviews show that those from middle-class families were more likely to spend a greater amount of time online compared to the participants from low and high-income households because they were encouraged to do so by their families and were asked to help with their businesses. This might also be due to the fact that their families put fewer restrictions on them than did the parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds and because they had more material access to digital technologies than did those from low-income families. It was not surprising to see that the political use of digital technologies was almost non-existent except in the form of following the news (most were forced to watch the news with their parents) or sharing posts during the commemoration period in April (most reposted the content created by the official authorities).

Although there were slight dissimilarities in the motivations and aims of uses of digital technologies among the different socio-economic groups, the distinction among them regarding digital skills is difficult to categorize because the motivation, frequency, and level of use of digital technologies did not determine or lead to more digital skills. For example, a low-user student might have a greater variety of digital skills than a frequent-user who utilizes digital technologies unidirectionally. In light of this, the following section will discuss the transmedia skills the young people in this research demonstrated during the workshops, interviews, and focus group discussions.

## 7.4. Transmedia skills

Having explored the motivations of the participants for using digital technologies and the benefits they obtained from this use, I now turn to the transmedia skills they adopted and acquired during their online interactions or which were transferred from their existing offline strategies. In the following sections, the typology created by the Transmedia Literacy project team will be used as the basis of the analysis. As Scolari et al. (2018) indicate, transmedia skills are fluid, therefore it is not possible to assign one set of skills to a certain group of people. However, in the following sections, some parts will nuance the differences among the students when relevant.

### ***Production Skills: From scattered to continuous producing***

When I arrived at one of the schools for the workshop, the vice-principal showed me the classroom they had reserved for us. In his hands was a box with the students' phones in it waiting for them. Since the new regulations did not allow the students to bring their phones, I had special permission from the school principal for the participants to use their phones that day. Some students arrived, grabbed their phones, and started checking their social media notifications. I was waiting on the porch of the classroom for other students to come. At that moment, a bird flew in and perched on the railing. One of the students shouted "Wow! That's a paradise flycatcher, let me take a video!" and he began taking a video of the bird staring at us. In the middle of the video, he started vlogging, taking advantage of having his phone at school, joking with his friends. This was one of the many instances I observed during the workshops where participants utilized digital technologies to produce content spontaneously without any previous plan.

The young people who had the means and advantages to do so exploited opportunities to take photos, make videos, edit them, write texts in Word, make graphs in Excel, create websites, write poems on blogs, create memes on shared accounts, etc. Some of these practices were unprompted or carried out based on situational factors. For instance, when asked what kind of videos they made or photos they took, most of the students' answers revolved around making spontaneous "funny" and

“crazy” daily videos or planned content such as videos made as a result of being challenged to dance, or videos of birthday celebrations.

I do capture videos when me and my siblings are doing crazy stuff [...] and when I want to celebrate someone’s birthday, I download an app then create a small video using their photos. And also just apps that turn your photos to images, drawings. (Michelle, female, 17, individual interview)

As suggested by Masanet et al (2019), the production process being spontaneous or planned was “conditioned by the final goal of the production, which is closely related to dissemination.” Moreover, another determinant factor was linked to aesthetics and the imagined level of entertainment it would lead to in the audiences. Therefore, the students often produced content spontaneously and disseminated it if they believed it was nice or amusing. By the same token, planned productions did not mean they would circulate the content on social media such as YouTube or Instagram. Thus for the production processes, the scattered and continuous content as categories would also be relevant for Rwandan youth. Some of the young people produced digital texts either spontaneously or planned but at intervals based on personal interests such as taking a selfie and posting it on Instagram and on situational interests such as making digital content for homework. For instance, during a focus group discussion, Eugene (male, 16) said, “We had this group presentation when we were studying about the World War. Then they asked us to present it. So we made a video.” So he created a planned content for his homework which did not result from his personal interest. This also shows the importance of digital technologies in classrooms when they are well integrated into the curriculum.

There was also a group of participants constantly producing content in order to sustain and maintain their audiences so as to have more visitors or followers, thus gaining recognition and earnings as mentioned before. This group included the Instagram phenomenon with around 36,000 followers, another Instagram artist with around 10,000 followers, a blogger poet, a painter who shared her paintings online, a YouTuber guitarist, and an admin of a meme account, among others. When young people benefitted from the usage of digital networks in both online and offline realms, they tended to strive to improve themselves in terms of digital skills. Since participants

such as Teta and Sandra turned their digital skills into capital, they made extra efforts to enhance their skills or acquire new ones and followed the recent trends to get more followers, thus earning money. Additionally, they were more likely to improve their production or outreach skills in order to receive more online or offline benefits than their peers who produced content only occasionally.

I make videos maybe miming to a song or videos with my friends just having fun. And then I post them on YouTube and I share the link with hashtags on Instagram. (Gloria, female, 19, individual interview)

Gloria produces digital content regularly, and thus improves her skills to keep up with the trends and reach out to more people. Like Gloria, Jerome also mentioned how he makes videos but also used additional features to make them more attractive to his audience:

I can download music to put on that video [...] it depends on the video. If it's a video when someone is walking and you're taking a video, I can put on "I want to walk with you" and things like that and share it. (Jerome, male, 17, individual interview)

Like in Jerome's case, editing was a significant part of the production process, where young people used filters, apps, or editing tools and programs such as Photoshop, which were very common practices among Rwandan youth. The editing practices were more likely to be developed through peer-to-peer learning or self-taught through videos on YouTube. Moreover, what I observed during our conversations was that young people usually underestimated their production and editing skills. They tended to compare themselves with professionals, even though they had amateur editing skills. Additionally, they deemed themselves incompetent when they used editing features inherent to a social media app instead of using more professional editing programs such as Photoshop.

Sometimes some pictures I take are not clear enough. So just to make them a bit clear lighting. That's it. Not some big editing like pros on Photoshop. (Gianna, female, 16, individual interview)

There was also a gender difference when it came to editing practices. Some girls in this research associated editing selfies and their own photos with dissatisfaction with their body, and thus they avoided editing especially their selfies, saying that they were “learning to be OK with their bodies.” This did not mean they didn’t have editing skills, but rather they were less inclined to edit their photos than boys, which also resulted in an unwillingness to search for, discover, and improve their editing skills or put them into practice. This was engendered by the comments and cyberbullying the female participants faced on social media. According to the participant’s answers, the female participants had more negative comments than did the male participants on their content based on editing.

To be honest, I used to edit before because they had just come out. You know something comes out and you want to try it out, or this picture looks better like this. Then you try it out. And it looks nice. And you post it, but then later you get criticism from the media. “That’s not lipstick. It’s edited.” And there’s these filters that came up early when I had just joined. And my recent account was all mostly based on edited makeup. But now I don’t do that. And maybe it’s because I’m more comfortable with myself, I guess. (Gloria, female, 19, individual interview)

Besides the effects of online interactions on their content, young people’s productions and styles were generally determined and inspired by their favorite “influencers” (Masanet et al., 2019), writers, actors, or sports players who they followed on social media. Most of the participants stated that they try to keep up with new trends on social media by checking the latest posts of Internet celebrities as well. Their inspiration was also supported by the videos of “Edit like a YouTuber” or “Post like an Instagrammer,” which some students admitted that they searched for. However, they were not only influenced by the aesthetic elements of the posts of their exemplars, but also the content of their productions.

My blog is like, I don’t know, a person would find, like, talking about my life and not really my life. Like, not going in deep and, I would put in some quotes that would help a person. [...] Like, what I would search on Wattpad is like an inspiring book that I can read and share and I have this emotional thing. I read a book, like I’d say my favorite author is Joyce Meyer, because she writes true

things like, and she tells you where it's built your life, and in a positive way. So yeah, what I really want is to inspire and give faith to people, like give them confidence, make them feel like they're really worth it. (Isabella, female, 17, individual interview)

When all things are taken into consideration, it can be said that the content young people in Rwanda produce with digital technologies ranges from photos they've taken, videos they've made with tools or apps, audiovisual productions they've edited with programs, to websites they've created. Skills related to coding, modifying software, or using programming languages also exist among the youth, but it was a minority group of students, mainly male participants, who studied ICTs. Young people acquired these skills through peer-to-peer learning or were self-taught through experimentation with the apps or watching videos. Their production skills were largely influenced by the people they follow on social media and the use of these skills were shaped by social constructions in their society.

### ***Managing the self, social relations, and content: "Posting like a Rwandan"***

Young people in this research possessed management skills in terms of their online participation and interactions. Firstly, they made choices in order to govern and handle their offline individual lives and balance them with their online presence. This included figuring out the options and alternatives in their interactions with digital technologies and social media via managing their resources and time. In general, offline inequalities, lack of time and of availability of resources, and coping with emotions and ideologies led to their online preferences. For instance, the inadequacy of the internet quality and quantity caused students to come up with strategies to manage their sources.

Sometimes they [parents] limit the amount of internet every day [...] so if it's more than [the limit], I have to download part of it today or I can download it somewhere else. [...] The internet's not everywhere. So I download music to listen to when I don't have the internet. (Eric, male, 15, individual interview)

Time management was one of the discussions that commonly came up in the focus groups and individual interviews. Besides the restrictions imposed by families and

schools, some participants intentionally tried to curtail their digital media use. As a result, they came up with their own individual techniques to organize their time, such as using time management apps, setting alarms for their daily tasks, creating to-do lists and putting them on their phones screens so that they would see it whenever they used their phones. They also took advantage of the features of social media platforms that enable them to make arrangements in terms of media use.

There is a feature on YouTube where you can actually set a time for like 10 minutes. It gives you a reminder that you spent 10 minutes and that you need to stop. I find that helpful for me. So if that could be on all the apps we use I think, like, when it sends me a reminder, I actually put my phone down and continue doing what I'm supposed to do. (Gianna, female, 16, focus group #3)

Gianna uses YouTube's feature to limit her own use when she needs to focus on other tasks, mostly her studies. Similarly to Gianna, Michelle also uses the "unfollow" feature of Instagram when she thinks the accounts she follows lead her to make excessive use of the app:

I used to follow artists. [...] I check Instagram and I want to get a small break from studying and I think that if I follow this artist it will distract me so I unfollow them, but when I finish work I will follow. (Michelle, female, 17, individual interview)

Along with this kind of time management, individual management encompasses identity negotiations through sharing content. Dealing with unrest individually can also overlap with online social relations. For example, many participants, especially female participants, often received negative comments on their posts. In this case, they either ignored the comment thinking "this is just a troll" or blocked the person and took action to report the profile or change their accounts. For instance, one of the students was bullied online because of his weight, so he had to change his account. However, as well as sharing, not sharing content also reveals important elements about digital media users' management of their identity and emotional resilience. For instance, most of the participants stated that they were afraid to share content because of the possibility of being criticized or judged. Thus they developed certain coping mechanisms and methods to avoid emotional distress such as not sharing intimate

content online, which is also related to risk prevention skills or finding alternatives to cope with discontent and unrest.

It's actually funny because all my friends are quite anti-social media. Like, I'm actually a social person out of social media, but I am not into you know, posting everything like a Rwandan. (Chantal, female, 16, individual interview)

Chantal says that she doesn't post everything as many Rwandans do. She might be managing her content due to the trends and attitudes of her close friends, but she also manages her individual appearance online. While she is very social in offline spaces, she does not show her social side in online spaces. When I asked her why she is not as social in online spaces as she is offline, she stated that she would not like getting "weird" comments from unknown people.

As well as individual management, there were also skills acquired for social management including chatting with friends, following friends, celebrities, and fan accounts on social media, sharing posts, and commenting on and liking posts. Managing social relations is mostly shaped by the idea of belonging to a group. For example, WhatsApp groups were one of the main chatting channels among Rwandan youth. Every participant I had an interview with had at least three WhatsApp groups for different reasons; these included such groups as a group for the classroom, a church group, or one for close friends. Video chats were also a common way of communicating with friends or family members.

I think of friends of mine who are like abroad, or something when I'm missing them, or I just want to talk to them. I use HouseParty app to video call them. It's very good. (Patrick, male, 16, individual interview)

In spite of being very common, social management skills such as sharing content on social media are hampered by cultural attributes or intergenerational differences. So offline social relations had an important impact on online social relations. For example, being judged by elders for "emulating Western culture" when the young Rwandans used and shared their lives on social media was brought up many times during our conversations. Nevertheless, despite their parents' concerns, sharing on apps such

as Snapchat was a very common practice among the students who liked to communicate with their friends and collaborate with them.

On Snapchat, I share moments, what's important to me, I share them with my friends. And take a photo of the expression I have about what I'm feeling and what is stressing me. They usually answer back with their photos. (Michelle, female, 17, individual interview)

One of the social management skills the participants had to acquire was to arrange with their family members which device to use and when to use it. This occurred as a result of external factors that forced young people to negotiate with their siblings and parents. Those from socio-economically underprivileged families especially learned to navigate these circumstances more than the students coming from high-income families. In the former group of families, the co-use of devices as well as in-family teaching on how to use certain digital apps or create content were more prevalent. The elder siblings were commonly put in charge of this teaching process. Although very rare, there were examples of group collaboration and coordination, too. For instance, one of the students had a shared account with his friends, where they shared memes:

*Victor (male, 16, individual interview):* I am in a group that people just like creating things. It's a group that I am in.

*Researcher:* It's an Instagram account?

*Victor:* Yeah. We create memes about life. It is like an account that we made, we share in turn.

The meme account they created is also an example of content management where they generated particular content apart from those that they shared on their own personal accounts. Content management skill practices among the participants consisted of doing research and making use of it, downloading and collecting data, updating and deleting content, receiving updates, and using digital technologies to accumulate ideas. For example, some students expressed that once in a while they scrolled down their posts on Instagram and deleted some pictures on their accounts because they found their pictures "old" or "bad-looking." They also regularly used "Notes" on their phones to write down their thoughts and turn them into actions later

on. Additionally, they use software such as Backup to protect their data and services like Google Docs to collaborate for homework with their friends. As a result, management skills are abundant among the students who daily managed their resources and time, online identities and emotions, and social relations and also navigated online content, downloaded and organized data, disseminated content, and collaborated with others to create content.

### ***Narrative and aesthetic skills: Construing, appraising, and reconstructing***

What young people watch, read and navigate online and how they describe and interpret the narratives and assess aesthetic features is mainly shaped by their passions, emotions, and critical reactions. In this case, the Rwandan youth also construed the narratives they interacted with, evaluated the artistic elements in the media, and reconstructed them if they were not satisfied. TV series were a significant part of the participant's media usage, and so one of the preeminent topics in our discussions was their favorite shows. When they watched the shows, they took advantage of the transmedia characteristics such as narrative expansions through fan fiction.

So if I watch a movie, and I like a movie, and I want to know what happens next in the movie, I almost always go back and read fan fiction, fan-made versions of the movie. Just so you can have a sense of what it would be like if the movie continued, it's never satisfying anyway so I try to write mine. (Victor, male, 16, individual interview)

As well as fan fiction, watching spinoffs was a common practice among the participants. They stated that they enjoyed putting pieces together and discovering different aspects of the same story world.

Watching *Legacies*, which is a spinoff, it's like you get to, it's like you go deep into the content. Like, sometimes you say there's so, there's a first one is the main characters and all these other characters. So they have their own series for them. So it's interesting, you get to know everything. (Gianna, female, 16, individual interview)

Young people also recognize certain elements in the narrative that resonate with them and the real world they live in. For instance, gender equality had become a trending topic in Rwanda since the election of women in the parliament, so it was a topic that was very relevant and widely articulated among the participants.

So I'm a crazy fan. Okay, well, so like, behind the scenes and spoilers, everything, everything about *Game of Thrones*, you know. I just feel like it's very educational in a way. Knowing your allies, knowing the people surrounding you, how to know how to dominate when you have less resources. Also how women are the ones having you know, the ones leading, from Queen Cersei to Targaryen and, I can just see that the role of women in that and which is something that I like, as I believe that women should strong, you know, be dominant, which is something that I like. (Joseph, male, 17, individual interview)

While the young people construed the meanings of what they watched and associated the content with their lives, they also attached importance to how they were presented. Although it is very subjective, they appraised the aesthetic components of what they engaged with. When they disapproved of it, they reconstructed it themselves based on their tastes. For instance, Victor (male, 16, individual interview) explained his method for making his music backgrounds more appealing.

*Victor:* So if I have some music that doesn't have a background like this, I put a background, so click right here. So for example some songs do not have background you know, it's more pleasing to like, look at some art, so I click here and then I basically, I choose from the gallery I pick a picture that I put on there.

*Researcher:* Is it your pictures like the ones you took?

*Victor:* Yeah, most of them are the ones I took, but also, sometimes I edit, like I get a picture of the artist. I use a font changer software, optimize one, and add some words.

So most of the participants I interviewed construed, appraised, and reconstructed the meanings behind narratives as well as the aesthetic aspects of their interactions. They watched TV series and their spinoffs, read fan fiction to connect the links, and bridged the gaps between narratives. They examined how they were presented and judged them in accordance with their own aesthetic appreciation. They also applied these

skills to their content creation through using filters, photoshopping their photos, and writing fan fiction, among other methods.

### ***Performative skills: Gender at play***

Skills related to performance include “all kinds of performing media activities using the body, be it in real life scenarios (performing arts) or virtual scenarios (videogames)” (Scolari et al., 2018). Some of the participants in this research were interested in video games, with FIFA, Far Cry, and Temple Run being their favorites. The gender differences in terms of performative skills become evident when their preferences are compared. While male participants opted for video games involving football and shooting, female participants preferred mobile games with role-playing or performing arts such as dancing traditional Rwanda dances or singing. Those who played video games tended to acquire skills such as being flexible, multitasking, or adapting to new environments or changes. For instance, the students who played FIFA had to be familiar with the teams and up-to-date with regards to football leagues, systems, and players. So they were required to strategize differently with the changes in the league or the new players on the teams.

Basically, you create a football team. And you create a team, for example, in the Bundesliga [...] and then you basically click versus other people who have created teams around the world when you have only 100 million to spend on players. (Eric, male, 15, individual interview)

Moreover, most video games require patience, concentration, and problem-solving skills that users can further develop and apply in their offline lives. The players also use trial-and-error strategies, which encourages them not to be afraid to make mistakes and to learn from them. They also set personal or daily goals when involved in long-term strategy games. Thus, they practiced planning short-term goals and time management through playing. Furthermore, some players preferred multiplayer games to socialize with their friends or compete with them or other players. Skills such as team-building, leadership, competitiveness, and being goal-oriented are skills that can help players in their future careers. For example, Victor explains what he did in his favorite game, *Auralax*:

It's basically like four signs. So to show you the central concept of it, OK, you are a star. OK. And you have to conquer other stars. OK, by moving to them by sending yourself. So there you go like this: send the near and I've conquered this planet now. Now it's mine. So I keep doing that. And essentially, the idea is to be the last one standing and own most of the planet. (Victor, 16, male, individual interview)

There were also many students, mostly females, who played role-playing games. In this type of game, students possess and improve two skills: decision-making and pattern recognition. With every move they make, the character is led to another story, so the players continually have to decide the next steps based on what they think is best. Through decision-making, they are exposed to different outcomes in different roles; therefore, they analyze the consequences of their actions, come up with solutions, and notice the patterns and exploit them. In addition, every character they play means becoming immersed in a different perception, which boosts empathy as well as moral communication.

I play a game that is like a personality. So you play like a person. You make life choices. Then those life choices have consequences after [...] it is like a movie you control [...] what I was playing yesterday was this girl in high school, she was bullied. And she had to actually learn how to move on from the bullying and all [...] so you choose one character and then they show you like the life stories that they can live and you choose. (Aline, female, 15, focus group #3)

Other than video games, performing arts through and on digital media was also common among the participants in this research. Some of the students were learning how to play instruments through YouTube videos, and also made videos of themselves and posted them on social media. The video that the participants of one of the workshops made where they sang a song together while one participant played guitar is one example of this group. After making the video, the guitarist of the group shared it on his YouTube account. It was very common to see girls dancing or singing challenges online, either in small circles of friends or on social media platforms.

