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REMEMBERING HUMANITY

The Politics of Genocide Memorialisation in Rwanda

Rachel Claire Ibreck

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Politics, March 2009

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ABSTRACT

My thesis explores the political significance of memorialisation after mass violence through an empirical study of the sites and rituals dedicated to remembering the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. My aim is to contribute to debates about the relationships between memory, identity, trauma and politics. I also seek to expose the dynamics of memory in a volatile political context. Increasingly, there is interest in how memory might contribute to political transformation after conflict or repression. However memorials are also typically regarded as an instrument for political elites to impose their visions of the past. I consider the politics of memorialisation at a time when the effects of violence and its memory cast shadows over Rwanda and the surrounding region.

My study is grounded in a discussion of the politics of memory but it also offers a window onto politics in Rwanda. I review previous studies to reach an understanding of how and why memorials intersect with politics. I trace the history of memorials to the victims of the genocide over more than a decade since their establishment. I examine the contributions of the Government of Rwanda, genocide survivors and international donors and NGOs to the memorials, discussing their aims and debates among and between them. I analyse the sites and rituals of remembrance, identifying how ideas about the genocide and its meaning for the present are expressed and shared. I uncover diverse interactions with, and responses to, the memorials and observe silences about the past. I find that political elites employ genocide memorials to construct political legitimacy, but such efforts are contested. The rituals and sites of genocide memory are not simply political instruments; they reflect trauma, mourning and a will to prevent further atrocities.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: *Samuel Brock* DATE: *23rd July 2009.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

Introduction	2
The Memory of Genocide in Rwanda	3
Approach	6
Argument	7
Structure	8
Chapter 1: The Politics of Memorialisation	11
Memory, Identity and Power	12
Memory and the Nation	13
Beyond the Nation	15
Constructing Memorials	18
Memories of Violence	22
Loss	25
The Ethics of Remembrance	28
Conclusion	30
Chapter 2: Researching Memorialisation	32
Studying Post-Genocide Rwanda	33
Arenas, Agencies, Processes	35
Narratives, Forms, Rituals	37
Sources and Methods	41
Fieldwork	41
Interviews and Observation	44
Interpretation	47
Ethics	48
Conclusion	49
Chapter 3: Research Context	50
History and Memory	50
The Genocide	52
Post Genocide Politics	55
Literature Review	58
Chapter 4: Official Memory	62
National Remembrance	63
The Origins of Genocide Memory	65
The Legacy of Genocide	65
Memory Policy	67
The Political 'Uses' of Memory	71
Constructing Legitimacy	71
Genocide Prevention, Reconciliation, Combating Denial	73
Extracting Advantage	74
A Political Process	76
Shared Concerns	76

Matters of Debate	77
Displaying Bones	79
Differences of Opinion within the Government	81
Conclusion	82
Chapter 5: The Politics of Grief	84
A Bereaved Community	85
Memory Work	87
Constructing Local Memorials	88
Nyamasheke Memorial Site	89
Mugina Memorial Site	91
Mourning	93
Resisting Genocide	97
Struggling for Survival	98
Human Dignity	102
Conclusion	104
Chapter 6: The Politics of Regret	106
International Memorials	107
Funding Memory Projects in Rwanda	111
The Meaning of Regret	116
Shame, Apology and Reform	118
Memory as Moral Legitimacy	122
Aiding Post-Conflict Reconstruction	124
Conclusion	128
Chapter 7: The Time of Mourning	130
Memory Narratives	131
The Official Account	132
Identity and Genocide	134
Local Accounts	138
Survivor Accounts	139
An International Account	141
Memory Rituals	142
The Nature of Participation	145
Tensions and Conflicts	147
Protests in Exile	147
Challenges in Rwanda	151
Injustice	153
Guilt and Hostility	155
Conclusion	157
Chapter 8: Trauma Sites	158
The Kigali Memorial Centre	159
Constructing KMC	160
A History of Genocide	162
Moral Lessons	164
Silences	166
Symbols of Memory	168
Responses	170

Murambi Genocide Prevention Centre	172
Genocide in Gikongoro	173
Preserving the Site	174
Problems in the Process	176
Inside Murambi	180
Visitors	181
Sites of Struggle	183
Nyarubuye Genocide Memorial	185
Ntarama Genocide Memorial	186
Nyamata Genocide Memorial	188
Bisesero Genocide Memorial	191
Collective Identities	196
Conclusion	199
Conclusion	201
The Contradictions in Memory Work	201
Memorials and Identity in Rwanda	204
Sites of Contestation	206
Negotiating the Future	207
Memory and Justice	209
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>214</i>