On Instagram, we post, like, music dancing videos, Rwandan dance you know, to take, for example, there is a concept. So they ask you to post a dance video

showing that they sing it and making it fun and advertising it so we do that and share ours. (Aurore, female, 16, individual interview)

Peer-to-peer learning was a practice the participants commonly used to acquire skills. YouTube was also a learning space for most of the performative skills, as Masanet et al (2019) suggest. However, cheating in video games was not a widespread convention among the young people in this research. They largely preferred learning tricks from their friends and considered cheating at games as a weakness and unethical. Additionally, socio-economic circumstances, the availability of Internet access or poor connections affected the gaming choices of these young people. For example, having consoles to play a game was not very common and so most students went to Internet cafes to play games with their friends, and in this case, gender inequalities appeared as well, since Internet cafes are populated with boys, as was mentioned earlier. The young people from high-income households were more privileged in terms of access, but even they faced restrictions. But they came up with solutions or adapted to the circumstances, as can be seen in the case of Pacifique:

I tried to make a Roblox account. But then I stopped, it kind of seemed pointless. And it takes up a lot of the Internet. So I was actually trying to create one. But then I stopped midway. And I don't really play that many online games. Most of the games I play are actually, if not all, are offline. And maybe a friend comes over so we can play together. (Pacifique, male, 15, individual interview)

### ***Media and technology skills: Zone for intergenerational contact and future talks***

Young people use digital technologies in a variety of ways. With the rapid changes in technology, they adapt their use and access and evaluate information related to media and technology to successfully function in a knowledge economy. In this research, the young participants who utilized media and technologies on a daily basis generated different perceptions and skills to keep up with the challenges and changes in digital environments. Their skills ranged from knowing the features of a particular social media platform, comparing media platforms, being aware of the options they had online, selecting their preferences to understand how media platforms work and how they shape society and communication, and their potential implications in the future.

The students regularly reflected on their preferences for the media platforms they used and why they used them. While doing this, they mainly drew on the comparisons between different social media networks.

I got addicted to Instagram after they put the stories. Instagram has just been a... before it was Snapchat. Now it's Instagram. So Instagram has everything (Ava, female, 16, focus group #1)

In addition to the comparisons, they also evaluated how knowledge transfers between different platforms. For instance, Aurore (female, 16) stated that “everything that goes on Instagram has to first pass through Twitter. So I see this all the time. We see when you have something on Twitter, it is popular on Instagram, it was one month later.” They were observant of knowledge-making and transmission on the Internet. Furthermore, they reflected on the collaborative production platforms and how they influenced social and economic aspects of life. A conversation between two participants during the focus group discussion reveals that the students expressed their experiences on Wattpad, where they read books, communicated with authors and even planned to publish their own books in the future:

*Marie (female, 14):* On Wattpad, for them to pay, you have to have a lot of likes and get ads.

*Gianna (female, 16):* Yes, for you to publish, you can publish, you have zero views and no one likes it. OK. It is like YouTube. (Focus group #3)

The young people were constantly assessing the differences and similarities and the social, economic, and political aspects of networked platforms. Some of them were also critical of how these platforms alter certain perceptions, which in turn affects our communication with others around us. One of the conversations I had with a student emerged from how platforms deal with their communication with users. She criticized how the concept of “friendship” and “follower” had changed over time through the use of these platforms.

You see, this thing Instagram did to the young generation where you came from changing, it changed the perspective of friends to followers, you know, it's a bit now dominant. And it gives people a sense of the right thing that you have

followers, not friends. On Facebook, it was friends. So the more friends you have, the more you feel happy when now you have the more followers you have, you know, you understand? And so that was pretty much it. You know? Now, no one likes Facebook, everyone is trying to get followers, 1,000, 2,000. (Joseph, male, 17, individual interview)

While reflecting on these topics and evaluating media platforms and digital technologies, the students mainly discussed their relations with their family members regarding the gap that existed between them and their parents. Therefore, their relationship with digital technologies and social media platforms became a space for intergenerational knowledge transmission and collaboration. They were regularly asked for help to fix devices, navigate online, search for news, change profile pictures, and print documents. As one of the students declared, they are “tech gurus” for their parents, even though when they were kids their parents “seemed very well-informed about digital technologies.” Even the parents with a technology background frequently requested help, especially with their mobile phones. For example, Gianna explained how her father needed help with phones even though he had studied technology; here we see a generational difference in the uses of different digital devices:

Because he actually studied technology, I just don't know what, but he actually knows a lot about laptops, but [with] phones I am better than him because all the time I just have to teach him something and ever since he got a new phone because it was a switch from Android to iPhone, so confusing for him. And personally, I didn't even have an iPhone, but I knew everything inside there. I help him with it. (Gianna, female, 16, focus group #3)

Reflecting on generational differences in terms of media and technology-related skills lays bare the understanding these young people have of these technologies and their implications for their generation. Recognizing or estimating how digital media and technologies might shape their careers or shape the job market is a skill young people acquired through observing changes or following up-to-date news about the challenges and opportunities they could face in the future.

For our generation where like, we have easy access to such. So basically, it's easy for us to access Instagram or, say, Snapchat. So basically, if they

encouraged us to use it, then yes, because this basically develops our creativity and things. I was just watching a video and the guy in the video is talking about how the best and most needed skill in this world today is creativity. So basically, you can pass in class, but everything, but in the future, they won't be looking at your grades, they'll be looking at what you have created, what's your, what's your brain can do, basically. So yeah, that can help build our creativity skills. (Patrick, male, 16, individual interview)

Most of the young people who made use of digital technologies for different motivations expanded their knowledge of them in order to keep up with the rapid changes. During this process, they observed, discovered, and discerned the differences and similarities between different platforms and then choose accordingly. They also acquired skills that allow them to analyze how media shapes communication among people and societies. While reflecting on these topics, they assessed the intergenerational disparities in understanding media and technologies and improved relationships with them through conversations. Furthermore, they were conscious of how the future might look in terms of the usage and application of their skills in practice.

### ***Risk prevention, ideologies, and digital ethics: Right or wrong? Fake or real?***

This section is focused on the skills surrounding the issue of how young people in this research engaged with online information and digital technologies in terms of right or wrong, misrepresentations, and stereotypes, including a discussion of "fake news." It also explores young people's approaches to their own and others' online actions in ethical terms and how they foresee and prepare for their possible consequences in offline spaces. The participants of this research were to some extent aware of the ideologies, misrepresentations, and stereotypes presented in the media. For instance, in our conversations they regularly mentioned how Black people are represented in the Western media or those shows which tried to change that misrepresentation.

I watch almost all the standups [of Trevor Noah]. I like the way he talks about racism, which is something that is grown much like in the West. Like how he talks about racism, I don't like judging people by the color of his skin. It is not

very, I don't know. It is not ethical, not nice. (Joseph, male, 17, individual interview)

As a result of no representation or the increasing misrepresentation of different minorities in the traditional media, some Rwandan youth (although not many) refer to alternative media, and especially content created on YouTube. For instance, one student stated that she enjoyed watching content on YouTube where people with different opinions on the same topic confronted each other and discussed their points of view, which she said was "not common on Rwandan TV." She gave an example of the "Jubilee" YouTube channel, where she spends most of her time watching such debates.

*Aurore:* It talks about controversial things.

*Researcher:* What kind of controversial things?

*Aurore:* Like LGBTQ, well, racism, some things like that. They bring like a group of people against it. (Aurore, female, 16, individual interview)

In addition to ideologies or representation of minorities, young people detected the ethical implications of their own actions on digital media, although this did not necessarily mean they refrained from these practices. For instance, some students admitted that they downloaded books illegally because they either couldn't find them in libraries or couldn't afford to buy them online. However, they were aware that this was not ethical and "disrespectful to the author." Moreover, some students went to "buy" movies for a low price in shops where these movies had been downloaded illegally and were sold on a USB flash drive because they couldn't afford to "have Netflix or other stuff," as one student stated. On the other hand, in some cases, they abstained from practices they found unethical. For instance, although cheating on games was not a common practice among those who played them, one student admitted that he used to cheat but had ultimately put an end to this habit because he thought that it was not "right":

I'll spend like two hours on this. Just trying to cross a level. I never go on YouTube. Usually, I used to go on YouTube and cheat. But I stopped doing that because I felt like it wasn't really right. (Victor, male, 16, individual interview)

Another set of skills identified in this research was related to the detection of “fake news” and the evaluation of its implications for society. However, these skills were not applied by every participant; on the contrary, it was limited to a few students who were frequent users of digital media technologies. For example, some students used news apps such as Flipboard, which aggregates news from different sources and countries, to have non-biased information and to avoid disinformation that might spread on channels without sources. They also had skills in terms of evaluating how disinformation might affect individuals’ lives. One student gave an example of a Rwandan singer whose face was photoshopped onto a naked picture and spread on social media. She said: “Then they said it’s her world. Then people started hating her” (Aimée, female, 18, individual interview). They also recognized the economics of fake news and why people are attracted to it.

When it is something sensational, they get more attention and more people. (Divine, female, 17, individual interview)

Just to make money because more views, more money (Martin, male, 17, focus group #5)

Fake news gets the most views because they create a trapper. (Gloria, female, 19, individual interview)

When it is worth and true, these [news] are only going to get a few likes. (Clementine, female, 16, focus group #1)

They want money from YouTube. (Cynthia, female, 16, individual interview)

When asked about “fake news” or misinformation and their ability to detect it, most students expressed that they couldn’t detect fake news if it’s not too “extreme” despite their familiarity with the term. Moreover, the concept of “fake news” was mostly related and reduced to celebrity-related news. For example, most of the students claimed that they had never encountered fake news about politics because they only watch Rwandan TV for the news.

There are some that are obvious that it can’t happen. So you make this a fake news. It can happen by either using an app and then after they’re like, oh, these

are fake news, which we would never experience here in Rwanda. I barely have fake news. (Chantal, female, 16, individual interview)

Regardless of their age, gender, or social class, most of the participants were vulnerable to misinformation. They were aware of what the concept of misinformation or “fake news” means, and why such news items are disseminated, but overlooked the consequences of misinformation in society and did not embrace a holistic view of the potential outcomes of such news in their individual lives and in their country. Most of them lacked the skills to assess how such actions online might have an impact on society and considered it a whole system that is highly interconnected. For example, in the following conversation, the participant says she doesn’t mind misinformation if the consequences do not affect her in the end.

If it’s not my business, I’m just going to believe it. But if it is something that will affect me, and it will affect my future in five years, I will just keep going deep inside. So just agree with everything. (Teta, female, 17, individual interview)

So while young people have skills in their personal use of digital technologies such as recognizing stereotypes, misrepresentations, and ideologies, they ignore misinformation and lose sight of its ideological implications. For example, the “Angry Walter” meme (see Chapter 6) with the caption “Rwanda waiting for Ugandans to dare to cross the border like” was created by one of the students in a workshop. When asked about what had inspired him to create the meme, he said that he had seen some news circulating online. As I had also observed the news regarding the Uganda–Rwanda border conflict, I knew that disinformation and misinformation were being used for provocative reasons to fuel hatred towards Uganda. So when there is a generation that uses and creates digital content almost every day (although it is not always related to conflicts), they need to be prepared to fight against misinformation and disinformation. In a country where people suffered from atrocities in the past, where the media played an important role in the genocide, and where peace is very fragile, disinformation and fake news can perpetuate, reinforce, and stimulate dangerous narratives.

Most of the young people I spoke to were aware of the risks and benefits of digital technologies. They negotiated the complexities and intricacies of their online

interactions and public exchanges as well as their private lives. Furthermore, they identified strategies to avoid the habits they found risky instead of completely disengaging themselves from digital technologies. In this regard, strategies pertinent to avoiding distraction and addiction were especially common among the Rwandan youth. For instance, as was mentioned earlier, they try to limit their use of digital technologies or balance it with time management apps, especially during their exam periods. They also recognized that digital technologies have pros and cons and that the use of them should not be rejected, but balanced.

Phones can also be very distracting if I am sitting in class, teacher teaching and I am on Instagram ... that's not going to help me because Instagram won't help me pass my exams, but listening to a teacher will, so there is both advantages and disadvantages. So I think we should probably find a way to balance it. (Pacifique, male, 15, individual interview)

Some students, like Pacifique, prefer to balance their use of digital technologies instead of abandoning them. As has already been mentioned, though, most of the participants' statements about preventing distraction or addiction were based on the perceived disadvantages their elders had acquired from media panic. Additionally, almost all participants in this research were vulnerable to polluted information in digital environments. They were also unaware of the part they play in the online spaces they interact with, which is directly related to their personal data, what kind of content they share, and how they position themselves on the overall digital platforms by reflecting on the consequences of their engagements.

### ***Data skills: Data privacy and data reflexivity in the making?***

Data literacy has recently become one of the important topics discussed in terms of young people's use of digital technologies. Since they are more and more involved in the datafication process of the digital world, it is important to understand their approach to data, their feelings and beliefs about data, and the tactics they adopt to protect their data. When we discussed digital technologies and data in focus groups and individual interviews, only a few students discussed their positive feelings and aspects of data and datafication. For example, Martin, who is an ICT student at a private school, said:

You know coding? I find it very fascinating. I might tell I can be nerd to some people but I think I love that stuff and it's actually very nice. (Martin, male, 17, individual interview)

Martin was one of the few students who were enthusiastic about conversations about data. He explained that he and his closest friend tried to create games and apps through coding and wanted to sell what they had created to big companies. He was also aware of the negative aspects of datafication, but believed that “people should not associate data with bad things; if the collected data is used for good, it's good.” Unlike Martin, most of the participants' approach was focused on negative feelings around hackers, spam, and password security. For example, one of the students mentioned that he was very scared of hackers:

There are many hackers, they steal your password, information, your data, and share with people. I'm afraid they can do that to me (John, male, 16, focus group #5)

In addition to the hackers, being tracked by the government was also mentioned by a few students. Thus, most of the data identification and understanding among the students was linked to interpersonal relations or political restrictions. In addition, in a few cases, students such as Innocent talked about data in general terms with regards to privacy and human rights:

Everyone deserves the privacy. And I don't think it's their right to enter into someone's business. No matter, online or even personal. (Innocent, male, 17, individual interview)

As can be seen, the participants seemed to overlook the consequences of their data being collected by digital platforms. When I asked some students what they thought about digital platforms collecting their data, their replies revealed that they were mostly unaware of how these platforms were using their data. Also, some students did not believe they had significant importance to these platforms:

I don't have many faces to hide anyway, and what would they do with my data? I'm just a normal person, not a celebrity (Robert, male, 19, focus group #5)

The participants who had views on data privacy similar to Robert's, whether interpersonal or linked to digital platforms, were not familiar with or made no effort to come up with strategies for their data privacy. On the other hand, those who spoke about the negative aspects of datafication tended to acquire tactics related to their data. These participants strategized over the content they shared, such as not sharing feelings openly on social media or avoiding "deep topics" about themselves and their families, as well as more technical strategies such as changing their passwords regularly against "hackers" and keeping their accounts private. They developed data reflexivity when they reflected on how their data was situated in the whole Internet system. As one of the students said, "you can post something which can affect your whole life," thus they took precautions regarding their online interactions and sharing bearing in mind that the data they provided could be used against them by third parties or in opposition to their wishes. Furthermore, some of the young people were also able to identify "fake" or "spam" accounts and take actions by "blocking" them or "declining the request" for the sake of their data privacy.

So there's some people who make fake accounts. So you can only say that it's fake it's zero followers, zero picture, zero thing. So they only want to comment on your pictures just to say bad stuff. So if it seems that, I'm just going to block you. (Olivia, female, 15, focus group #1)

Similar to Olivia's approach, Ethan, a 16-year-old student, also used specific tactics to prevent spam accounts from accessing his personal data and information on Instagram:

Well on Instagram my account is private, so if somebody wants to follow me, I will get a notification of a follow request and if I don't approve that person because I first check the account. If it is probably somebody I [don't] know or if it is a spam account then when I will decline the request, if it is somebody I know and they actually told me they will follow me then I can accept it (Ethan, 16, male, focus group #2)

As seen in these examples, the participants' understanding of data was generally related to interpersonal connections and networking. Though the participants in this research acquired various transmedia skills, the skills related to data were not widespread. They were limited to their small circles in their reflections and in general they lacked an understanding of the social and political implications of datafication and their own agency in the process of datafication. Some students also approached data presented by the authorities as the complete and absolute truth, and this data was never challenged by the participants. Data skills such as data identification, use, interpretation, and data reflexivity should be given importance as a part of data literacy so that the youth have the tools they need to understand datafication and their position in it, as well as how data is collected, by whom, and how it is used, presented, and interpreted. They should be also be taught to develop methods to reflect on data with regards to repurposing it for social use.

<b>Production skills</b>	Unprompted, situational and continuous practices of producing content, making videos, taking photos, editing, exploiting tools and apps to create or modify digital content, coding as well as using programming languages and software
<b>Management skills</b>	Governing and handling online appearances, practices, identities, emotions, relations, and managing time and resources through organizing and planning
<b>Narrative and aesthetic skills</b>	Describing, interpreting, discussing, reconstructing and appraising different narratives, and assessing and reevaluating the aesthetic features of online content
<b>Performative skills</b>	Performing activities in online spaces and in videogames while solving problems, making decisions, and navigating difficulties
<b>Media and technology skills</b>	Adapting to the new changes in media ecology, accessing and evaluating information relevant to the media and technology practices, and knowing socio-technical perspectives and influences

<b>Risk prevention, ideologies and digital ethics</b>	Understanding the consequences of misrepresentations, stereotypes, misinformation, and disinformation and taking precautions or developing skills to mitigate the risks related to these practices, as well as to use digital technologies ethically
<b>Data skills</b>	Understanding datafication and its outcomes and consequences, reflecting on and assessing data practices, and acquiring skills for data privacy

Table 20. Types of transmedia skills

### ***Transmedia skills and their implications***

Transmedia literacy is an important part of digital inclusion that is closely linked to social inclusion. These concepts are intertwined concepts that should be considered in unison especially when it comes to political participation, peacebuilding, and peace education in Rwanda. When the transmedia skills the participants acquired in this research are considered, we can conclude that:

*The intensity and variety of transmedia skills acquired by the participants depends on their access to digital technologies and their attitude towards digital technologies.* Due to a lack of access to digital technologies, the non-frequent users tended to focus on their performative and management skills. Due to their negative attitude towards digital technologies, the non-frequent users tended to center their skills on personal, data, and social relations management skills and risk prevention skills. The frequent users with a positive attitude towards digital technologies focused more on production skills, narrative and aesthetics skills, ideology and ethics skills, and media and technology skills. And finally, the frequent users with a negative and critical attitude towards digital technologies were more likely to develop skills related to management skills, risk prevention skills, and data skills.

*Acquiring and applying transmedia skills depends on socio-political context.* Acquiring transmedia skills did not mean that the students could openly practice them. Considering the fact that the non-frequent users who lacked access were mostly young women from underprivileged backgrounds, their social exclusion was reflected in their participation in online spaces. This also reflects their political participation and

their engagement in the peacebuilding process. While non-frequent users with access were less likely to be involved in the online environments due to the fear of personal judgments and data privacy, the frequent users did not openly discuss political and peacebuilding issues due to the repercussions they feared facing. For example, although they had the relevant production skills, Rwandan youth shied away from sharing their own content online with regard to political engagement.

*Transmedia skills go hand-in-hand with recent trends in online spheres and they are time-dependent.* Most students acquired certain skills after encountering recent trends through peer-to-peer conversations or through their online observations of influencers' or YouTubers' accounts. Most of these skills were centered on production skills, narrative and aesthetics skills, performative skills, and media and technology skills. In some cases, they felt obliged to learn skills due to a certain time period, but later on, they would not use them either because they found them "childish" for themselves or because they were no longer trendy. Also, their personal preferences changed over time, so they stopped developing certain skills or abandoned them overall.

*Acquiring only some transmedia skills does not make the students fully ready for the digital world.* Although most students developed skills in many areas, skills related to risk prevention, ideology, ethics, and data skills were still in their infancy among Rwandan youth. Especially with regards to the peacebuilding process in the country, these were the skills that were most needed in the context of the country. These skills were significant because they would enable young people to navigate through fake news, disinformation, and misinformation. The discourses fueled by polluted information are detrimental to peacebuilding and even frequent users with a good knowledge of media and technologies were somehow vulnerable to fake news.