Appendix 1: Map of Rwanda showing key genocide memorial sites

Appendix 2: Photographs of Memorial Sites in Rwanda



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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Amnesty International
AU	African Union
AVEGA	Association des Veuves du Génocide
CNLG	National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide
COSAR	Collectif du Six Avril 1994 Rwanda
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises
FDLR	Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (United Nations)
INMR	Institute of National Museums of Rwanda
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IPEP	International Panel of Eminent Personalities
KMC	Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre
MRND	Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement
MIJESPOC	Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture (Rwanda)
MINILOC	Ministry of Local Government (Rwanda)
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PRI	Penal Reform International
RDR	Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda
RDF	Rwanda Defence Forces
RNA	Rwanda News Agency
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SURF	Survivors' Fund (UK)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

INTRODUCTION

After genocide, memory is the only form of resistance left against a crime designed to eliminate a “people” (UN, 1948). Forgetting implies complicity (Nevins, 2005: 276) and leaves the victims nameless (Edkins, 2003: 229). Silence about genocide, and other atrocities, is a form of denial which torments survivors and dishonours the dead. It seems, then, that there is no alternative but to confront the difficult questions of how the dead are to be remembered, by whom and to what effect. In this thesis I consider how and why memorials matter after mass violence. I explore their political uses and their connections with identity and morality through a detailed study of the memorialisation of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda – a recent and under-researched case.

Previous studies describe an intimate relationship between memory and identity, establishing that we remember in light of the present and, in turn, our view of the past shapes understanding of the world we live in, and imaginings of the future. Memorials call upon us to think about the dead, but they also influence the way we think about our own lives and those of others, reflecting and reinforcing moral sensibilities. Often memorials serve as a means for those in power to convince us of their views by promoting selective accounts (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 16). But increasingly remembering the victims of violence has come to be seen as a collective moral responsibility, necessary to prevent revisionism, impunity and future atrocities (Booth, 2006: 163).

Many studies have explored the role of commemoration in nationalism (Gillis, 1994), but this is only one facet of its politics after mass violence – remembrance can also be allied to struggles for recognition and rights. After violence and mass bereavement, we need to take account of the impact of trauma on memory (Edkins, 2003) and to consider the relationship between memorials and mourning (Winter, 1995). We need also to be aware that memorialisation is marked by competing agendas and contestation (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 13), and that its political implications remain uncertain:

Memory has fuelled merciless, violent strife, and it has been at the core of reconciliation and reconstruction. It has been used to justify great crimes, and yet is central to the pursuit of justice (Booth, 2006: ix).

Despite this uncertainty, contemporary times have seen a flourishing of memorials and the emergence of a new international politics of memory.

A recent shift in the relationship between memory and politics is reflected in practices of Holocaust remembrance. Before the 1960s, the Holocaust was barely named or memorialised as such anywhere in the public arena; this period was effectively “a retreat into oblivion” (Koonz, 1994: 261). Since the end of the Cold War, Holocaust memorials have proliferated, mainly in Europe, Israel and the US, but also more widely. Although memorials typically reflect a distinctive national context and heritage (Young 1993), this international spread of a commitment to remembering the Holocaust internationally seems significant. It has been described as both reflective and constitutive of a “cosmopolitan” identity, defined by new “sensibilities and moral-political obligations” (Levy and Sznajder, 2002: 103) and central to the establishment of “global human rights politics” (Levi and Sznajder, 2006: 4).

Holocaust remembrance is fuelled by the belief that remembering is essential to prevent further atrocities, an idea which now has become central to the politics of post conflict reconstruction. Dealing with memory has come to be seen as crucial to political transformation; looking back is a means to move forward to “find solutions to legacies of violence that may affirm the rule of law and democratic government.” (De Brito *et al*, 2001: 1). The problem of how to effect change is understood to revolve around questions of memory, justice, truth and reconciliation. Yet experiments in ‘reckoning with the past’ in diverse contexts have mixed results and give rise to new questions; not least about whether they might give rise to new resentments or inflame conflict (Clark *et al*, 2008: 391). Even the ethical merits of Holocaust remembrance are not agreed upon; it is associated with the failure of ‘never again’ (Novick, 2000; Finkelstein, 2000) as well as with the foundation of international human rights law. Against this background of disputes about the political significance of memorialisation, it is clear that there is a need for theoretically informed empirical studies (Bell, 2006: 24) and careful investigations of particular cases.