*Transmedia skills are mainly acquired informally by the Rwandan youth.* Like many young people in our increasingly interconnected and globalized world, the Rwandan youth acquired transmedia literacies outside of formal education through trial-and-error and peer-to-peer learning. Therefore, young people did develop skills related to interaction with digital technologies, production, content creation, navigation, doing research, online privacy, evaluation of information, personal and social management, and participation in digital spheres. Digital technologies are a part of modern

technology and one on which today's youth are increasingly reliant. So the solution for many problems young people are facing online is not restriction or prohibition, but education so that they can use these technologies wisely, safely, and consciously.

## 7.5. Overview of the results

The dimension of digital inclusion has been set on four elements in this chapter: *Access and affordability*, based on socio-economic status and restrictions; *voluntary digital disengagement*, based on concerns, priorities, preferences, and attitudes; *the use of digital technologies*, based on motivations and benefits; and *transmedia skills*, based on production, management, narrative, performance, media and technology, risk prevention and digital ethics, and data skills. Drawing on these results, we can infer that:

- Socio-economic and gender inequalities in Rwanda produced unequal access to digital technologies (i.e. female participants had less access to digital devices).
- Unequal access did not necessarily mean less participation in digital networking sites (i.e. those from middle-income households sometimes participated in the online sphere more than those from high-income families due to the benefits they received from it).
- Socio-economic inequalities did not necessarily mean fewer digital skills (i.e. the YouTuber from a low-income family had better or more complex editing skills than others).
- Spending more time with digital media technologies did not result in more transmedia skills (i.e. some low-users had a variety of transmedia skills, and some frequent users only used social media and only developed skills related to these apps).
- Digital ethics and data skills were the least developed skills among the participants.

Thus, in the light of this chapter and its findings about the uses of digital technology among the Rwandan students, the next chapter conducts a policy analysis of ICT education in Rwanda as well as the peace education initiatives promoted by the

Rwandan government. More specifically, the regulations for ICT in Education and the *Peace and Values Education* guidebook for teachers will be discussed in detail.





## **8. ICT POLICY AND PEACE EDUCATION IN RWANDA: WORLDS APART?**

In the previous chapter, I analyzed and discussed the digital inclusion of youth in terms of the dimensions of access, voluntary digital disengagement, motivations of use, and transmedia skills. This chapter takes a different approach to the digital inclusion of youth by widening the perspective through considering the policies prepared by the government for the “Rwanda Vision 2020,” which aimed to turn Rwanda into a middle-income country and is considered to be the “reflection” of Rwandans’ aspiration “to construct a united, democratic and inclusive Rwandan identity, after so many years of authoritarian and exclusivist dispensation” (Paul Kagame, in the Foreword to *Rwanda Vision 2020*). Therefore, this chapter focuses on the last objective of this research project: an analysis of the initiatives of the government with regards to ICT use and peace education and a comparison between these initiatives and their implementation based on the fieldwork observations and the accounts of the participants. In the first half of this chapter, I reflect on different policies which include ICT use in the country specifically related to education and the youth, and then compare them to the research participants’ experiences as well as my observations as a researcher at schools and in the capital city of Kigali. The second half of the chapter focuses on narratives of Rwandan youth in terms of peacebuilding and reconciliation in the country while reflecting on the “Education for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda” (ESPR) initiative and the *Integrating Concepts of Peace & Values Education into Rwandan Classrooms – Teacher Guidebook*, which was developed for the national curriculum in Rwanda by the Aegis Trust in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Education Board.

### **8.1. ICT policy in relation to the digital inclusion of youth**

ICT use in Rwanda has become a significant element for reaching the Vision 2020 goals in Rwanda. The objective of becoming a knowledge-based society is supported by the ICT policies supporting development in various sectors in governance. Education is a key factor in reaching the ideal ICT use and skills for the information-rich society, as is mentioned in policies such as the National Information and

Communications Infrastructure (NICI) plans, the Smart Rwanda Master Plan, the ICT Hub Strategy, and the ICT in Education Policy. These policies regarding ICTs and the importance of education for ICT use are considerably detailed and clear, and indicate the lessons to be learned and future plans for implementing the policies. The government prioritizes the use of ICTs in its education system and therefore aims to reduce the digital gap amongst its citizens. The implementation of these policies, however, faces various challenges. Additionally, the policies in terms of ICT education and the use of digital technologies for education and development are not politically or ethically impartial. In the following sections, the prominent themes in the ICT policies with regards to youth and education will be discussed: infrastructure, the stance of the government, youth inclusion, the gender divide, teacher training, digital content, and digital identity.

### ***Infrastructure and access: “Smart Classrooms”***

According to the ICT policies for Vision 2020, Rwanda aims to have computers and internet access in all secondary schools. With the road map of “universal education for all,” ICT in education is promoted to be used as a tool for teaching and learning. It is in this sense that “smart classrooms” are brought to life; that is, schools are to be equipped with computers. According to the policy, by 2020 all schools should have a smart classroom and benefit from it. The government also encourages schools to integrate ICTs into any kind of lesson, not exclusively ICT classes. In practice, however, the complexities of the circumstances have prevented the implementation of “smart classrooms.” First of all, the emphasis of the policies on ICT access and infrastructure ignore the skills students need to use these devices. Additionally, since one “smart” classroom is shared in an overcrowded school, not all students are able to take advantage of the devices provided to them. These computer labs are mostly used by the students who have ICT classes and usually not for more than two hours a week. Moreover, the heavily loaded school curriculum makes it difficult for teachers to find time to integrate these devices into their teaching. For example, one of the teachers told me that they faced many challenges in finishing the subjects in a term and so the computer labs were usually allocated to the teachers of ICT classes. In this way, ICT use was not prioritized and so they continued with traditional methods such as the chalkboard in order to keep up with the curriculum. I also spent a couple of days

in this school, sometimes observing different lessons in different classrooms. Once I attended an English class where the principal brought in a projector. The teacher and the principal had a conversation in Kinyarwanda, so I did not understand what they were speaking about. The teacher briefly checked the projector, but left it there and started writing the definitions of some figures of speech in English, such as “metaphor” and “hyperbole,” on the chalkboard. During the lesson, no conversation happened between the teacher and the students, and the students only copied what was on the board. I assumed that while the principal wanted to present a good image to me as a researcher of digital technologies, the teacher did not have any experience with or preparation for using the projector in the classroom.

Not only public schools but also private schools have similar complaints regarding computer labs. Out of the four private schools in my research, only two allowed students to take laptops out of the library and into their classrooms. This was despite the fact that these schools were among the most expensive in Rwanda; many of their students were the children of important government officials and the Rwandan elite. Therefore, the emphasis on ICT in education policies does not cover social and economic inequalities in Rwandan social structures while individuals such as teachers and students are held in charge of their own actions. The teacher who was presumably told by the principal to use the projector even though he had probably never used one before is an example of the power structures and individual responsibilities implicit in the implementation of these policies.

While the ICT Policy in Education promotes the use of “Interactive White Boards, servers, local area networks, cloud services, broadband connectivity and power” as well as “ICT as an integral part of the education process,” implementation of these technologies remained limited since the policymakers seem not to have considered the infrastructural and instrumental aspects of ICT use. Additionally, providing sufficient funds for access and infrastructure seems to be an issue since the government mostly depends on the donors (Farrell, 2007). Perhaps this is why the policy promotes the “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) program for students and teachers alike, with the aim of boosting ICT penetration. Since technology investments are expensive, this appears to be a good solution, but there are numerous disadvantages in a country like Rwanda where there is a huge gap between the rich

and the poor and where the middle class has just started to emerge. The program also reduces its effectiveness due to the government's policy that prohibits mobile phones in schools. Due to this, the devices to be used in this program are effectively limited to computers and tablets, which overlooks the popularity of mobile phones as a learning tool among young people. Moreover, as was discussed in the previous chapter, the ownership of computers and tablets is visibly lower than that of mobile phones. Therefore, the policies around access and infrastructure fail to account for social inequalities, trends among the youth, and the lack of digital skills among teachers. Digital inclusion and its necessity in modern-day society is an issue that rates highly on the agenda of the Rwandan government. Although the government prioritizes the use of ICTs, contradictory regulations inside the education system and the poor implementation of its recent policies in schools mean that there is still much room for improvement in its execution.

### ***Attitudes towards ICTs and the conflicting reality***

The ICT policies positively emphasize the importance of ICT use in education with the purpose of “expand[ing] access to education at all levels,” “improv[ing] the quality of education and training,” and “strengthen[ing] the relevance of education and training to the labor market including the insertion of 21st century skills” (Republic of Rwanda, 2016, p. 3). The government draws attention to digital technologies and their significance for the development of the country on a daily basis. The young people in this research constantly referred to the developmental elements of ICT use and how the government supports the initiatives. But the attitude of the Rwandan government towards ICT use happens to be “techno-solutionist” in policies, while the implementation process of ICT in education is subject to “media panic,” as was mentioned in the previous chapter. The prohibition of phones and the use of social media in schools, claiming that they are “dangerous” and “distractions” to students is based on the media panic the government holds without acknowledging the potential uses of these devices and platforms. In this sense, the role of the Rwandan government is significant in shaping the ideas surrounding ICT use among the youth both in a positive or negative way.

From time to time, I was able to detect ambivalence in the research participants' narratives in terms of digital technologies and their use in their lives. This stemmed from the conflicts between the discourse about ICT use and its implementation. While the policies and conversations about ICT rely on positive impacts, the implementation moves from a constructive and positive approach to an emphasis on the “detrimental” and “prejudicial” aspects of ICTs. For example, while promoting new, “Mara phones,” which were locally produced in Rwanda and expected to replace expensive Western brands, the government adopted prohibitive regulations against phone use in schools. Its attitude thus resides in an instrumental and economic perspective on ICT use rather than an educational one. Additionally, ongoing initiatives tend to target university students rather than primary or secondary school students because the government seeks short-term and immediate outcomes, and so the focus of implementation is more likely to be capital-oriented rather than educational or democratic. For example, the Vision 2020 document states that “the government of Rwanda will encourage the use of ICT as a tool for self-employment, innovation and job creation. Policies to encourage the development of smart applications that meet economic needs and develop economic potential will be promoted amongst the youth” (Republic of Rwanda, 2012, p. 18). Thus the policies are most likely to be designed for profit, growth, and performance and focused less on participation, democracy, and equality. Despite the regulations and policies promoting democratic participation, the implementation falls short because of the fear citizens have over possible control by the authorities. This can be seen with regard to the attitude towards social media and platform use. Although it is not mentioned in the “ICT policy in Education,” in other policies related to ICT such as the “Local Digital Content Promotion Strategy & Implementation Plan” (Republic of Rwanda, 2018b, p. 18) consider social media to be “an unprecedented opportunity for Rwandans to tell their own story.” However, as was discussed in the previous chapter, most young people in this research were afraid to share their own stories considering their political views and their side of stories due to potential political surveillance.

### ***A top-down approach to ICT policies: Lack of youth voice***

Most of the ICT policies put a significant emphasis on youth education and youth inclusion in society through digital technologies. It appears, however, that the policies

were created with a top-down approach that does not consider the needs and expectations of young Rwandans. The policymakers lack a clear pathway for assessing and understanding young people's use of ICTs and the skills they acquire during their formal and informal digital education and interactions. Both national and school policies overlook students' expectations and fail to provide a space for them to discuss and communicate their concerns. For example, after a workshop, one student told me "maybe, one of us will be Bill Gates, but we will never know because they don't let us use these [digital technologies]" (Victor, male, 16). When asked if he talked to the school about changing the rules, he stated that the school would not listen to them even if he did so. Another student gave voice to the same sentiment:

*Jerome (17, male, individual interview):* What can we do, we can't go in the office and say that writing with the chalkboard is boring, we want projectors. It's impossible in this school.

*Researcher:* Why is it not possible?

*Jerome:* The headmaster wouldn't listen to you.

Even the school authorities, who are in direct contact with students, do not include the youth in policy conversations that directly concern them; policymakers are even more distant. There is yet another dimension to this problem: The policymakers do not involve teachers and school authorities in dialogue either. Some of the teachers I informally talked to stated that they were simply "forced to" apply some regulations and rules and that they had never been asked to be involved in policy conversations. Therefore, there is a strong hierarchy in which no communication between policymakers, school authorities, and students takes place.

### ***"Gender equality as a cross-cutting area": Equality vs. equity***

Since gender equality is a key element that has been continuously discussed in Rwandan society, it is highly included in any kind of policy. During the focus group discussions about the education system, the topics of gender equality and girls' education were brought up many times and the students articulated that they were proud of the government's efforts to contribute to gender equality in the country. It's true that there has been an enormous change in the representation of women in the

parliament: 61%, is women at the time of this research. Also the number of girls in primary and secondary education “has surpassed boys, with girls to boys ratio at 1.03,” according to *Vision 2020 Rwanda* (Republic of Rwanda, 2012, p. 17). When it comes to the gender digital divide, the policies recognize the challenges. For example, the ICT Hub Strategy Plan (Republic of Rwanda, 2018a) citing the National Gender Policy (2010) states that “limited access to ICT contributes to poor access to information, which is an issue mostly faced by women who are more involved in domestic activities and thus have little time for collecting information” (p. 8). However, despite the government’s emphasis on these issues in policies, interventions that attempt to face these challenges remain limited due to patriarchal norms. Furthermore, progress in gender equality appears to disproportionately favor the elite and those coming from high-income households. For instance, the female research participants from the public school in this research referred to their household chores or taking care of their family members when they mentioned reasons for not being able to use their phones more often. On the contrary, female students from private schools were able to take advantage of digital technologies without the burden of such responsibilities.

The ICT policies cursorily mention and acknowledge gender inequalities but fail to sketch a roadmap for overcoming these problems. They tend to approach the issue as a simple binary inequality between men and women, but do not elaborate on the nuances such as economic factors and social class. The solutions proposed to these issues tend to involve providing access and infrastructure rather than trying to come up with more detailed ways for empowering women and girls in society. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the most vulnerable group in terms of access is the group of girls from public school. Therefore, it can be said that the gender divide is not given the attention it merits in the implementation process even if the policies overtly recognize the challenges.

All in all, gender sensitivity, not only in terms of access and infrastructure, but also the overall societal structures and economic inequalities is disregarded in the ICT policies. Moreover, the results of the questionnaires in the previous chapter also corroborate the limited implementation of these policies. And although in general, women increasingly occupy positions in companies and policy-making bodies, patriarchal norms prevail, which prevents women, especially those from rural areas, from taking

part in decision-making (Burnet, 2011). The power relations and structures can also cause women not to see their potential in ICT use and thus they may shy away from becoming involved in initiatives and even in the simple use of digital technologies on a daily basis. Therefore, ICT regulations should prioritize equity over equality and include nuanced consideration of social inequalities in order to create a clear map of challenges and evaluation/assessment tools.

### ***Do teachers keep up with the young people?: Teacher training***

ICT policies unanimously agree that teachers play a crucial role in ICT education. The focus is on the teacher training that promotes a shift from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. But, as was discussed previously, the teachers are often held responsible individually for their success in integrating digital technologies into the classroom since teacher training seems to be short-term training that does not provide teachers with the tools they need to adapt to new changes and challenges. Lack of adaptation skills causes teachers to be overwhelmed by the new emerging technologies and trends in education, which leads them to abandon attempts to integrate ICT tools in their instruction. Some teachers are more familiar with digital technologies, but they tend to work in private schools, which generally emphasize the importance of ICTs in their curriculum more than public schools do. But in their case, a lack of certain skills, as well as infrastructural problems, arise, and these factors prevent them from adopting digital methods in their classes. For example, I was invited to a class in a private school where the classrooms are not in one building but separately located in one compound. The classroom I visited was located in the far corner, where reception of the signal required for an internet connection was non-existent. The teacher was trying to show a video on YouTube, but the video froze many times and so the students quickly became bored and lost their interest in the video. One of the students in the class was a participant in the workshops and she later mockingly told me during the interview that her teacher did not know how to download a video.

Even teachers who use educational technological tools do not realize that the methods they use lag behind the students' needs and skills. Moreover, when teachers are familiar with and informed about digital technologies and their students' expectations,

the infrastructure and regulations do not fully support them. On a similar token, when they are not acquainted with these tools and devices, they tend to continue with the traditional methods. Therefore, ICT policies should consider these factors and put more emphasis on the teacher training that bears in mind their needs and expectations as well. As in the case of youth inclusion, the inclusion of teachers and school authorities is not properly fulfilled in the policies. In addition, this training should not be arranged one time only, but organized regularly considering the new changes in educational technologies. Another issue in the ICT policies regarding the teachers is that since they are held responsible for their individual performance and development, they are not willing to take personal risks to integrate different methods and do not try out creative approaches to education, and thus tend to use outdated educational technologies and tools that do not attract students. For example, some students mentioned that their teachers use PowerPoint presentations and projectors to explain the lectures, but the students do not see any difference between writing on a whiteboard and projecting a PowerPoint slide onto a wall, since neither of them is interactive. Some teachers, though not many, however, try to keep up with the trends to draw their students' attention:

*Marie (female, 14):* Our biology teacher keeps talking about a page on Instagram that's called biology memes.

*Researcher:* He's encouraging you to check it?

*Marie:* Well, yeah. Kinda he keeps on telling us about it. From time to time he talks about, like, a meme on the page and shows it to us.

Marie's biology teacher is one of the few teachers I heard from the students who made efforts to involve students in the classroom with creative and interactive media. Other students who attended his class also mentioned that he regularly uses popular culture for students to "make peace" with biology class. However, this practice is very rare among other teachers. My research suggests that such use of technology is not a part of teacher training. But those teachers who are familiar with young people's needs and expectations try to use ICTs in education in different ways. In our informal conversations during my fieldwork, some teachers also stated that they were enthusiastic about using digital technologies, but that they would need more support and training to be provided by the school administration and the Ministry of Education.

One math teacher said that most of the training prioritizes ICT teachers, and so they were the ones who were invited to the training.

***Digital content, digitization of content: Data in highly politicized settings***

The ICT policies for education recognize digital content creation and the digitization of content sufficiently to include a separate policy focusing on these topics. These policies acknowledge that there is a lack of digital content in the education sector and thus prioritize the importance of digital content creation as well as digitizing already existing content and archives. According to the main policy, “Local Digital Content Promotion Strategy” (Republic of Rwanda, 2018b), one of the starting points for this approach is the lack of content in Kinyarwanda. Kinyarwanda is one of the three official languages of Rwanda after French and English. The reason behind this is that many people, especially in rural areas, do not speak French and English, and therefore cannot access the content created in these languages. The policy of digital content, however, does not encompass only education, but also takes into consideration all the development areas in Rwanda. The ICT in Education policy briefly mentions the importance of local and international digital content creation but does not elaborate on it. While the government states that having local content in foreign languages is one of the weaknesses that results in a lack of digital content, it should be noted that the official language of the education system is English. Therefore, the educational digital content needs to be in English to be consistent with the language the schools use in their classrooms. On the other hand, having English as the official language of instruction does not mean the schools will use it or will find teachers who speak English. For example, at the public school I visited during my fieldwork, I met some teachers who could only speak French or Kinyarwanda. The participants from that school also confirmed that many students in the school did not speak English well enough to understand the classes, and so some teachers used a mix of different languages to explain their subjects. Therefore, having local digital content in Kinyarwanda appears to be a significant tool for addressing the digital divide in schools in rural areas, as well as in cities, where some people do not speak English or French. However, this conflicts with the policy of English as the official language of the education system. Paradoxically, the *Local Content Promotion Strategy & Implementation Plan* also states that “Increased access to globalized knowledge

powered by the internet has transformed Rwandans into consumers of foreign, most of the time, irrelevant content that not only is in a language the majority don't understand," which could become a tool for economic exploitation and cultural subversion (Republic of Rwanda, 2018, p. 9). Thus some ambivalences come to the surface when the statements of the officials differ from their actions.

When it comes to digitizing the content, the policies also expect teachers to digitize the content they teach, as well as develop it. As was mentioned before, though, the teachers neither have the relevant skills nor are they able to prioritize them due to the other responsibilities they have in schools. Providing digital content seems to be the first step to adjusting teachers to teaching with digital technologies so that they will be comfortable with digitizing their own content. In the meantime, workshops should be organized to facilitate this process. Another issue is the scope of the content that will be digitized by the government. Especially for history classes and nation-building processes, the "strategic" content will be digitized to show Rwanda's history and culture. In this context, ideologies play an important role in shaping education in order to promote the government agenda. Whose voices will be included in this content? Whose stories and history will be showcased? These questions should be carefully discussed when the data is digitized and disseminated in highly politicized settings. Although the ICT policies emphasize the value of data, they do not provide methods or pathways for citizens on how to use, analyze, and understand this data. Therefore, critical examination of the data provided by different stakeholders in the education sector is required; furthermore, data literacy should be brought to the forefront in order to ensure that the learners can make sense of large amounts of data and discover connections. At the same time, they can learn the skills and tools they need to explore if there are ideological biases in the data presented.

### ***From "One Laptop per Child" to "One Digital Identity per Child"***

One Laptop per Child (OLPC) is an initiative that provides low-cost laptops for schools in "developing" countries in order to "transform" education. Rwanda was one of the global destinations of this initiative. It sparked a lot of hope among educators, but failed to succeed as much as was hoped. The ICT in Education policy also confirms that the initiative faced various challenges such as the inadequacy of teacher training, the cost

of distribution and implementation, and integration of the program in the continuous learning and teaching process. Additionally, it has become outdated and insufficient with the new emerging technologies that are being adopted in urban areas. For this reason, the policy has been revised and the “One Digital Identity per Child” program has been adopted, although OLPC is still one of the aims the government is trying to achieve in the near future. For the program, the Ministry of Education has been partnering with Microsoft, which will provide software for the schools so that the school administration, teachers, and staff can interact with each other through digital tools. These kinds of interactions have the potential to improve the education system since the students can access the educational classroom content and homework and collaborate with their classmates in these spaces without needing to have their own devices. This program would work in cases where “Smart classrooms” are provided to the schools and access is enabled for learners and teachers. However, again, the relevant skills should be acquired by teachers as well in order to be able to prepare content and use the assessment tools.

Another issue with this program concerns user data and privacy. Most of the devices used at schools were donated by China (Byusa, 2010) and the software used belongs to Microsoft. China to Rwanda technology transfer as well as the American companies which are hungry for data from the users in order to shape their business models and profits lead to “data capitalism” and “data colonialism.” Although Rwanda has data protection and privacy laws, personal data surveillance and users’ general lack of knowledge about data privacy complicate the circumstances (Habumuremyi, 2014). The ICT policies do not elaborate on how they will protect the data coming from the schools. Extracting data that results from the interaction between school staff and students and their digital actions on these platforms are seen as valuable commodities by providers. Even if the providers do not cross the privacy line, this is a risk the policymakers and officials should take into consideration to ensure that data is secured. The school staff and students also need to be informed about data privacy and ways of protecting their data. In general, ICT in Education policies overlook the risks and possible challenges that such initiatives can bring forward. Instead, they tend to be techno-solutionists and focused on the idea that ICTs are inherently “beneficial,” which can endanger inexperienced users of these digital platforms.

## Summary

The ICT policies for education overlook the socio-economic inequalities in Rwandan society and seek to bring about changes immediately instead of taking steady and solid steps. The simple provision of digital technologies does not lead to ideal digital literacy. One also needs to keep up with the trends and new changes since the emerging technologies and platforms tend to evolve faster. The Rwandan youth from elite and high-income households are more likely to adapt to these changes since their private schools put more emphasis on the use of digital technologies. On the other hand, those students who are in the national curriculum, as well as their teachers, are overwhelmed by the workload the government imposes on them. Therefore, some local and school-based policies should be adapted and schools should be given some freedom in terms of using technologies. Additionally, equity should be the key factor especially in dealing with the gender divide in the use of digital technologies. ICT policy in education should be developed holistically. The interaction between policy makers, teachers, principals, librarians, and students is significant in communicating needs, expectations, and inadequacies. But most of the policies that have been prepared carry a top-down approach by eliminating the needs of stakeholders. For example, in the ICT in Education policy, the weaknesses in the integration of digital technologies and the implementations of ICT policies are seen as a result of “the absence of a culture around the use of ICT” as well as the lack of “digital content, expertise and project coordination” (Republic of Rwanda, 2016, p. 6). However, what I observed at schools is that the reason for these weaknesses also depends on the lack of communication between stakeholders and the neglect of nuances in socio-economic inequalities.

Components	ICT Policies	Implementation Issues
Access and infrastructure	Highly emphasized	Big differences among schools; Social inequalities prevail
Stance of the government	Very positive	Very critical in implementation; Media panic
Youth inclusion	Highly emphasized	Lack of youth voices, needs and expectations in ICT policies
Gender divide	Not elaborated and neglectful of economic inequalities	Gender divide in low-income households; Patriarchal norms prevail

<b>Teacher training</b>	Highly emphasized	Not continuous training; Teachers overwhelmed by the curriculum
<b>Digital content/digitization of content</b>	Considered as a very important aspect of ICT in Education	Lack of skills for creating digital content; Lack of data literacy; Highly politicized
<b>Digital identity per child</b>	China to Rwanda technology transfer; Microsoft collaboration for the software	Data privacy issues; Data colonialism

*Table 21.* Summary of ICT policy and implementation

There are also two main areas that can be considered in the policies: (1) the continuing evaluation and assessment to keep track of the implementation process and (2) the diversity of school cultures which vary from one school to another depending on the schools' location, school staff, and student profile, among other factors. After securing access and infrastructure, relevant teacher training, and equitable opportunities for marginalized and underprivileged young people, the content and the curriculum should be adapted to give space to everyday integration of digital technologies into the classroom. Additionally, the curriculum should go beyond teaching instrumental aspects of digital technologies and include data literacy, data privacy, and digital ethics as well. Bearing all of this in mind, the ICT policies should be formulated in a way that is suitable for the school community's needs.

## **8.2. Peace education in Rwanda**

Rwanda has integrated Peace and Values Education (PVE) in the national curriculum for schools. However, research shows that teachers find it difficult to implement it with regards to contradictory messages as well as bringing students into dialogue (Basabose & Habyarimana, 2019). The research centers upon the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom and observes that students shy away from discussing sensitive topics or do not make enough effort to “learn” about “peace competences” (p. 143). However, the discussion surrounding peace education in Rwanda fails to take into account the nuance in the political spheres and regulations of the Rwandan government. In light of this, I will reflect upon certain aspects of Rwandan youth narratives on peacebuilding and reconciliation with reference to the initiatives that were taken by the Aegis Trust in Rwanda partnership with the Ministry

of Education and Rwanda Education Board. I also discuss the lack of digital technologies in peace education initiatives in Rwanda, where young people constantly use digital tools and can be exposed to fake news, disinformation, and misinformation, which can lead to conflicts or hamper the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

### ***Intergenerational conflict and social polarization: What is “genocide ideology”?***

The documents prepared by the Aegis Trust and the Rwanda Education Board put a great deal of emphasis on the “fight against genocide ideology.” What are young people fighting against and “building resistance” for? What is considered “genocide ideology”? As mentioned before, “genocide ideology” law happens to be very vague (Amnesty International, 2010; Waldorf, 2009). This results in ambivalence and dilemmas among the Rwandan youth as well. The conversations around “genocide ideology” that regularly occurred in focus group discussions as well as interviews with the students revealed that the meaning of this term varied among them. The conversations I had with participants revealed the same thing. For most participants, “genocide ideology” meant discriminating against people based on their ethnicities. For RPF supporters, it meant making negative comments about the government. For those who had more connections to international communities, “genocide ideology” meant to deny that the genocide happened, and these students mentioned the BBC documentary *Rwanda: The Untold Story* as an example. In the government discourse, denial of the genocide is associated with international communities and the media, such as Hutu diaspora communities and the BBC documentary, which questioned the official accounts of the genocide.

There is also intergenerational conflict regarding the existence of a “genocide ideology” in Rwandan communities. According to most of the participants, those who have the “genocide ideology” are the older generations, and mostly those who live in villages and fear being punished by the government when they express their ideas. Here we also see categorization based on age as well as socio-economic background. Those who are “older,” “living in villages,” and “with little education and financial resources” were seen as potential “genocide ideology” holders and students challenged their “grudge,” which was “imprinted on their mind a long time ago.” They

also mentioned the government's power to suppress this group, leading them to become passive and silent in society. Some students regarded this pervasive silence as necessary for peace and reconciliation, but others were concerned it was a violation of their human rights:

And still people who now I know have an ideology are old [...] The ideology is here in Rwanda, a lot of people have ideology, but they don't show it. They don't because they're afraid to be punished. (Cynthia, female, 16, individual interview)

As well as older generations living inside the country, the students differentiate the older generations who "ran away" from the country when the "RPF came to rescue," the latter being allegedly far more extreme in having a "genocide ideology." This group was the most feared by the youth, given that the elderly who live in villages could be surveilled or taken under control within the country's borders. Some suggested that those who were outside of the country, on the other hand, had the potential to organize themselves and lead to another genocide. A small number of participants pointed out that the "genocide ideology" was not only predominant among elders but that it also existed to some extent among their peers. For example, some students suggested that the "genocide ideology" exists in schools among young people and student associations, specifically in the form of discrimination based on "ethnicities." The following conversation took place during a focus group discussion at a private school:

*Anita (female, 16):* The biggest problem I think we have right now is the fact that they still have like, not in this school, there is nothing, actually our school is OK, but in national schools, you find they have like AERG<sup>39</sup> maybe, or PLP,<sup>40</sup> they have AERG which is for people who lost family members during the genocide.

*Divine (female, 17):* Who were apparently Tutsis.

---

<sup>39</sup> The Association des Etudiants et Éléves Rescapés du Genocide (AERG) is an organization of student survivors of the 1994 genocide (see <https://aerg.org.rw/>).

<sup>40</sup> Peace and Love Proclaimers (PLP) is a youth-led organization that aims for youth empowerment (see <http://peaceloveproclaimers.org/>).

*Anita:* Yeah, Tutsis. And they actually select who can be in AERG, which is a really big problem, and PLP is for, like, those people who are against AERG.

*Divine:* They are in a competition in these schools, you find that the Tutsis are sitting in the same place. (Focus group #7)

According to Anita and Divine, who are private school students, these associations single out certain people based on their “ethnicities” in “national schools.” They emphasize that this does not occur in their school and claim that those schools which belong to the national curriculum overlooked cases of discrimination in student associations. As a result, the polarization does not remain limited to older versus younger generations or to political opinions, such as supporting or not supporting the RPF, but positioning others based on socio-economic status: “Old people living in villages” creates a difference and an invisible conflict among different groups, as well as private versus national school, which allegedly implies low-income and high-income households. However, later on in the conversation, another student challenged this idea and suggested that this kind of discrimination happens at their own school as well, but on a different level: that of making friends and creating their own circles.

*Innocent (male, 17):* You have a group of your friends, right? Don’t we do that at this school, too?

*Divine:* No, it’s just people you connect with, they don’t look at those ethnic groups.

*Innocent:* But still that’s where it starts from. We were supposed to be reunited with everyone, right? (Focus group #7)

How does peace education address these polarizations? Most of the teachers are most probably aware of these groupings and positionings, but they might not know how to handle these issues in the framework of the political circumstances in the country since they are very sensitive subjects in the government’s agenda. The teacher guidebook defines some risks regarding the implementation of these issues and says “[i]f not well handled, this may cause participants to rethink about their misfortune and start a blame game or even worse a state of “us and them” among participants.” What happens if the “us versus them” already exists in the society but is hidden or not mentioned overtly? I believe the peace education content prepared to

be integrated into the national curriculum leaves certain points untouched and is limited in terms of its explanations. Teachers are most likely to shy away from discussing these points directly since they risk facing repercussions from the government. This is likely the reason that the guidebook focuses on “values education” more than direct “peace education,” but the efficiency of avoiding direct peace education might not yield the intended results.

### ***De-ethnicization and “Rwandanness”: Attitudes and ambivalences***

The guidebook for teachers starts with a Nelson Mandela quote: “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.” After the quote, a box titled “Consider this...” explains why this quote is important and should be applied to the Rwandan situation and peace education:

The quote above was given by Nelson Mandela in his efforts to build peace and unity between black and white South Africans after apartheid had generated racial hatred and distrust. From Rwanda’s history, what processes taught Rwandans to hate? How could individuals carry out such horrific acts? How could they be persuaded to turn on neighbours, friends and family? (Aegist Trust Rwanda, 2018, p. 10)

One of the obstacles for peace education and performative dilemmas of the identity of Rwandan youth starts here in this question. The nation-building process of the Rwandan government aims to eliminate the use of the “ethnicities” of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. Moreover, it emphasizes the idea of “Ndi Umunyarwanda” (*I am Rwandan*). So the definition of “Rwandanness” by the young Rwandans is simply defined by the policies and ideologies of the government, which leads to confusion and ambiguity when they define and perform their identity. For instance, although all students defined themselves as “Rwandans,” one student overtly defined herself as “half-Tutsi” and “half-Hutu.” Some students even said that they did not know which “group” or “tribe” they belonged to, and yet their discourses revealed that they seemed to be aware of who held which ethnicity.

When asked about the genocide, the research participants instinctively tended to explain the differences between the Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa prior to the colonization, saying that they were actually socio-economic statuses, that one could move among these groups based on their income, and that they became “ethnic groups” only with colonization. Their statements were aligned with the discourse in the education system, in which “the RPF’s construction of history is presented as a reality of the past” (Reyntjens, 2016, p. 63). Consistent with Hilker’s (2009) research on ethnicities among Rwandan youth, with the exception of one who described herself half-Hutu and half-Tutsi, the participants in my research never mentioned their “ethnic groups,” and some even said they did not know which group they belonged to.

OK, I haven’t been to a lot of areas of Rwanda. But I know mostly there’s no genocide ideology, because even myself, I don’t know what tribe I am right now [...] They tried to abolish that because it brings back the ideology that caused genocide all over again. I am Rwandan, we are all Rwandans. (Gloria, female, 19, individual interview)

On the other hand, Cynthia (female, 16), who felt the urge to say she was “half-Hutu, half-Tutsi” despite not having been asked about it, stated that she cannot show who she is because of the government’s policies and rules. She still believed that they were all Rwandans, but she also believed that there should not be any problem with showing what your origin is.

You can see that. We are not the same. There are a lot of differences. OK. But we don’t show each other because of the government. We are all Rwandans, but you can’t show that if you are Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa. I don’t understand the problem of saying that. (Individual interview)

As a result, it can be said that they do not explicitly refer to their ethnicities in public spheres because of the fear of facing backlash from the community and the government. On the other hand, they did not align with the dominant discourse’s taboo against speaking of three “ethnicities” when it was useful to refer to these groups such as in the context of history classes. Most students thought that talking about “ethnicities” should not be “taboo” because “that is the only way for genocide not to happen again.” The following conversation took place in a focus group in which the

students discussed the necessity of openly debating “the ethnic groups,” however, some participants acknowledged that it might be more difficult for older generations who experienced the genocide to reflect on the topic because of the traumatic experiences they had experienced.

*Cécile (female, 17):* We don’t talk about them openly.

*Aurore (female, 16):* People look at you, say “Ohhh, you said that word,” and this won’t help changing things.

*Eric (male, 15):* It creates fear.

*Cécile:* I agree with it, but I feel like it is easier to say than actually do. It is easier to say Tutsi, Twa, and Hutu, but for someone who lived in that moment, even the simple pronunciation of that, just to pronounce the words, the mentality goes to those years, the flashback, everything comes back. (Focus group #8)

It might seem as if the reconciliation strategy of the government through de-ethnicization has been partly successful among Rwandan youth. The research participants made conscious and deliberate efforts to resist these “ethnic” categories, declaring that they were all “Rwandans.” However, they seemed to know who belonged to which ethnicity. This also means that the polarization did not cease to exist. For example, the student who claimed that she does not know which “tribe” she belonged to explained the background of her family in the following conversation:

*Researcher:* Your mom was not here during the genocide?

*Gloria (female, 19, individual interview):* She actually was here. But they were fighting for the country’s liberation and my dad, too.

*Researcher:* Your dad was in the country, too?

*Gloria:* Yes. Through the genocide, they were in the RPF fighters for the country’s liberation. So yes, they were here. And they stayed throughout after.

Ethnicization has not stopped; instead, its categories have changed from the older ethnicities to those of coming from a family of a “survivor” or a “non-survivor.” While the group of survivors includes those who fought alongside the RPF for the “liberation of the country” or those who were targeted during the genocide, the group of non-

survivors includes returnees and perpetrators. Especially in focus group discussions, the dynamics between students as they talked about their families and assigned them certain positions gave clues about the structure of the society. The students whose families were victims or RPF fighters proudly told their stories at length. Second in line of alleged importance came those whose families returned after the 1994 genocide. These participants confined themselves to simply saying that their families did not experience the genocide first-hand because they were abroad. And the students who had genocide perpetrators in their family preferred to stay silent during the focus groups, but did briefly mention it during the individual interviews. On the individual level of the reconciliation process, identity creation plays an important role. In this specific case, young people showed a tendency to position themselves in different categorizations such as “survivor” and “non-survivor” rather than in “ethnic groups,” which leads to “survivor nationalism” that provokes social tension and endangers sustainable and long-term peace (Baldwin, 2019). Therefore, discussions around the genocide, ethnicities, and newly emerging positions in society, should also be addressed critically in peace education. However, it appears that the peace education initiatives focus on emphasizing “Rwandanness” while neglecting the performative dilemmas and ambivalences experienced by Rwandan youth while aligning with the approach of the government to peacebuilding.

### ***Expansion of the dialogue: The limitations of participatory spaces and silence in the home***

Bringing students into dialogue and preparing them to be open to having conversations with people around them is one of the crucial points of peace education. The participants in this research showed great interest in discussions, contrary to the common belief that they do not want to be involved in sensitive topics. However, while many discussions took place during the focus groups where students communicated with their classmates and peers, most hesitated to give an answer when they were asked if they could discuss these topics in another social setting outside of the peer groups. The first problem that arises is the silence of the home. A lack of conversation in households complicates and adds another level of difficulty to reconciliation, which is constrained, as well as the initiative of peace education that aspires to include parents in the dialogue. One participant, for example, stated that, in general, parents

did not let their children reflect on these topics because of their traumatic memories: “Like my mom, I ask her and she gets emotional and I am like what’s wrong, and she says she just had the moment and changes the subject.” (Cécile, female, 17, individual interview).

The research participants were very concerned about not being able to say what they thought, about being silenced by their elders and having to “bottle up” their problems and concerns. This intergenerational conflict and positioning of youth by their elders could be constrain the availability of safe spaces for discussion and development in the long run. Some students related this conflict to the more general context of being an “African kid.” Besides having an intergenerational conflict inside the country, geographical, cultural, and historical factors also play a critical role in how they voice their concerns in society and according to the continent they are living in.

It’s also a matter of culture, like keeping stuff to yourself is mostly about how we are raised. We are not raised to argue, usually we are all Africans, and we know that if you are an African kid and if you argue, you just disrespected [...] Just because it’s a culture to keep quiet and obey. (Elise, female, 15, individual interview)

When it comes to the expansion of dialogue, conversations about genocide and peacebuilding are restricted to the time when national commemoration events are taking place, when the discursive framework is shaped by government policies (Baldwin, 2019). The transmission of memory and ideologies through sharing stories and exchanging conversation is an undeniable element in post-genocide societies. How young people interpret historical events and position themselves and others is molded by this transmission, which gives many clues about cultural and national identities (Wolnik et al., 2017). In the case of Rwanda, the curtailment of contesting narratives and social and cultural pressure on the youth seems to hamper further constructive discussions among the different generations and with diaspora communities. It appears that participatory spaces in the communities are also limited and controlled by the elders and also restricted by the ongoing “genocide ideologies” such as the ones in youth associations. The peace education initiatives seem to fall short in identifying these restrictions and implementing projects accordingly. Although

they highlight the importance of the content for parents, they overlook the silence of the home and ways to include them in discussions on a regular basis rather than in a short period of time.

### ***Teacher training: The learner-centered approach and participatory education***

Training teachers is one of the focal points of peace education initiatives in Rwanda (Rubagiza et al., 2016). Through training, they are to be given tools and methods to promote a learner-centered approach to education. Policy states that training will not be based on short-term interventions and that there will be follow-ups for evaluating the impact of the training. I believe this is one of the strengths of the initiative, as long as it is organized well and inclusive in terms of the availability of teachers and their motivation. The top-down approach to education is something I observed many times during my fieldwork at schools. The teachers did not encourage students to interact with the class materials nor did they bring activities for students to voice their opinions or practice peer-to-peer learning. The young people I interviewed also corroborated my observations by saying their teachers came to class, wrote down notes, explained topics, and then left.