The Memory of Genocide in Rwanda

There can hardly be a more challenging context in which to deal with memories of violence than post-genocide Rwanda. It is an important case for analysis of the

politics of memorialisation, because of the nature of the violence, because it is so recent and because little has so far been written about it. Indeed there is a comparative lack of literature on memorialisation of the victims of violence in post-colonial Africa in general, despite long histories of violence in parts of the continent.¹ Much of the previous literature on genocide memorialisation discusses the Holocaust while literature on war commemoration mainly focuses on Europe and the US (Bell, 2006: 29). In contrast to the ‘sovereign’ nations which have been the focus for most analyses of memorialisation, Rwanda is an example of a post colonial state in the south, a very different political circumstances from those in which much of the debates about memorialisation and its relationship to politics have been conducted. This is a unique context in which survivors of the 1994 genocide must live alongside former perpetrators and their families, and memory presents an acute personal, social and political problem. Moreover in Rwanda and in neighbouring countries, the violence has been persistent and peace remains elusive. The focus on Rwanda can therefore widen the literature on memorialisation and raise new questions.

The 1994 genocide claimed the lives of close to a million people and caused immense and enduring suffering. It was an atrocity on a scale and intensity that is difficult to describe or comprehend (Eltringham, 2004: xi). Genocide is a “limit” event (Gigliotti, 2003: 164): violence so extreme that it produces a rupture in the social and political order. Crimes of this magnitude cannot simply be erased; they leave indelible marks on people and on the landscape. The consequences of the genocide remain a present reality in the lives of survivors, witnesses and perpetrators, in distinct ways, and have affected the character of social and political interactions in Rwanda since (Gourevitch, 1998: 25-26). This past violence also structures how other people inside and outside view Rwanda, so that it is now standard in discussions of this country’s past, present or future to make some mention of the genocide.

Since the genocide, politics has been dominated by concerns about justice, reconciliation, identity, and security. The memory of the genocide is embedded in Rwandese politics and society, shaping constitutional, legal and educational reforms, and social and economic interventions. Alongside these embedded memories are justice and education programmes aimed at shaping memory; and numerous collective initiatives to memorialise the genocide, which are of most interest here. Efforts to

¹ Werbner (ed., 1998) makes this point and is an important exception.

honour the victims of the 1994 genocide began not long after the violence ended, with the first annual national genocide commemoration taking place in Kigali in 1995. In the years since, memorial projects have multiplied. The 1994 genocide is now being memorialised in various forms and locations within Rwanda and around the world, including in annual commemoration ceremonies, memorial museums and monuments; through the preservation of massacre sites, through exhumations and reburials; and in published testimonies, memoirs, documentaries and films.

Alongside the memorialisation, competing accounts of the nature and origins of the violence continue to circulate (Eltringham, 2004), fuelling questions about who should be publicly mourned and how (Zorbas, 2004: 12). Rwanda is, as Lemarchand observes: “ensnared by its past... the monstrous butchery lives on in collective memories” (2000: 1). The genocide still bears heavily on people’s attitudes, experiences and their sense of identity. Although Hutu and Tutsi identities were the product of political interventions, prior to, during and after colonisation, as most scholars of Rwanda’s history and politics agree,² the killing marked out differences between people which endure. Groups of survivors, the relatives of genocide perpetrators, and sometimes perpetrators, live in close proximity to one another, but are divided by their pasts. Tensions between Rwandese people, at home and in exile, centre on their recent experience of, or involvement in, violence – principally the 1994 genocide, but also a civil war (1990-94), an insurgency in the northwest of Rwanda (1996-97), and years of atrocities in the region.³ Disputes over memory are inevitable.

Existing academic studies of the 1994 genocide memorialisation offer some insights into the politics of commemoration in Rwanda. Vidal (2001) shows how year after year the commemorations have been influenced by the government’s political priorities. She argues that they are state-led and detrimental: “conceived and directed by the state authorities” as a means to promote political legitimacy (2001: 15), and that they marginalise genocide survivors, exclude other victims and contribute to social divisions (2001: 45). Cameron (2003) finds that the commemorations are a means for the government to manage its relations with the international community: by marking out the genocide as of “singular and unique status” (2003: 3), the

² See Uvin, 2001a for a review.

government diverts attention from recent human rights abuses. A more complicated picture emerges from Longman and Rutagengwa's (2006a) research, which explores attitudes towards commemoration. They argue that while the government links the memorials to promote national unity and reconciliation, Rwanda "presents an interesting case study of the limits of a government's ability to shape the collective memory of a population" (2006a: 243), and people express views ranging from anger to support for memorials.