Another issue discussed in the guidebook is the avoidance of “harsh punishment,” the promotion of positive discipline, and the importance of being a personal role model to students. I believe this is one of the important aspects that should seriously be taken into consideration. I experienced how some Rwandan teachers and school authorities “disciplined” their students. Once I was visiting the office of the vice-principal of a private school. He saw me entering the school yard from his window and kindly asked me to wait for a couple of minutes while he was having a conversation with a student. Five minutes later, he went out of his office, got a stick from the garden and went into the office. I was still waiting when a little girl left the office crying and looking at her hands. Another incident happened when I was at another school attending a morning assembly to explain the workshops to the students. After the assembly was over, I was walking around the compound and answering the students’ questions. At that moment, I heard one of the teachers yelling at three students who sank to their knees and stayed there for a while as a punishment. The teacher was proudly looking at me. Later on, in one of the workshops, one young woman said that was how teachers

disciplined the younger students and stated that the teachers couldn't do it to them (older students) since the older students would riot. How can space be created for genuine discussions and sensitive topics in an environment in which students are physically punished for their behavior? Therefore, peace education initiatives and training should encourage teachers to value the students' ideas and not "discipline" them in a way that can discourage them from debating certain issues.

The teacher guidebook elucidates the importance of embedding peace and values-based education into the curriculum of any class or subject matter. In so doing, it aims for diverse activities in different courses for participatory education, which also empowers students and encourages peer-to-peer learning. I believe the young people are substantially open to peer-to-peer learning and when they are given space for discussion, they discuss sensitive issues in a constructive manner. During the focus group discussions and workshops, I did not witness any humiliation of one participant by another for expressing their ideas, except for one workshop I cut short because of my fear regarding one student's harsh criticism of the president of Rwanda. After that workshop, I kept in touch with the student asking if everything was OK; she told me nothing would happen and that her friends were respectful of her opinions. The social trust among them had created a safe space for her to overtly criticize the government. Another concern in this context, though, is related to who can raise criticism towards the government regulations and actions. It turns out that the elite of Rwanda has the "right" to speak up and expostulate certain sensitive issues, while the rest shy away from sensitive topics. For example, in this research, the elite students whose parents were somehow related to the government or who were survivors of the genocide could openly criticize the regulations, while those coming from low-income households did not criticize the government's actions. In this kind of environment, how can critical thinking be encouraged?

Peace and Values Education seems to address this issue in a roundabout way by focusing more on "values education" than "peace education." The genocide in Rwanda has a complex background, which the guidebook acknowledges, but it fails to provide any guidance for addressing sensitive topics in relation to it. It prefers to draw attention to "values" that should be taught anywhere and at any age, regardless of the historical background of a country. But in a post-genocide society, peace education should go

deeper into topics such as human rights, active citizenship, intercultural communication, intergenerational communication, and border conflicts, among others. In the guidebook, there is an Appendix on the genocide, which resulted from workshops with teachers. But it only presents the consequences of the genocide. I witnessed some of the consequences mentioned in this appendix first-hand as I discussed the “genocide ideology” and de-ethnicization with participants. But how these issues are to be truly dealt with requires a more nuanced approach to peace.

The section of the manual concerning “the importance of encouraging and asking questions” (Aegis Trust Rwanda, 2018, p. 19) is very detailed and encourages teachers by introducing certain methods to help students develop critical thinking. The workshops and focus group discussions I conducted were very fruitful in this sense. As students indicated, most teachers preferred to come to class, write down notes, and ask questions related to the topic, but did not further the discussion in terms of having a group debate where students shared their opinions or could arrive to a conclusion together. I understand that in the context of sensitive topics and potential government surveillance of controversial issues teachers might find it difficult to bring forward certain discussions. What I realized during the workshops is that using teaching materials such as those related to the Guatemalan and Cambodian genocide helped students navigate delicate issues by referring to these genocides. For example, discussions of leadership and justice happened rarely when they discussed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, but were frequently debated in relation to the other genocides.

The guidebook sets forth a general outline teachers can adapt to create content for their classes and provides specific examples to help teachers navigate and encourage certain “values” in their lectures and activities. But when it comes to “direct peace education,” its approach to teaching about genocide without focusing much on the genocide itself reveals some political sensitivity over peculiar issues. At some point, it can be considered a good method not to conflict with the regulations of the Rwandan government, however, its efficiency is questionable. As mentioned previously, not addressing polarization in society directly can create greater gaps and lead to hatred over time. For example, the private school students’ comments on the organizations such as AERG and PLP in national schools or “old” people “living in villages” show certain prejudices and biases they have towards these communities. Regarding these

prejudices and biases, the guidebook warns teachers not to use examples that might reinforce stereotypes against marginalized and under-represented groups. But what happens if the students have already developed certain stereotypes and blaming culture? Therefore teachers should also observe their classrooms, and encourage more dialogue among their students to better understand their biases so that they can better address them. As a result, teacher training should also emphasize identifying these prejudices.

### ***Audiovisual support of peace education***

Based on the framework of peace education, “Education for Sustainable Peace in Rwanda” (ESPR) was established to provide audiovisual complementary tools for all partners and stakeholders. One of its primary initiatives is the fictional radio drama *Musekweya*, which aims to help educators bring students into dialogue. One of the transmedia projects used in this research was based on the *Musekweya* radio drama where the content of the actual drama was shortened and supported by interviews with the radio actors/actresses and program makers as well as students, survivors, and human rights activists. When asked if they had previously heard of or listened to the radio drama, the students said they had heard of it before but that they had never listened to it. However, they enjoyed the website, watched the episodes, and navigated through the digitized photos and documents. Radio is clearly very important in Rwandan culture. On the streets, in homes, in offices, most people have a radio on to listen to the news or music. But the Rwandan youth seem to be connected to digital technologies and the Internet rather than TV or radio. Therefore, the activities are not entirely adapted to young people’s use of ICTs and are mostly based on traditional teaching methods.

The ESPR initiative also aims to digitize the archives of the genocide, including photos, testimonies, and official documents. Although it is a crucial step for young people to learn from the archives, two questions arise: Whose data is presented in these archives, i.e. do the archives represent every community in Rwanda? Do young people have sufficient data literacy to make sense of such a large amount of documentation? Without answering these questions, digitizing the archives is less likely to contribute to peacebuilding in Rwanda. The initiative has also created a digital platform,

*Ubumuntu*, but it is a work-in-progress, and therefore not much digital content has been shared on it. However, it appears that peace education initiatives do not go beyond digitizing content. For example, most of the model lessons for “Peace and values education” adopt traditional teaching methods, where no digital technologies are used. Although the initiative highlights the importance of the “Media for Dialogue” project, it does not integrate it into interactive peace education in the classroom. As a result, the use of digital technologies in peace education is limited to the teachers’ use of computers and projectors where they share content for their lectures. It does not provide space for students to use ICTs for discussion, research, or content creation. Additionally, the peace education initiatives do not consider discussions around fake news, misinformation, and disinformation that can create conflicts or escalate already existing ones.

### **8.3. Overview of the results**

The guidebook and the ESPR initiative support different stakeholders and provide teachers with detailed information and recommendations but overlook the multifaceted legacy of the genocide and the complexities of the Rwandan society resulting from the regulations and possible official or peer surveillance, as well as the socio-economic inequalities and those who have the “right” to speak up. On top of this, the silence of the home, cultural particularities of the African context, and young people’s parents’ attitude positioning them in certain roles lead to disengagement from civic participation and a lack of self-esteem and critical thinking among young people. Therefore, teachers in peace education should nuance these aspects of society by bearing in mind the complexities and ambivalences they cause as well as the polarization based on age and/or socio-economic status, which could potentially thwart sustainable long-term peace.

Whether formal or informal, the education of the youth about the past and the present of the country has a top-down approach. Moreover, opportunities to take part in participatory spaces or create their own dimensions and spaces were lacking for the young people I interviewed. They mainly expected others to build informal participatory spaces for them to contribute to. Most participants, for example, stated that they

enjoyed taking part in discussions because they could discuss topics that they could not in other spaces, but when I asked them if they themselves organized such discussions among friends, they said they did not have enough time because of the heavy workload in their schools. However, they attended the workshops I arranged because they had many things in common with other attendees of these meetings, such as their desire to talk about the genocide, to use digital technologies for that aim, to have a conversation with their classmates outside of classrooms, and to speak up as young people. Therefore, the participation spaces provided for young people for peace education should target more interaction rather than being merely introductory. Only then can these practices help them understand and acquire the necessary skills for navigating formal practices of citizenship and critically evaluating such practices. And after they are empowered in these spaces, bridges between the different generations and with diaspora communities should be built for further discussions. Even though peace education initiatives target these gaps, the implementations are hampered due to neglecting the complicated socio-economic and power relations in Rwanda.





## **9. CONCLUSION**

The objectives of this research are to (1) analyze the transmedia projects about the post-genocide peacebuilding processes in Rwanda, Guatemala, and Cambodia; (2) examine the transmedia participation of young people in Rwanda during and after their interactions with the transmedia projects; (3) discuss the gradations of digital inclusion of young Rwandans and its implications on their transmedia participation; and (4) review ICT policies in Rwanda with regards to their impact on young people's transmedia participation. While I tried to fulfill these research objectives as much as possible throughout my research, there were many questions that this research brought up while I was writing my analysis and conclusions. In the following sections, I provide some of the main conclusions of my research as well as the questions that this research led to.

### **9.1. Telling post-genocide stories and transmedia participation**

Transmedia storytelling proves to be an important tool to the different stakeholders involved in the peacebuilding processes in post-genocide societies. It also allows them to avoid telling a "single story" about a complex and multifaceted process. Thanks to various strategies, the nonfiction transmedia projects used in this research offer different approaches to the narrative and visual representation of the real-life struggles of people in post-genocide Rwanda, Guatemala, and Cambodia. These include local organizations, educational toolkits for young people, and exhibitions and screenings. The projects do not act alone; they also provide viewers with the information, skills, and activities they need to take action and construct a narrative for change in the public sphere. Transmediality adds creativity, facility, and civic imagination to their activism. It is also able to connect to where the people are: they are moving all the time, they are in the real world, and, of course, they are on a variety of platforms. Although these projects expand the post-genocide stories online, most of their strategy focuses on offline activities rather than online participation. Some projects invite people to expand transmedia narratives through sharing their stories, but they also limit participation due

to the sensitive topics that are inevitable when addressing genocides and the reconciliation process. As was seen in the project of Granito, they monitor what is being shared on their online platform to avoid “hate speech.” Additionally, the producers state that people shy away from participating in the platform due to fear and trauma. There may be limitations to what transmedia projects can do when they tackle delicate issues with regards to human rights, justice, and freedom of speech, among others.

When the young Rwandans who participated in my research interacted with transmedia projects and created their stories, I realized they needed little encouragement to engage with the topics discussed in the projects. They were very eager to discuss with and learn from each other, as well as from the projects. The interactive and transmedia documentaries especially drew their attention since the participants could navigate the stories as they wished and were able to generate their own storyworld through their navigation. They were also able to fulfill their desire to learn more about what drew them instead of letting the documentary guide them, as is the case with traditional documentaries. As other scholars suggest (e.g., Kalogeras, 2014; McRoberts, 2016; Rodrigues & Bidarra, 2014; Scolari et al., 2019), transmedia storytelling and the interactive documentary offer an educational tool for people to engage and discuss problems that affect their lives as well as generate their own stories to build a community. Therefore, I consider user-generated content in nonfiction transmedia storytelling as paratexts that occupy the space between Text, Audience, and Local Realities—negotiating identities, contesting or aligning with dominant narratives, revealing dilemmas, informing the audience’s reading, conceptualizing and contextualizing controversial and difficult issues, shaping perceptions, and expectations, and encouraging civic engagement, dialogue, and political participation.

The process of generating the content, especially memes and humorous content, disclosed the participants’ familiarity with popular culture and online trends, which enabled them to express themselves about the post-genocide peacebuilding that affected their lives, but which is considered a topic reserved for adults in Rwandan society. Therefore, this content not only served as a response to intergenerational conflict, but also functioned as tool for “civic imagination” by debating how Rwandan

society should deal with post-genocide issues and reflecting on alternative ways to talk through the peacebuilding process. The “polyvocality” in user-generated content and memetic practices was revealed both in the contents themselves (e.g., the creation of different memes with various discourses on a single topic) and in the analysis of socio-cultural norms of Rwanda (e.g. participants’ refusal to engage with the accepted, standard ways of debating the genocide). The memes and other user-generated contents created in relation to the transmedia storytelling projects emerged as responses to cultural, social, or political contexts or norms.

For some participants, the content creation process marked their first online experience of speaking about genocides and peacebuilding. While expressing their opinions, the young Rwandans not only negotiated the way reconciliation unfolds in their country, but they were engaged in a constant process of construction and deconstruction of collective and national identity-making where imagined audiences played a significant role. The “enemies” who were considered a threat to national unity as well as the “outsiders” who did not acknowledge the successful peacebuilding process in Rwanda were challenged by the participants through memes. Therefore, the digital stories or the stories they digitized became paratexts which the young people used to negotiate their positions within the discussions about the representation of Rwanda, the national identity of “Rwandanness,” and the unity of Rwandans against “destabilizing” factors that harm the peacebuilding process.

The user-generated content functioned mostly as a transmediatization tool for showing solidarity, legitimizing dominant discourses, and demonstrating nationalistic and patriotic virtues and values. Detachment from other post-genocide societies and the sensitive issues within their own country created a dynamic in which the participants expressed relatable struggles in a more sarcastic way with regards to Guatemala and Cambodia and in a more socially appropriate or acceptable way in content about Rwanda. Although the participants did not often touch upon sensitive topics about Rwanda in their content, the way they debated about Guatemala and Cambodia provided them an indirect means by which they could express opinions and discourses with reference to Rwanda and its approach to coping with the post-genocide issues and reconciliation process. Therefore, the comparison of the genocides entailed certain criticism or appreciation of how the peacebuilding process was and is being

unfolded in Rwanda. These transmedial discussions with regards to genocides and reconciliation mostly aligned with the official discourses in Rwanda.

User-generated memes created by the participants in this research revealed different stories and arguments about what peacebuilding entails, how young people negotiate, align, or contest narratives about post-genocide reconciliation, and how content creation, specifically creating memes, demonstrates their approach to peacebuilding processes. Their transmedia participation through user-generated content, meme-making, meme-sharing, the selection of memes, and the memetized discourses about peacebuilding reveal important aspects of young people's experiences and opinions, and these cultural artifacts become a tool for articulating political views and constructing collective and national identities (Ask & Abidin, 2018; DeCook, 2018; Denisova, 2019; Gal et al., 2016). Therefore, when aiming to understand young people's approaches to different issues in their societies, the content they create should not be considered trivial, but rather as an important part of youth culture and as paratexts for political participation and the negotiation of social norms.

## **9.2. Socio-economic and political context for transmedia participation**

Young Rwandans in this research had different transmedia skills that allowed them to take part in expanding nonfiction transmedia storyworlds through their discussions, comments, and user-generated content. They acquired production skills or learned these skills through peer-to-peer learning. Not only in the workshops that were organized for this research but also in their daily lives, they produced content and shared it with their followers or friends and family. They were knowledgeable about the platform affordances, the different apps that they could use for the production process, and followed the trends of various content they encountered online. While they used digital technologies, they managed their self-image, their time, and their interactions with the online communities. While they generated content, spent time online, and followed different channels and accounts on the Internet, they comprehended, appreciated, and evaluated the narrative components of the information provided and the aesthetic features of the audiovisuals and Internet content.

As this research shows, the young Rwandans who participated in this research were quite savvy about digital media and technologies; however, some of them acquired more knowledge in certain areas than others because their daily practices came from their personal needs and interests. Their understand of digital technologies also created a space for intergenerational contact between young people and their elders since young people more easily kept up with the technological advancements. On the other hand, some of the participants faced restrictions from their parents due to the disadvantages perceived by their families, such as “being too young” or the risk of encountering inappropriate content. Additionally, gender differences played a role in access to digital technologies. For example, while young men could use cybercafés for access, young women did not use these spaces. While young women from privileged backgrounds could access certain devices, those from underprivileged classes tended to share a device among family members. All these socio-economic differences and gender disparities resulted in unequal transmedia participation and acquisition of transmedia skills. Therefore, the efforts for digital inclusion in the Rwandan context need to go beyond issues of infrastructure and access, and take into consideration underprivileged groups and the challenges they face.

Another prominent factor that impacts transmedia participation is the socio-political context in Rwanda. Rwanda’s highly politicized settings, where the “government exerts considerable control over sociopolitical discourses” (Thomson, 2010, p. 20), influences the identity and meaning-making processes among young people, who are positioned by the state and by the communities around them. The discursive framework of the RPF as “rescuer” and “liberator” predominates, but different realities and fears surface when the issues of the present-day start to affect the lives of young people. As Pells (2011b) states, in Rwanda “not only past shape[s] the present, but the present shapes the view of the past” (p. 603). The past is made present not only by remembering it through commemoration events or speeches but also by compelling young Rwandans in this research to perform their identities and practicing identity-making on a daily basis in various participatory spaces, including online spaces. Although there was content that showed resistance to these discourses and challenged them, these user-generated contents, mostly memes, were not disseminated in public digital spaces, but rather in private groups with close friends. In some cases, the group pressure resulted in silencing resistance to dominant

discourses. Additionally, self-censorship surfaced when participants feared online surveillance and backlash on digital platforms even when their posts on Instagram were anonymous. The Rwandan government considers the agency of youth significant for the new nation-building project and positions young people as future leaders and nation builders, but at the same time, youth participation and positioning become complicated due to surveillance over spaces and self-censorship.

As a social position, being young is practiced with complicated variables, such as being positioned as “disrespectful” when they disagree and argue. This leads to a disconnection between generations and the self-censorship of youth both in their communities and digital environments. It appears that young people in this research mostly internalized their assigned positions and rarely refused to perform the actions expected of them. However, this does not mean that young people in this research did not articulate resistance and reject certain aspects of the official discourses. But those who did so publicly and on digital platforms were from privileged backgrounds or prominent families. Those from middle and low-income families feared backlash, and thus only expressed criticism or resistance privately. Thus, their social positions determined their behaviors and either gave them the “right” to voice their criticism or deprived them of it. Therefore, transmedia participation remains limited due to the socio-political dynamics in Rwanda. The increasing arrests and prosecution regarding social media posts<sup>41</sup> may also hamper further online discussions and the transmedia participation of young Rwandans in the long term.

### **9.3. Transmedia education for peacebuilding**

One of the starting points of this research was the desire to determine if transmedia storytelling could be effective in peace education and if it could be used as a tool for peacebuilding. Answering this question seemed easier when I started. It became more complex throughout the research process and my analysis of the data. While it has many advantages, many external factors can limit the use of transmedia education for

---

<sup>41</sup> While I was writing the conclusions of my thesis, I came across a Human Rights Watch report on the Rwandan government’s arrest of YouTubers who criticized the government for their response to Covid-19 as well as the peacebuilding process in the country. (See <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/30/rwanda-arrests-prosecutions-over-youtube-posts>.)

peacebuilding. As for advantages, transmedia education provides rhizome-like<sup>42</sup> thinking and learning. As does a rhizome, transmedia education offers various connections and multiple entry points. This would be useful for addressing “dangerous narratives” that the students do not face, the educators cannot discuss, or which the socio-political dynamics restrict. In this regard, transmedia can be not only a resource, but also a useful tool for enhanced learning across platforms, thus making a contribution to attempts to overcome the existing challenges that educators confront (Alper & Herr-Stephenson, 2013). For example, many narratives that were not discussed in public spaces or schools in Rwanda surfaced when the participants interacted with transmedia projects and did their own research in relation to these topics. They connected people, ideas, and resources; their interaction also encouraged diversity in discussions and in their user-generated content. The process led to the formation of edutainment, which received user-generated content incorporating photography, multimedia texts, music, humor, and poetry, among others. Diverse reactions emerged from this rhizomatic experience, prompting discussions and dialogue among the students in a variety of topics regarding the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. They created different texts depicting and envisioning alternatives to the representation of reality, as well as their own realities, discussing the unspoken, filling in the gaps, or evaluating and criticizing. Therefore, their transmedia experience acquired a multi-directional path from the original text and was not reduced to a single element.

Transmedia education aims to give tools to the learners so that they can navigate the “polluted” information provided on the Internet by supplying them with critical transmedia literacy. Since transmedia education is deeply linked to systems thinking, i.e. tackling an issue holistically, combining peace education with transmedia storytelling can allow students to develop consciousness of conflicts, their consequences, the reasons for violence, and familiarity with peaceful methods and conflict resolution for interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, which in the long-term can elicit positive and constructive results for wider social contexts. Furthermore, new media technologies allow the learners develop their own peacebuilding skills and participatory methods in the peacebuilding processes. Although these tools are mostly

---

<sup>42</sup> The principles of Rhizome are introduced by French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

used in informal education environments, they can also be adapted to the formal education system.

Some dilemmas arise in the context of adopting transmedia storytelling in formal education, however. Schools become very significant in terms of the digital inclusion of young people in Rwanda. Since there are socio-economic inequalities that result in unequal access and opportunities for acquiring skills, schools, where young people spend most of their time, provide a space for the students to use digital technologies (although there can be issues, such as for example ICT students using computer labs more than the other students). However, the use of digital technologies by teachers lagged behind the needs and expectations of young Rwandans in this research. Additionally, the ICT policies of the Rwandan government in formal educational settings lack youth voices, which leads to the introduction of strategies that do not align with the young people's interests. The peace education initiatives that involve ICTs overlook the daily digital use of young Rwandans. The initiatives also appear to be top-down and so young people remain passive. Furthermore, while young people in this research used mobile phones more than other devices, the prohibition of phones at schools hindered their online engagement. Including devices that young people use on a daily basis could be one of the ways to include youth so that they can create, annotate, archive, disseminate, appropriate, and recirculate content for peace, dialogue, and reconciliation. Some possible issues regarding peacebuilding and reconciliation that could result from the use of digital technologies should also be emphasized such as the spreading of misinformation, disinformation, stereotypes, and misrepresentation.

There are discussions around whether formal education is effective for peacebuilding. For example, King (2013) argues that formal education in Rwanda contributes to adoption of official dominant narratives rather than promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation. What the participants told me during focus groups and interviews and what I observed in classrooms in schools, in student organizations, and in school activities concerning commemoration and peacebuilding seemed to be either ideologically loaded, controlled, or limited by the dominant discourse. This impacts the subjectivities and agency of youth, creating a complex environment for the reconciliation process and preventing young people from having their positions

communicated, negotiated, and diversified. The silence of private spaces, such as households, hampers intergenerational exchange, while self-censorship limits constructive dialogues. The youth are taught that they are responsible for the reconciliation of Rwanda. Yet, the lack of alternative spaces and the control over public participatory spaces where there is pressure to conform cripples the reconciliation process. While transmedia education can tackle these issues since learners can be exposed to different narratives online, as mentioned before, their transmedia participation can be limited due to surveillance and the fear of facing repercussions.

There are questions arising from the dilemmas about formal education in Rwanda: To whom does the educational content belong? Whom does the direction of the education serve? Whose history is being taught? Whose data is collected and presented? The use of digital technologies is not a panacea for the difficulties that arise from these complex socio-political dynamics and highly politicized settings. But in some cases, it can contribute to solving certain issues. The peace process should be participatory and comprehensive so that everyone can speak up and decisions in relation to these topics can be made by those who will be directly affected by them. What I observed is that the young people in Rwanda were open to discussing sensitive topics; at the very least, during the workshops and focus group discussions, they were involved in debates and raised their concerns over topics that were relevant to peacebuilding such as the freedom of speech and “genocide ideology.” As a result, these policies and initiatives should consider young people’s needs and expectations of being able to participate in a way they feel comfortable such as peer-to-peer discussions, or in a participatory way they are familiar with, such as using digital technologies. Answering the question of whether transmedia education can be an efficient tool for peacebuilding seems difficult to answer. It could certainly contribute to the involvement of young people in discussions through user-generated content and interactions in online environments, but socio-political dimensions also need to be considered in this process. Acknowledging that these problems are in constant flux and in some cases intertwined can be one of the first steps to reflect upon.

#### **9.4. Limitations and further research**

No research project is without limitations and this holds even more true for PhD projects. Being alone and the sole responsibility of a research project requires more tasks and time than a project with a research group. I always saw my project as a way to prepare myself for what is to come and to learn from my mistakes and failures for my future academic career. There were inevitable limitations as well as aspects I overlooked. The first limitation to my research was the time constraints I had with my fieldwork. I conducted my fieldwork in 2019 for a period of three months. When I came back, I planned to return in 2020 for three more months to contact my research participants again. Unfortunately, this second trip was not possible due to the limitation of resources and restrictions of traveling because of the Covid pandemic.

The second limitation was the lack of collaboration with public schools in my research. As I mentioned in the Methodology section, I collaborated with five schools: one public and four private. Unfortunately, only one public school agreed to collaborate during my research period, while the rest declined, claiming their schedule was too tight. More public schools are needed to better understand the dynamics and differences in those schools. Furthermore, my research focused on the capital city, Kigali, where internet access is concentrated. Hence, I cannot generalize my research results as being applicable to Rwanda as a whole. Further research should be done in other cities in Rwanda to understand the digital practices of young people and the potential use of transmedia storytelling for peacebuilding and peace education. Additionally, other post-genocide countries could also be picked as fieldsites for comparative analysis. It would also be more complete if the approach of teachers and families in post-genocide societies to digital technologies could be analyzed in order to understand how they can be included in the process.

Another limitation of my research was the interdisciplinary approach that I adopted to understanding transmedia storytelling and participation. Although I do not consider interdisciplinary research as a limitation per se, it was difficult for me to keep up with all the research related to my topic in both media and communication studies as well as peace and conflict studies. Interdisciplinary research requires a lot of hard work and the collaboration of people from different fields and areas. Even though I enjoyed

conducting this research, I also felt limited in certain aspects with regards to catching up with the recent research in these areas, analyzing my data from the fieldwork, and trying to survive through the pandemic in the last year of my doctoral studies.

As I write these conclusions in the context of ongoing pandemic, I have also seen many recently published articles about digital education, disinformation and misinformation, and the experiences of young people during the Covid pandemic. As someone interested in digital literacy, the digital divide, and inequalities in the context of post-conflict societies and peacebuilding processes, I believe that those scholars who aspire to rethink and reframe the issues regarding digital education through the lens of this pandemic and its aftermath should consider entering into dialogue with scholars working on education in emergencies and post-conflict contexts. Interdisciplinary collaboration would benefit society in the times of crisis such as Covid-19.



## 10. REFERENCES

- Adler, P., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 377–392). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Adler, R. P., & Goggin, J. (2005). What Do We Mean By “Civic Engagement”? *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(3), 236–253.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344605276792>
- Aegist Trust Rwanda. (2018). *Teacher Guide: INTEGRATING CONCEPTS OF PEACE & VALUES EDUCATION INTO RWANDAN CLASSROOMS*. Aegis Trust.
- Agar, M., & MacDonald, J. (1995). Focus Groups and Ethnography. *Human Organization*, 54(1), 78–86.  
<https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.54.1.x102372362631282>
- Agbu, O. (2006). *West Africa's trouble spots and the imperative of peace-building*. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.
- Alexander, E., & Regier, E. (2011). Speaking out on violence and social change: Transmedia storytelling with remotely situated women in Nepal and Canada. *Canadian Theatre Review*, (148), 38-42.
- Allen, D., Bailey, M., Carpentier, N., Fenton, N., Jenkins, H., Lothian, A., Linchuan Qui, J., Schäfer, M. T., & Srinivasan, R. (2014). *Participations: Dialogues on the Participatory Promise of Contemporary Culture and Politics PART 3: POLITICS*. 8, 1129–1151.
- Alper, M., & Herr-Stephenson, R. (2013). Transmedia Play: Literacy Across Media. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 4.
- Amnesty International. (2010). *Amnesty International Report 2010, The State of the World's Human Rights*.
- Andreasson, K. (Ed.). (2015). *Digital Divides: The New Challenges and Opportunities of e-Inclusion*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1201/b17986>
- Angom, S. (2018). *Women in Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in Northern Uganda* (Vol. 22). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75883-1>
- Ansoms, A. (2008). Striving for growth, bypassing the poor? A critical review of Rwanda's rural sector policies. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 46(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X07003059>
- Ask, K., & Abidin, C. (2018). My life is a mess: Self-deprecating relatability and collective identities in the memification of student issues. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(6), 834–850.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1437204>
- Askanius, T. (2021). On Frogs, Monkeys, and Execution Memes: Exploring the Humor-Hate Nexus at the Intersection of Neo-Nazi and Alt-Right Movements in Sweden. *Television & New Media*, 22(2), 147–165.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476420982234>

- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248–261). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Aufderheide, P. (2015). Interactive Documentaries: Navigation and Design. *Journal of Film and Video*, 67(3–4), 69–78. <https://doi.org/10.5406/jfilmvideo.67.3-4.0069>
- Baldwin, G. (2019a). NATION-BUILDING CONFESSIONS: CARCERAL MEMORY IN POSTGENOCIDE RWANDA. *Les Ateliers de l'éthique*, 14(2), 159. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1071136ar>
- Baldwin, G. (2019b). Constructing identity through commemoration: *Kwibuka* and the rise of survivor nationalism in post-conflict Rwanda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 57(3), 355–375. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X19000259>
- Barnett, M., Kim, H., O'Donnell, M., & Sitea, L. (2007). Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name? *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 13(1), 35–58. <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01301004>
- Bar-Tal, D. (2000). From Intractable Conflict Through Conflict Resolution To Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis. *Political Psychology*, 21(2), 351–365. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00192>
- Bar-Tal, D., & Rosen, Y. (2009). Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts: Direct and Indirect Models. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(2), 557–575.
- Basabose, J. de D., & Habyarimana, H. (2019). Peace Education in Rwandan Secondary Schools: Coping With Contradictory Messages. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 14(2), 138–149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316619846825>
- Batson, C. D., & Ahmad, N. Y. (2009). Using Empathy to Improve Intergroup Attitudes and Relations. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 3(1), 141–177. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2009.01013.x>
- Bekerman, Z., & McGlynn, C. (Eds.). (2007). *Addressing ethnic conflict through peace education: International perspectives* (1st ed). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bekerman, Z., & Zembylas, M. (2011). *Teaching Contested Narratives: Identity, Memory and Reconciliation in Peace Education and Beyond*. Cambridge University Press.
- Benveniste, É. (1970). L'APPAREIL FORMEL DE L'ÉNONCIATION. *Langages*, 17, 12–18.
- Berents, H., & McEvoy-Levy, S. (2015). Theorising youth and everyday peace(building). *Peacebuilding*, 3(2), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2015.1052627>
- Beswick, D. (2010). Managing Dissent in a Post-genocide Environment: The Challenge of Political Space in Rwanda. *Development and Change*, 41(2), 225–251. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2010.01640.x>
- Bilali, R. (2014). Between Fiction and Reality in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Reflections on a Social-Psychological Media Intervention for Social Change. *Journal of*

- Social and Political Psychology*, 2(1), 387–400.  
<https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v2i1.288>
- Bilali, R., & Vollhardt, J. R. (2013). Priming effects of a reconciliation radio drama on historical perspective-taking in the aftermath of mass violence in Rwanda. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(1), 144–151.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.08.011>
- Black, L. W. (2008). Deliberation, Storytelling, and Dialogic Moments. *Communication Theory*, 28.
- Blackie, L., & Hitchcott, N. (2018). 'I am Rwandan': Unity and Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda. *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 12(1), 24–37.  
<https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.12.1.1480>
- Blumenstock, J., & Eagle, N. (2010). Mobile divides: Gender, socioeconomic status, and mobile phone use in Rwanda. *Proceedings of the 4th ACM/IEEE International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development - ICTD '10*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2369220.2369225>
- Boellstorff, T. (Ed.). (2012). *Ethnography and virtual worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton University Press.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed). Pearson A & B.
- Bouka, Y. (2013). (Oral) History of Violence: Conflicting Narratives in Post-Genocide Rwanda. 33(Special Issue "Confronting Mass Atrocities."), 1–26.
- Bringer, J. D., Johnston, L. H., & Brackenridge, C. H. (2006). Using Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software to Develop a Grounded Theory Project. *Field Methods*, 18(3), 245–266.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X06287602>
- Brink, P. J., & Edgecombe, N. (2003). What is Becoming of Ethnography? *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(7), 1028–1030.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732303253542>
- Brooker, W. (2001). Living on Dawson's Creek: Teen viewers, cultural convergence, and television overflow. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4(4), 456–472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136787790100400406>
- Brough, M., & Shresthova, S. (2012). Fandom meets activism: Rethinking civic and political participation. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 10.  
<https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0303>
- Brounéus, K. (2010). *The Trauma of Truth Telling: Effects of Witnessing in the Rwandan Gacaca Courts on Psychological Health*. 31.
- Buckley-zistel, S. (2006). Dividing and uniting: The use of citizenship discourses in conflict and reconciliation in Rwanda. *Global Society*, 20(1), 101–113.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13600820500405616>
- Buckley-Zistel, S. (2009). Nation, narration, unification? The politics of history teaching after the Rwandan genocide. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11(1), 31–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520802703608>
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2009). The entrepreneurial vlogger: Participatory culture beyond the professional/amateur divide. In P. Snickars & P. Vonderau (Eds.),

- The YouTube Reader* (pp. 89–107). National Library of Sweden.  
[http://www.wallflowerpress.co.uk/product/new-titles/youtube\\_reader](http://www.wallflowerpress.co.uk/product/new-titles/youtube_reader)
- Burnet, J. E. (2011). Women Have Found Respect: Gender Quotas, Symbolic Representation, and Female Empowerment in Rwanda. *Politics & Gender*, 7(3), 303–334. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X11000250>
- Byungura, J. C., Hansson, H., Masengesho, K., & Karunaratne, T. (2016). ICT Capacity Building: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rwandan Policies from Higher Education Perspective. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, 19(2), 46–62. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eurodl-2016-0007>
- Byusa, V. (2010). Chinese external assistance to Rwanda. *Social Sciences*, 19, 18.
- Cahill, H., & Coffey, J. (2016). Positioning, participation, and possibility: Using post-structural concepts for social change in Asia-Pacific youth HIV prevention. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(4), 533–551.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2015.1083960>
- Carmi, E., Yates, S. J., Lockley, E., & Pawluczuk, A. (2020). Data citizenship: Rethinking data literacy in the age of disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation. *Internet Policy Review*, 9(2).  
<https://doi.org/10.14763/2020.2.1481>
- Castells, M. (2002). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. OUP Oxford.
- Checkoway, B. (2011). What is youth participation? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(2), 340–345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.09.017>
- Chinyere, A. (2013). Peace Education, Transformation Of Higher Education And Youths Empowerment For Peace In Africa. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 1, 338–347.
- Cole, E. A. (2007). Transitional Justice and the Reform of History Education. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 1(1), 115–137.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijm003>
- Cordell, R. (2013). Information Literacy and Digital Literacy: Competing or Complementary? *CommInfoLit*, 7(2), 177.  
<https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2013.7.2.150>
- Cornwall, A. (2002). *Making spaces, changing places: Situating participation in development*.
- Cornwall, A. (2004). Spaces for transformation? Reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development. In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation: Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development* (pp. 75–91). Zed Books.
- Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking ‘Participation’: Models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal*, 43(3), 269–283.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsn010>
- Cornwall, A., & Coelho, V. S. (2007). *Spaces for Change?: The Politics of Citizen Participation in New Democratic Arenas*. Zed Books.
- Courtés, J. (1976). *Introduction à la sémiotique narrative et discursive: Méthodologie et application*. Hachette.

- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed). Sage Publications.
- Culhane, D., & Elliott, D. (Eds.). (2017). *A different kind of ethnography: Imaginative practices and creative methodologies*. University of Toronto Press.
- Dahlgren, P. (2013). *Young Citizens and New Media: Learning for Democratic Participation*. Routledge.
- Dallaire, R., & Beardsley, B. (2005). *Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda* (1. Carroll & Graf trade paperback ed). Carroll & Graf.
- DataReportal. (2020). *Digital 2020: Rwanda*. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-rwanda>
- Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(1), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.44.1.113>
- de Saint Laurent, C., Glăveanu, V. P., & Literat, I. (2021). Internet Memes as Partial Stories: Identifying Political Narratives in Coronavirus Memes. *Social Media + Society*, 7(1), 205630512198893. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121988932>
- DeCook, J. R. (2018). Memes and symbolic violence: #proudboys and the use of memes for propaganda and the construction of collective identity. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 43(4), 485–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2018.1544149>
- Deen-Swarray, M. (2016). Toward Digital Inclusion: Understanding the Literacy Effect on Adoption and Use of Mobile Phones and the Internet in Africa. *Information Technologies*, 12(2), 18.
- Denisova, A. (2019). *Internet memes and society: Social, cultural, and political contexts*. Routledge.
- Des Forges, A. (1999). *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Human Rights Watch.
- Dickerson, N. (2016). Constructing the Digitalized Sporting Body: Black and White Masculinity in NBA/NHL Internet Memes. *Communication & Sport*, 4(3), 303–330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479515584045>
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Celeste, C., & Shafer, S. (2004). *From Unequal Access to Differentiated Use: A Literature Review and Agenda for Research on Digital Inequality* (p. 73).
- Duff, P. A. (2002). The Discursive Co-construction of Knowledge, Identity, and Difference: An Ethnography of Communication in the High School Mainstream. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 289–322. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/23.3.289>
- Edmond, M. (2015). All platforms considered: Contemporary radio and transmedia engagement. *New Media & Society*, 17(9), 1566–1582. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814530245>
- Ekdale, B., & Tully, M. (2014). Makmende Amerudi: Kenya's Collective Reimagining as a Meme of Aspiration. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 31(4), 283–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2013.858823>

- Elejabarrieta, F. (1994). Social positioning: A way to link social identity and social representations. *Social Science Information*, 33(2), 241–253.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/053901894033002006>
- Esterberg, K. G. (2002). *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. McGraw-Hill.
- Fajebe, A. A. (2013). Is the One Laptop Per Child Enough? Viewpoints from Classroom Teachers in Rwanda. *Information Technologies*, 9(3), 14.
- Farrell, G. (2007). *ICT in Education in Rwanda* (p. 13) [Country Report]. infoDev.
- Fiedler, A., & Frère, M.-S. (2018). Press Freedom in the African Great Lakes Region: A Comparative Study of Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In H. M. Mabweazara (Ed.), *Newsmaking Cultures in Africa* (pp. 119–143). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54109-3\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54109-3_6)
- Fosnot, C. T., & Perry, R. S. (Eds.). (2005). Constructivism: A Psychological Theory of Learning. In *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice* (2nd ed, pp. 8–28). Teachers College Press.
- Freedom House. (2020). *Rwanda—Freedom on the Net 2020*.  
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-net/2020>
- Freeman, M. (2014). *Advertising the Yellow Brick Road: Historicizing the Industrial Emergence of Transmedia Storytelling*. 20.
- Freeman, M. (2016). Small Change – Big Difference: Tracking the Transmediality of Red Nose Day. *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 5(10), 87. <https://doi.org/10.18146/2213-0969.2016.jethc114>
- Frère, M.-S. (2009). After the hate media: Regulation in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda. *Global Media and Communication*, 5(3), 327–352.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766509348675>
- Frohardt, M., & Orlando, P. (2019). THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN FOSTERING A CULTURE OF CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF MASS ATROCITIES: EXAMPLES FROM RWANDA, COLOMBIA AND SOUTH SUDAN. In A. Thompson (Ed.), *Media and Mass Atrocity: The Rwanda Genocide and Beyond* (pp. 200–226). CIGI Press.
- Fuchs, C. (2010). Alternative Media as Critical Media. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13(2), 173–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431010362294>
- Fuchs, C., & Horak, E. (2008). Africa and the digital divide. *Telematics and Informatics*, 25(2), 99–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2006.06.004>
- Gagliardone, I., & Golooba-Mutebi, F. (2016). The Evolution of the Internet in Ethiopia and Rwanda: Towards a “Developmental” Model? *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 5(1), 8.  
<https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.344>
- Gal, N., Shifman, L., & Kampf, Z. (2016). “It Gets Better”: Internet memes and the construction of collective identity. *New Media & Society*, 18(8), 1698–1714.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814568784>
- Gambarato, R. R. (2016a). *Russian News Coverage of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games: A Transmedia Analysis*. 24.

- Gambarato, R. R. (2016b). The Sochi Project: Slow journalism within the transmedia space. *Digital Journalism*, 4(4), 445–461.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2015.1096746>
- Gambarato, R. R. (2018). *Transmedia Journalism and the City: Participation, Information, and Storytelling Within the Urban Fabric* [Chapter]. Exploring Transmedia Journalism in the Digital Age; IGI Global.  
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-3781-6.ch009>
- Gambarato, R. R., & Tárca, L. P. T. (2017). Transmedia Strategies in Journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 18(11), 1381–1399.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2015.1127769>
- Gaudreault, A., & Jost, F. (1999). Enunciation and Narration. In T. Miller & R. Stam (Eds.), *A Companion to Film Theory*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Genette, G. (1997). *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation* (Vol. 20). Cambridge University Press.
- González-Martínez, J., Esteban-Guitart, M., Rostan-Sanchez, C., Serrat-Sellabona, E., & Estebanell-Minguell, M. (2019). What's up with transmedia and education? A literature review. *Digital Education Review*, 36, 207–222.  
<https://doi.org/10.1344/der.2019.36.207-222>
- Grant, A. M. (2019). Bringing *The Daily Mail* to Africa: Entertainment websites and the creation of a digital youth public in post-genocide Rwanda. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 13(1), 106–123.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2018.1547255>
- Gray, J. (2010). *Show sold separately: Promos, spoilers, and other media paratexts*. New York University Press.
- Greimas, A. J. (1987). *On meaning: Selected writings in semiotic theory*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Greimas, A.-J. (1984). *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (D. McDowell, R. Schleifer, & A. Velie, Trans.; 0 edition). University of Nebraska Press.
- Guerrero-Pico, M. (2016). Dimensional expansions and shiftings: Fan fiction and transmedia storytelling the the Fringeverse. *Series - International Journal of TV Serial Narratives, Vol 2*, 73-85 Pages. <https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.2421-454X/6593>
- Gutenbrunner, L., & Wagner, U. (2016). Perspective-taking techniques in the mediation of intergroup conflict. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 22(4), 298–305. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000184>
- Gyamfi, A. (2005). Closing the Digital Divide in Sub-Saharan Africa: Meeting the challenges of the information age. *Information Development*, 21(1), 22–30.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666905051910>
- Habumuremyi, E. (2014). *Ensuring security, or violating privacy and freedom?: Rwanda* (Global Information Society Watch 2014: Communications Surveillance in the Digital Age). Global Information Society Watch.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed). Routledge.

- Hancox, D. (2017). From subject to collaborator: Transmedia storytelling and social research. *Convergence*, 23(1), 49-60.
- Hancox, D. (2019). Transmedia for social change: Evolving approaches to activism and representation. In M. Freeman & R. Rampazzo Gambarato (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to transmedia studies (Routledge Media and Cultural Studies Companions)* (pp. 332–339). Routledge.  
<https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Companion-to-Transmedia-Studies/Freeman-Gambarato/p/book/9781138483439>
- Harré, R., & Langenhove, L. V. (1991). Varieties of Positioning. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 21(4), 393–407. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1991.tb00203.x>
- Hattani, H. (2017). New Media and Civic Participation in Morocco. *Journal of Media Research*, 10, 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.24193/jmr.29.1>
- Helsper, E. J. (2008). *Digital inclusion: An analysis of social disadvantage and the information society*. Department for Communities and Local Government.  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/digitalinclusionanalysis>
- Helsper, E. J., van Deursen, A. J. A. M., & Eynon, R. (2015). *From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes* (From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes Project Report, p. 72).
- Higgins, J. W. (2011). *Peace-building through listening, digital storytelling, and community media in Cyprus*. 6(1), 1–13.
- Higiro, J.-M. V. (2007). Rwandan Private Print Media on the Eve of the Genocide. In A. Thompson (Ed.), *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (pp. 73–89). Pluto Press.
- Hilker, L. M. (2012). Rwanda's 'Hutsi': Intersections of ethnicity and violence in the lives of youth of 'mixed' heritage. *Identities*, 19(2), 229–247.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2012.684441>
- Hintjens, H. M. (1999). Explaining the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37(2), 241–286.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X99003018>
- Hirblinger, A. T. (2020). *Digital Inclusion in Mediated Peace Processes* (No. 168; Peaceworks). United States Institute of Peace.
- Hobbs, R. (2010). Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action. A White Paper on the Digital and Media Literacy Recommendations of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. In *Aspen Institute*. Aspen Institute. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED523244>
- Holloway, I. (1997). *Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research*. Wiley.
- Honwana, A. (2014). Youth, Waithood, and Protest Movements in Africa. *African Dynamics in a Multipolar World: 5th European Conference on African Studies — Conference Proceedings*, 2428–2447.
- Hoskins, A. (2009). The Mediatisation of Memory. In J. Garde-Hansen, A. Hoskins, & A. Reading (Eds.), *Save As ... Digital Memories* (pp. 27–43). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230239418\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230239418_2)

- Huntington, H. E. (2016). Pepper Spray Cop and the American Dream: Using Synecdoche and Metaphor to Unlock Internet Memes' Visual Political Rhetoric. *Communication Studies*, 67(1), 77–93.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2015.1087414>
- Ingelaere, B. (2010). Do We Understand Life after Genocide? Center and Periphery in the Construction of Knowledge in Postgenocide Rwanda. *African Studies Review*, 53(1), 41–59. <https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0307>
- Ingelaere, B. (2016). *Inside Rwanda's /Gacaca/ Courts: Seeking Justice After Genocide*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- IPU. (2020). *Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments*. Parline: The IPU's Open Data Platform. <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking>
- Jenkins, H. (2003). *Transmedia Storytelling. Moving characters from books to films to video games can make them stronger and more compelling*. MIT Technology Review.  
<https://www.technologyreview.com/2003/01/15/234540/transmedia-storytelling/>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2010). *Transmedia Education: The 7 Principles Revisited*. Henry Jenkins.  
[http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2010/06/transmedia\\_education\\_the\\_7\\_pri.html](http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2010/06/transmedia_education_the_7_pri.html)
- Jenkins, H. (2013). *Announcing Transmedia Hollywood 4: Spreading Change*. Henry Jenkins. <http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2013/02/announcing-transmedia-hollywood-4-spreading-change.html>
- Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K., & Robinson, A. J. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. The MIT Press.
- Jenkins, H., Shresthova, S., & Peters-Lazaro, G. (2020). *Popular Culture and the Civic Imagination: Case Studies of Creative Social Change*. NYU Press.
- Jensen, K. B. (2002). The qualitative research process. In *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research* (pp. 235–253). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Jessee, E. (2011). The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology Amid Highly Politicized Research Settings. *Oral History Review*, 38(2), 287–307.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohr098>
- Jessee, Erin. (2017). *Negotiating Genocide in Rwanda*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45195-4>
- Kahne, J., Lee, N.-J., & Feezell, J. T. (2012). *Digital Media Literacy Education and Online Civic and Political Participation*. 24.
- Kalogeras, S. (2014). *Transmedia Storytelling and the New Era of Media Convergence in Higher Education*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137388377>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>

- Kaplowitz, M. D., & Hoehn, J. P. (2001). Do focus groups and individual interviews reveal the same information for natural resource valuation? *Ecological Economics*, 36(2), 237–247. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009\(00\)00226-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009(00)00226-3)
- Keightley, E., & Schlesinger, P. (2014). Digital media – social memory: Remembering in digitally networked times. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(6), 745–747. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714532985>
- Kellow, C. L., & Steeves, H. L. (1998). The role of radio in the Rwandan genocide. *Journal of Communication*, 48(3), 107–128. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1998.tb02762.x>
- Kerrigan, S., & Velikovsky, J. (2016). Examining documentary transmedia narratives through The Living History of Fort Scratchley project. *Convergence*, 22(3), 250–268. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856514567053>
- King, E. (2013). *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kirschke, L. (Ed.). (1996). *Broadcasting genocide: Censorship, propaganda and state-sponsored violence in Rwanda 1990-1994*. Article 19.
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative Research: Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, 311(7000), 299–302. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299>
- Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (Eds.). (2007). *A new literacies sampler*. P. Lang.
- Kuntsman, A., & Miyake, E. (2015). *Paradoxes of Digital dis/engagement: Final Report* (No. 6; Working Papers of the Communities & Culture Network+, p. 20).
- Kuntsman, Adi, & Miyake, E. (2019). The paradox and continuum of digital disengagement: Denaturalising digital sociality and technological connectivity. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(6), 901–913. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719853732>
- Lambourne, W. (2003). Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Meeting Human Needs for Justice and Reconciliation. *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.7246/pcd.0404>
- Larrauri, H. P., & Kahl, A. (2013). Technology for Peacebuilding. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(3), Art. 61. <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.cv>
- Leavy, P. (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches*. Guilford Publications.
- Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. U.S. Institute of Peace.
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 22(4), 557–584. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1045-3830.22.4.557>
- Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. Penguin Press.

- Li, D. (2004). Echoes of violence: Considerations on radio and genocide in Rwanda. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6(1), 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462352042000194683>
- Livingstone, S. (2003). Children's Use of the Internet: Reflections on the Emerging Research Agenda. *New Media & Society*, 5(2), 147–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444803005002001>
- Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 9(4), 671–696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807080335>
- Longman, T. (2014). The Uses and Abuses of Media: Rwanda before and after the Genocide. In R.-B. Ramirez-Barat (Ed.), *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach* (pp. 247–278). Social Science Research Council.
- Lupton, D. (2015). *Digital sociology*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Maclellan, S. (2019). "FAKE NEWS," DANGEROUS SPEECH AND MASS VIOLENCE: CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. In A. Thompson (Ed.), *Media and Mass Atrocity: The Rwanda Genocide and Beyond*. CIGI Press.
- Mafeza, F. (2013). *The Role of Education in Combating Genocide Ideology in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. 1(10).
- Magnarella, P. J. (2005). The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda. *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 3(4), 801–822. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqi059>
- Mamdani, M. (2002). *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda* (3. print., and 1. paperback print). Princeton Univ. Press.
- Masanet, M.-J., Guerrero-Pico, M., & Establés, M.-J. (2019). From digital native to digital apprentice. A case study of the transmedia skills and informal learning strategies of adolescents in Spain. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44(4), 400–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2019.1641513>
- Mateos-Rusillo, S. M., & Gifreu-Castells, A. (2018). Transmedia Storytelling and Its Natural Application in Museums. The Case of the Bosch Project at the Museo Nacional del Prado. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 61(2), 301–313. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12252>
- McCracken, E. (2013). Expanding Genette's Epitext/Peritext Model for Transitional Electronic Literature: Centrifugal and Centripetal Vectors on Kindles and iPads. *Narrative*, 21(1), 105–124. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2013.0005>
- McEvoy-Levy, S. (2001). *Youth as social and political agents: Issues in post-settlement peace building*. Kroc Institute Occasional Paper #21:OP:2.
- McKay, A., & Verpoorten, M. (2016). Growth, Poverty Reduction, and Inequality in Rwanda. In C. Arndt, A. D. McKay, F. Tarp, & World Institute for Development Economics Research (Eds.), *Growth and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa* (First edition, pp. 112–136). Oxford University Press.
- McLean Hilker, L. (2009). Everyday ethnicities: Identity and reconciliation among Rwandan youth. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11(1), 81–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520802703640>

- McLean Hilker, L. (2011). The role of education in driving conflict and building peace: The case of Rwanda. *PROSPECTS*, 41(2), 267–282.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-011-9193-7>
- McLean Hilker, L. (2014). Navigating adolescence and young adulthood in Rwanda during and after genocide: Intersections of ethnicity, gender and age. *Children's Geographies*, 12(3), 354–368.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2014.913784>
- McRoberts, J. (2016). Negotiating Conflict: A Discussion of Interactive Documentary as Constructive Storytelling in Societies Emerging from Conflict. *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network*, 9(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.31165/nk.2016.91.414>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mgbako, C. A. (2005). Ingando Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda Note. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 18, 25.
- Miller, C., & Bartlett, J. (2012). “Digital fluency”: Towards young people’s critical use of the internet. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 6(2), 35.  
<https://doi.org/10.11645/6.2.1714>
- Milner, R. M. (2012). *The World Made Meme: Discourse and Identity in Participatory Media* [University of Kansas].  
<https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/10256>
- Milner, R. M. (2013). *Pop Polyvocality: Internet Memes, Public Participation, and the Occupy Wall Street Movement*. 34.
- Milner, R. M. (2018). *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*. MIT Press.
- Miltner, K. M. (2014). “There’s no place for lulz on LOLCats”: The role of genre, gender, and group identity in the interpretation and enjoyment of an Internet meme. *First Monday*. <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v19i8.5391>
- Mina, A. X. (2014). Batman, Pandaman and the Blind Man: A Case Study in Social Change Memes and Internet Censorship in China. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 13(3), 359–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412914546576>
- Mironko, C. (2007). The Effect of RTLM’s Rhetoric of Ethnic Hatred in Rural Rwanda. In A. Thompson (Ed.), *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (pp. 125–135). Pluto Press.
- Mitchell, J. (2007). Remembering the Rwandan Genocide: Reconsidering the Role of Local and Global Media. *Global Media Journal*, 6(11).  
<https://www.globalmediajournal.com/peer-reviewed/remembering-the-rwandan-genocidereconsidering-the-role-of-local-and-global-media-35262.html>
- Mittell, J. (2015). *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*. NYU Press.
- Moloney, K. (2018). Transmedia Photography: Implicit Narrative from a Discrete Moment. In Matthew Freeman & R. R. Gambarato (Eds.), *The Routledge*

- Companion to Transmedia Studies* (1st ed., pp. 173–183). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351054904>
- Moloney, K. T. (2011). *PORTING TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING TO JOURNALISM*. University of Denver.
- Moreno-Almeida, C. (2020). Memes as snapshots of participation: The role of digital amateur activists in authoritarian regimes. *New Media & Society*, 146144482091272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820912722>
- Mossberger, K., Tolbert, C. J., & Stansbury, M. (2003). *Virtual Inequality: Beyond the Digital Divide*. Georgetown University Press.
- Mukama, E. (2008). Students' interaction with Web-based literature: Towards dissolution of language boundaries. *IJKL*, 4, 478–495.  
<https://doi.org/10.1504/IJKL.2008.022065>
- Mukama, E. (2009). The interplay between learning and the use of ICT in Rwandan student teachers' everyday practice: The learning and use of ICT in Rwanda. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 25(6), 539–548.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2009.00326.x>
- Mukama, E., & Andersson, S. B. (2007). Coping with change in ICT-based learning environments: Newly qualified Rwandan teachers' reflections: Change in ICT-based learning environments. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 24(2), 156–166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2007.00249.x>
- Mumporeze, N., & Prieler, M. (2017). Gender digital divide in Rwanda: A qualitative analysis of socioeconomic factors. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1285–1293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.05.014>
- Murithi, T. (2009). AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON PEACE EDUCATION: UBUNTU LESSONS IN RECONCILIATION. *International Review of Education*, 55(2), 221–233. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-009-9129-0>
- Murthy, D. (2008). Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research. *Sociology*, 42(5), 837–855.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094565>
- Mutamba, J., & Izabiliza, J. (2005). *The Role of Women in Reconciliation and Peace Building in Rwanda: Ten Years after Genocide 1994-2004* (p. 53). THE NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (NURC).
- Mwambari, D. (2017). Women-Led Non-Governmental Organizations and Peacebuilding in Rwanda. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 7(1), 66. <https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.7.1.05>
- National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. (2017). *UNLOCKING RWANDA'S POTENTIAL TO REAP THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND*.  
<https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/demographic-dividend>
- Nduhura, D., & Prieler, M. (2017a). Citizen Journalism and Democratisation of Mainstream Media in Rwanda. *African Journalism Studies*, 38(2), 178–197.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2017.1332659>
- Nduhura, D., & Prieler, M. (2017b). When I chat online, I feel relaxed and work better: Exploring the use of social media in the public sector workplace in

- Rwanda. *Telecommunications Policy*, 41(7), 708–716.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2017.05.008>
- Ndura-Ouédraogo, E. (2009). The role of education in peace-building in the African Great Lakes region: Educators' perspectives. *Journal of Peace Education*, 6(1), 37–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400200802655130>
- Newbury, C., & Baldwin, H. (2001). Confronting the Aftermath of the Conflict: Women's Organizations in Postgenocide Rwanda. In K. Kumar (Ed.), *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations, and Action*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Nissenbaum, A., & Shifman, L. (2017). Internet memes as contested cultural capital: The case of 4chan's /b/ board. *New Media & Society*, 19(4), 483–501.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815609313>
- Noddings, N. (2012). *Peace education: How we come to love and hate war*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nottingham-Martin, A. (2015). *Thresholds of Transmedia Storytelling: Applying Gérard Genette's Paratextual Theory to The 39 Clues Series for Young Readers* [Chapter]. Gamification: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications; IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8200-9.ch041>
- Paluck, E. (2007). *Reducing Intergroup Prejudice and Conflict Using the Media: A Field Experiment in Rwanda*. Yale University.
- Paluck, E. L. (2009). Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(3), 574–587. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0011989>
- Pangrazio, L. (2016). Reconceptualising critical digital literacy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(2), 163–174.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2014.942836>
- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research*, 34(5 Pt 2), 1189–1208.
- Pearson, R. (2008). *The Jekyll and Hyde of Transmedia Storytelling*. Television and the Digital Public Sphere, Université de Paris II, Paris, France,.
- Pells, K. (2011a). Building a Rwanda "Fit for Children." In *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence* (pp. 79–86). The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Pells, K. (2011b). "Keep going despite everything": Legacies of genocide for Rwanda's children and youth. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 31(9/10), 594–606. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01443331111164179>
- Pells, K., Pontalti, K., & Williams, T. P. (2014). Promising developments? Children, youth and post-genocide reconstruction under the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(2), 294–310.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2014.892672>
- Pentzold, C. (2009). Fixing the floating gap: The online encyclopaedia Wikipedia as a global memory place. *Memory Studies*, 2(2), 255–272.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698008102055>
- Phillips, W., & Milner, R. M. (2017). Decoding Memes: Barthes' Punctum, Feminist Standpoint Theory, and the Political Significance of #YesAllWomen. In S.

- Harrington (Ed.), *Entertainment Values: How do we Assess Entertainment and Why does it Matter?* (pp. 195–211). Palgrave Macmillan UK.  
[https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-47290-8\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-47290-8_13)
- Pink, S., Horst, H. A., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T., & Tacchi, J. (Eds.). (2016). *Digital ethnography: Principles and practice*. SAGE.
- Power, S. (2001, September). Bystanders to Genocide. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 31.
- Pratten, R. (2015). *Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*.
- Purdeková, A. (2008a). Repatriation and reconciliation in divided societies: The case of Rwanda's 'Ingando.' *RSC Working Paper Series*, 43.  
<https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/repatriation-and-reconciliation-in-divided-societies-the-case-of-rwanda2019s-2018ingando2019>
- Purdeková, A. (2008b). Building a Nation in Rwanda? De-ethnicisation and its Discontents. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 8(3), 502–523.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2008.00031.x>
- Purdeková, A. (2011). 'Even if I am not here, there are so many eyes': Surveillance and state reach in Rwanda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49(3), 475–497. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X11000292>
- Purdeková, A. (2015). *Making ubumwe: Power, state and camps in Rwanda's unity-building project*. Berghahn Books.
- Rager, K. B. (2005). Self-Care and the Qualitative Researcher: When Collecting Data Can Break Your Heart. *Educational Researcher*, 34(4), 23–27.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034004023>
- Ragnedda, M., & Mutsvairo, B. (2018). *Digital Inclusion: Empowering People through Information and Communication Technologies*. Lexington Books.  
<https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/128561>
- Ramasubramanian, S. (2016). Racial/ethnic identity, community-oriented media initiatives, and transmedia storytelling. *The Information Society*, 32(5), 333–342.
- Rampazzo Gambarato, R. (2013). Transmedia Project Design: Theoretical and Analytical Considerations. *Baltic Screen Media Review*, 1(1), 80–100.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/bsmr-2015-0006>
- Republic of Rwanda. (2001). *LAW NO 47/2001 ON PREVENTION, SUPPRESSION AND PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF DISCRIMINATION AND SECTARIANISM*.
- Republic of Rwanda. (2008). *LAW N°18/2008 OF 23/07/2008 RELATING TO THE PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE IDEOLOGY*.
- Republic of Rwanda. (2012). *Rwanda Vision 2020*.
- Republic of Rwanda. (2015a). *Rwanda ICT Strategic and Action Plan (NICI III – 2015)*.
- Republic of Rwanda. (2015b). *Smart Rwanda Master Plan 2020—Towards a Knowledge Based Society*.
- Republic of Rwanda. (2016). *ICT in Education Policy*. Ministry of Education.

- Republic of Rwanda. (2018a). *ICT Hub Strategy Plan*. MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS.
- Republic of Rwanda. (2018b). *Local Digital Content Promotion Strategy & Implementation Plan*. MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS.
- Rettig, M. (2008). Gacaca: Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Postconflict Rwanda? *African Studies Review*, 51(3), 25–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.0.0091>
- Reyntjens, F. (2006). Post-1994 Politics in Rwanda: Problematizing ‘liberation’ and ‘democratisation.’ *Third World Quarterly*, 27(6), 1103–1117.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590600842399>
- Reyntjens, F. (2016). (Re-)imagining a reluctant post-genocide society: The Rwandan Patriotic Front’s ideology and practice. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 18(1), 61–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1120464>
- Rivers, J. K., Rivers, P. A., & Hazell, V. (2015). *Africa and Technology in Higher Education: Trends, Challenges, and Promise*. 5, 18.
- Rockenberger, A. (2015). Video Game Framings. In *Gamification: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 49–82). IGI Global.  
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8200-9.ch004>
- Rodrigues, P., & Bidarra, J. (2014). Transmedia Storytelling and the Creation of a Converging Space of Educational Practices. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 9(6), 42.  
<https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v9i6.4134>
- Rodríguez-Ferrández, R. (2017). Paratextual Activity: Updating the Genettian approach within the transmedia turn. *Communication & Society*, 30(1), 165–182. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.30.1.165-182>
- Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2015). *Applied Qualitative Research Design: A Total Quality Framework Approach*. Guilford Publications.
- Rubagiza, J., Umutoni, J., & Kaleeba, A. (2016). Teachers as agents of change: Promoting peacebuilding and social cohesion in schools in Rwanda. *Education as Change*, 20(3). <https://doi.org/10.17159/1947-9417/2016/1533>
- Rubagiza, J., Were, E., & Sutherland, R. (2011). Introducing ICT into schools in Rwanda: Educational challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(1), 37–43.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2010.06.004>
- RURA. (2020). *STATISTICS REPORT FOR TELECOM, MEDIA AND BROADCASTING SECTOR AS OF THE SECOND QUARTER OF THE YEAR 2020*. Rwandan Utilities Regularity Authority.  
<https://rura.rw/index.php?id=194>
- Rutledge, P. (2011). *Storytelling for a Social World: Transmedia*.  
<http://www.pamelarutledge.com/resources/the-psychological-power-of-transmedia-storytelling/>
- Ryan, M.-L. (2004). *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*. U of Nebraska Press.

- Ryan, M.-L. (2015). Transmedia Storytelling: Industry Buzzword or New Narrative Experience? *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 7(2), 1. <https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.7.2.0001>
- Sánchez Martínez, M., & Ibar Alonso, R. (2015). Convergence and interaction in the new media: Typologies of prosumers among university students. *Communication & Society*, 28(2), 87–99. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.28.2.87-99>
- Scolari, C. (2009). *Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production*. 21.
- Scolari, C. (2013). Lostology: Transmedia storytelling and expansion/compression strategies. *Semiotica*, 2013(195), 45–68. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2013-0038>
- Scolari, C., Bertetti, P., & Freeman, M. (2014). *Transmedia archaeology storytelling in the borderlines of science fiction, comics and pulp magazines*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781137434371>
- Scolari, C., Lugo Rodríguez, N., & Masanet, M. (2019). *Transmedia Education. From the contents generated by the users to the contents generated by the students* (74th ed.). *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*. <https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2019-1324en>
- Scolari, C., Masanet, M.-J., Guerrero-Pico, M., & Establés, M.-J. (2018). Transmedia literacy in the new media ecology: Teens' transmedia skills and informal learning strategies. *El Profesional de La Información*, 27(4), 801. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2018.jul.09>
- Scolari, Carlos A. (2014). *Don Quixote of La Mancha: Transmedia Storytelling in the Grey Zone*. 27.
- Scolari, Carlos A. (2015). From (new)media to (hyper)mediations. Recovering Jesús Martín-Barbero's mediation theory in the age of digital communication and cultural convergence. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(9), 1092–1107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1018299>
- Scolari, Carlos A. (Ed.). (2018). *Teens, Media, and Collaborative Cultures. Exploiting Teens' Transmedia Skills in the Classroom*. H2020 Transliteracy Project.
- Selwyn, N. (2004). Reconsidering Political and Popular Understandings of the Digital Divide. *New Media & Society*, 6(3), 341–362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444804042519>
- Selwyn, N., Cardiff University, & School of Social Sciences. (2002). *Defining the "digital divide": Developing a theoretical understanding of inequalities in the information age*. School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.
- Shifman, L. (2012). An anatomy of a YouTube meme. *New Media & Society*, 14(2), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811412160>
- Shifman, L. (2014). *Memes in digital culture*. The MIT Press.
- Smyth, T. N., Etherton, J., & Best, M. L. (2010). MOSES: Exploring new ground in media and post-conflict reconciliation. *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems - CHI '10*, 1059. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1753326.1753484>

- Sobel, M., & McIntyre, K. (2018). Journalists' Perceptions of Human Rights Reporting in Rwanda. *African Journalism Studies*, 39(3), 85–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2018.1495659>
- Sobel, M., & McIntyre, K. (2019). The State of Journalism and Press Freedom in Postgenocide Rwanda. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 96(2), 558–578. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018782201>
- Somerville, K. (2012). *Radio Propaganda and the Broadcasting of Hatred*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137284150>
- Sommers, M. (2011). *Governance, Security and Culture: Assessing Africa's Youth Bulge*. 5(2), 12.
- Spillane, J. (2015). ICT4P: Using information and communication technology for peacebuilding in Rwanda. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 10(3), 97–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2015.1091269>
- Spink, J. (2005). Education and politics in Afghanistan: The importance of an education system in peacebuilding and reconstruction. *Journal of Peace Education*, 2(2), 195–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400200500185794>
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Spradley, J. P. (2016). *Participant Observation*. Waveland Press.
- Srivastava, L. (2009). *Transmedia Activism: Telling Your Story Across Media Platforms to Create Effective Social Change*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130515174049/http://www.namac.org/node/6925>
- Staub, E. (2006). Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory. *Political Psychology*, 27(6), 867–894. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00541.x>
- Staub, E. (2013). Building a peaceful society: Origins, prevention, and reconciliation after genocide and other group violence. *American Psychologist*, 68(7), 576–589. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032045>
- Staub, E. (2014). The Challenging Road to Reconciliation in Rwanda: Societal Processes, Interventions and Their Evaluation. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 2(1), 505–517. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v2i1.294>
- Steyn, J., & Johanson, G. (Eds.). (2010). *ICTs and sustainable solutions for the digital divide: Theory and perspectives*. Information Science Reference.
- Straus, S. (2007). What Is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda's "Radio Machete." *Politics & Society*, 35(4), 609–637. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329207308181>
- Straus, S. (2019). WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HATE RADIO AND VIOLENCE? RETHINKING RWANDA'S "RADIO MACHETE." In A. Thompson (Ed.), *Media and Mass Atrocity: The Rwanda Genocide and Beyond* (pp. 108–136). CIGI Press.
- Straus, S., & Waldorf, L. (Eds.). (2011). *Remaking Rwanda: State building and human rights after mass violence*. The University of Wisconsin Press.

- Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6(3), 374–385.
- Suter, E. (2000). Focus Groups in Ethnography of Communication: Expanding Topics of Inquiry Beyond Participant Observation. *The Qualitative Report*, 5(1), 1–14.
- Teske, P., & Horstman, T. (2012). Transmedia in the classroom: Breaking the fourth wall. *Proceeding of the 16th International Academic MindTrek Conference*, 5–9. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2393132.2393134>
- Thomas, P., & Skinstad van der Kooij, K. (2018). The history syllabus in post-genocide Rwanda. *Cogent Education*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2018.1541495>
- Thompson, A. (Ed.). (2007). *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*. Pluto Press.
- Thompson, A. (Ed.). (2019). *Media and Mass Atrocity: The Rwanda Genocide and Beyond*. CIGI Press.
- Thomson, S. (2010). Getting Close to Rwandans since the Genocide: Studying Everyday Life in Highly Politicized Research Settings. *African Studies Review*, 53(3), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0002020600005655>
- Thomson, S. (2018). *Rwanda: From Genocide to Precarious Peace*. Yale University Press.
- Thomson, S. M. (2013). *Whispering truth to power: Everyday resistance to reconciliation in postgenocide Rwanda*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Todd, A. R., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Perspective-Taking as a Strategy for Improving Intergroup Relations: Evidence, Mechanisms, and Qualifications. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 8(7), 374–387. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12116>
- Toffler, A. (1980). *The Third Wave*. Morrow.
- Tsekoura, M. (2016). Spaces for Youth Participation and Youth Empowerment: Case Studies from the UK and Greece. *YOUNG*, 24(4), 326–341. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308815618505>
- UNAOC. (n.d.). *PEACEapp | UNAOC*. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Retrieved November 25, 2020, from <https://www.unaoc.org/what-we-do/projects/peaceapp/>
- Unwin, T., Kleessen, B., Hollow, D., Williams, J. B., Oloo, L. M., Alwala, J., Mutimucuo, I., Eduardo, F., & Muianga, X. (2010). Digital learning management systems in Africa: Myths and realities. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 25(1), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680510903482033>
- Uvin, P. (1999). Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different Paths to Mass Violence. *Comparative Politics*, 31(3), 253–271. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422339>
- van Dijck, J. (2008). Digital photography: Communication, identity, memory. *Visual Communication*, 7(1), 57–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357207084865>

- Van Langenhove, L. (2017). Varieties of Moral Orders and the Dual Structure of Society: A Perspective from Positioning Theory. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2017.00009>
- Vázquez-Herrero, J., & Gifreu-Castells, A. (2019). Interactive and Transmedia Documentary: Production, Interface, Content and Representation. In M. Túnñez-López, V.-A. Martínez-Fernández, X. López-García, X. Rúas-Araújo, & F. Campos-Freire (Eds.), *Communication: Innovation & Quality* (pp. 113–127). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91860-0\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91860-0_8)
- Vescio, T. K., Sechrist, G. B., & Paolucci, M. P. (2003). Perspective taking and prejudice reduction: The mediational role of empathy arousal and situational attributions. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33(4), 455–472. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.163>
- von Stackelberg, P. (2011). *Creating Digital Narratives: The Structure and Design of Stories Told Across Multiple Media*. State University of New York.
- Waldorf, L. (2009). Revisiting Hotel Rwanda: Genocide ideology, reconciliation, and rescuers. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 11(1), 101–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520802703673>
- Wang, C. S., Kenneth, T., Ku, G., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Perspective-Taking Increases Willingness to Engage in Intergroup Contact. *PLOS ONE*, 9(1), e85681. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0085681>
- Warschauer, M. (2002, July 1). *Reconceptualizing the digital divide* (1996 - 2002) [Text]. First Monday, ISSN 1396-0466; Valauskas, Edward J. <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/967/888>
- Were, E. M., Rubagiza, J. M., Sutherland, R., & EdQual RPC. (2009). *Bridging the digital divide?: Educational challenges and opportunities in Rwanda*. EdQual RPC.
- Wiggins, B. E. (2019). *The Discursive Power of Memes in Digital Culture: Ideology, Semiotics, and Intertextuality* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492303>
- Wolnik, K., Busse, B., Tholen, J., Yndigegn, C., Levinsen, K., Saari, K., & Puuronen, V. (2017). The long shadows of the difficult past? How young people in Denmark, Finland and Germany remember WWII. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20(2), 162–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1206866>
- World Bank. (2020). *Rwanda—Overview* [Text/HTML]. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview>
- Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2013). *Propaganda vs. Education*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199764419.013.018>
- Yanagizawa-Drott, D. (2014). Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide\*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(4), 1947–1994. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qju020>
- Yoon, I. (2016). Why is it not Just a Joke? Analysis of Internet Memes Associated with Racism and Hidden Ideology of Colorblindness. *Journal of Cultural*

*Research in Art Education*, 33.

<https://jcrae.art.arizona.edu/index.php/jcrae/article/view/60>

Zimmerman, A. (2016). Transmedia Testimonio: Examining Undocumented Youth's Political Activism in the Digital Age. *International Journal of Communication*, 10(0), 21.

Zorbas, E. (2004). Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda. *African Journal of Legal Studies*, 1(1), 29–52. <https://doi.org/10.1163/221097312X13397499735904>



## 11. APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Focus Group Discussion Questions

Themes	Relevant Questions
Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-How was your experience in general?</li><li>-What have you done while visiting the websites of projects on the internet?</li><li>-Which other websites have you visited other?</li><li>-Have you checked for other information on different platforms?</li></ul>
Design of the projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-How do you like the design of the website?</li><li>-Was it easy or hard to follow?</li><li>-What do you think about the visuals, colors and audio used in the project?</li><li>-What kind of emotions have these visuals, colors and audio evoked?</li></ul>
Content of the projects	<p>For the projects related to the Cambodian and Guatemalan genocide;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Did you know anything about this specific genocide? Explain.</li><li>-What kind of ideas and thought has this project fostered related to your country's past? Explain.</li><li>-What kind of questions it has elicited in your mind associated with peace and reconciliation? Explain.</li></ul> <p>For the projects related to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Have you learned something new or unfamiliar to you while reading or watching the materials on the website? Explain.</li><li>-What has been your experience in terms of peacebuilding and reconciliation process in your country?</li></ul>
Content creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-What was your experience while creating a content after interacting with the projects?</li></ul>

## Appendix II: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Themes	Relevant Questions
General icebreaking questions	-Do you like to spend time on the internet? What do you do? -Which media platforms do you use? For what reason?
Experiences about creating stories	-How do you describe your experience with creating your story? -Can you explain me how you did it? -Which media platform have you used? -Did you have any obstacles? How did you find out the solution? -What was your inspiration using this story?
Education system in Rwanda	-How do you describe the education system in Rwanda? -Do you use any kind of digital storytelling activities such as images, videos, documentaries in classrooms?
General ideas on media	-Do you share your memories and opinions on social media platforms? On which platforms? -Do your family members use social media? What do they think about your use of digital technologies?

## Appendix III: Consent Form

Parent/Guardian Consent for Their Child to Participate in a Research Study

**Title of Study:** Negotiating Peace through Transmedia Narratives: Digital inclusion of youth and peacebuilding in post-genocide Rwanda

Researcher: Tugce Ataci (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Department of Communication)

**Please read the following part carefully.**

- You are being asked to consent your child's involvement in a research study on the use of transmedia storytelling in peacebuilding and peace education in post-genocide Rwanda.
- The purpose of the study is to understand in what ways and to what extent transmedia storytelling can be used in peace education and what are the students' expectations, needs and approach. It aims to produce new knowledge about the peace education methods using new media technologies.
- Ultimately, this research will be a PhD dissertation in Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain.
- If you agree for your child to be involved in this research, they will be asked to participate in the following things: workshops/focus groups and interviews. All of these activities will be conducted with the permission of and collaboration with their school. The workshop/focus groups will last 3 to 4 hours, while individual interviews will take 45-50 minutes. Throughout the research process, the researcher will take notes of her observations.
- There are no expected physical risks that your child will be exposed to throughout the course of this research. However, there might be emotional and sensitive topics with regards to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The projects your child will interact in the workshops include personal stories of survivors of genocides and peacebuilding processes in post-genocide societies. Digital projects that will be used in the workshops are Love Radio - Rwanda (<http://www.loveradio-rwanda.org/>), Portraits from a Changing Rwanda (<http://www.rwanda20ansapres.net/en/the-webdoc/>), Scars of Cambodia (<http://scarsofcambodia.com/>) and Granito: Every Memory Matters (<http://www.granitomem.com/>)
- The benefits of participation are that your child will gain information about the genocides that occurred in Cambodia and Guatemala and reflect on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and they will have a chance to see the similarities and differences, causes and consequences of each. They will also widen their perspective about the concept of transmedia storytelling.
- All of the information about your child's identity will be kept anonymous. Research records will be kept in an electronic format which will be locked with a password. The researcher will record the interviews and workshops with a voice recorder or a video camera, which will be used only by her and only for

educational purposes. After transcribing the records, all records will be deleted. Additionally, pseudonyms will be used in the research publications. Any people they mention in their interviews will be assigned a pseudonym as well.

- Your child’s participation in the study is voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time during the project.
- Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace in Rwanda (IRDP) will be the affiliating organization of the researcher during the field research in Rwanda
- If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Tugce Ataci at [tugce.ataci@upf.edu](mailto:tugce.ataci@upf.edu). If you agree for your child’s participation in the study, please sign this form and return it.

**I hereby confirm that;** (please tick the boxes)

I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided below.	
I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary and he/she can withdraw from the study at any time without being penalised.	
I voluntarily agree to my child’s participation in the project.	
I understand that regarding confidentiality, my child’s identity will be kept anonymous.	
I agree to the workshops/ interviews /focus groups being audio or video recorded	
I understand that the data collected for this research will be used in publications.	
I agree to sign this parent/guardian consent form.	

**Child’s name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian                      Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Researcher                      Signature                      Date

## Appendix IV: Participation form/Questionnaire

**Name:**

**Surname:**

**Date of Birth:**

**Gender:**

**Nationality(s):**

**Please circle the answer:**

Do you have a smartphone? Yes/No

Do you have a tablet? Yes/No

Do you have a desktop computer? Yes/No

Do you have a laptop? Yes/No

Do you play games on your phone or computer? Yes/No Your favourite game:

Do you watch TV series? Yes/No Your favourite TV series:

**Please answer the following questions:**

Which social media platforms, apps or websites do you use?

Facebook

Twitter

Youtube

Instagram

Whatsapp

Other: (Please specify).....

I don't use any

Which social media platform, app or website do you use the MOST? (Please write only ONE)

.....

Date/Signature

## **Appendix V: Letter to the School Principals/Teachers**

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Tugce Ataci, and I am a PhD candidate at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain. I am writing to you because I am conducting my research about transmedia storytelling for peace education in societies emerging from conflict. I am collaborating with Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP), Rwanda. I thought you, as a teacher/principal in one these schools, might be interested in involving your students for my research. I will conduct two workshops that will last 3 to 4 hours and individual interviews with students that will take 45-50 minutes. This study aims to contribute to our understanding of young people's use of new media technologies and how to integrate them into classrooms for peace education. Your and your students' identity will be kept strictly confidential. The results of this study will be published as a PhD dissertation at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain as well as academic publications. Pseudonyms will be utilized in the publication and any identifying information will not be given. Your collaboration would mean that you will encourage students to participate in my research and provide a space for us in the school for workshops and interviews. In return of collaboration, I would be happy to give a seminar on a related topic to my studies or volunteer for a community work in the school.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me at [tugce.ataci@upf.edu](mailto:tugce.ataci@upf.edu).  
Thank you!

Sincerely,

Tugce Ataci

## Appendix VI: Recruitment Flyer



Hello! I am Tugce Ataci, a PhD student looking for volunteers between the ages of 13 and 19 to take part in a study of digital media use of young people in Rwanda.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in 2 workshops where we will watch documentaries about the reconciliation processes in post-genocide societies of Cambodia, Guatemala and Rwanda, interact with digital projects, create digital texts and discuss. I will also conduct interviews with you on digital media use and more fun stuff like games, TV series and mobile phone applications.

Your participation is **entirely voluntary**. If you accept to participate in the research, you will spend 2 full days of workshop with me and approximately 1 hour of individual interview.

To participate in this study, please sign up the participation form that will be provided to you by me or your teachers. And also the consent forms for your parents!

**This research has been approved by the National Council for Science and Technology in Rwanda.**