On the whole, previous studies suggest that the political significance of memorialisation is as an instrument of the government, designed to bolster its political legitimacy and likely to exacerbate social divisions. However, these studies assume that the state is driving the genocide memorialisation and they tend to concentrate on national commemorations, rather than exploring the diverse local, national and international commemorative initiatives. I look beyond these critiques to investigate the wider political significance of the memorials.

Approach

It appears that both in the literature on memory, and in its practice, there is a shift away from viewing the state as its central architect. In various contexts non-state actors have had a decisive influence on memorialisation processes and their outcomes (eg Young, 1993, 63-64). Attention is now called to the role of civic groups as producers of memory (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 15; Winter, 1995, 93-94) and to the purpose and impact of personal contributions, such as those of survivor testimony (Edkins, 2003: 188-189). There is also growing interest in how and why commemoration is becoming "simultaneously... more global and more local" (Gillis, 1994: 14) and in the effects of transnational power relations (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 52). We now need to consider that a range of agencies, national local and international might be involved in projecting their accounts of the past in various social arenas (*ibid*: 17).

With these insights in mind, I undertake a detailed investigation of the memorialisation process and analyse the forms and meanings of memorials, and responses to them. A memorial is understood here to mean any practice or object dedicated to publicising the memory of the victims of the genocide. I focus on two

³ These include genocide (1972) and massacres (1988; 1993) in Burundi and, since 1996, conflict and

key institutions of memory: commemorative ceremonies and memorial sites,⁴ which touch directly upon the lives of most Rwandans as well as many non-Rwandans and become forums in which other 'memorials' are presented, such as testimony.⁵ The analysis is based on an empirical study – including participant observation, interviews, and documentary sources – and on an interpretative analysis of the forms of memorial sites and the politics surrounding them. My aim is to shed light on the political significance of memorials after mass violence, and on their particular origins, forms and impacts in post-genocide Rwanda.

Argument

I argue that to reach a full understanding of the meaning and effects of memorials it is necessary to take account of both their political uses and their association with mourning. Investigating the memory-making process and the ideas and activities of the agencies involved, enables us to see that memorialisation is driven by both instrumental goals and intrinsic concerns. I show that the Rwandan government, genocide survivors and foreign governments and NGOs have all contributed to memorialisation in Rwanda. Often they have worked together to create memorials with the shared aim of genocide prevention. But each of these agencies also brings their own aims to the memorialisation and there are differences between and among them. The government does not have a coherent strategy to exploit the memory of the genocide, as is sometimes implied, although its support for memorials has partly to do with efforts to construct its political legitimacy at home and abroad. Meanwhile, international agencies have made important financial and practical contributions, in support of Rwandan partners, but also with concerns about the moral legitimacy of the 'international community'. Above all, genocide survivors and bereaved relatives have given impetus to remembrance, as part of their work of mourning and pursuit of recognition and rights.

My analysis challenges the notion that the memorials are consistently an instrument of state power, producing a dominant narrative of the past. I find them to be characterized by political contradictions and tensions, both internally and in the

mass death in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

⁴ I use the terms memorial, commemoration and public memory interchangeably to refer to objects and practices of memory visible in the public sphere (simply meaning outside the 'private' domain of the family).

responses they engender. I suggest that rather than serving as a tool to entrench power or support social healing, the memorials contain and reflect experiences of mass violence and trauma. They are local, national and international sites of contestation over questions of identity and rights which offer us a new window onto the challenges and possibilities for politics after genocide.

Structure

Chapter one is a theoretical investigation of the political significance of memorialisation. I discuss the close association between memory and identity, showing that memorials are implicated in promoting a common sense about the past. They are often employed by states or elite groups to present their version of the past, but this is generally contested. I find that although public remembrance is shaped by political goals, after mass violence it is defined by trauma and originates in mourning. I suggest that memorialisation is inherently an ethical practice, although it is often employed for narrow political ends.

In chapter two, I explain my approach to the study of memorialisation. I argue for the need to look at the memorialisation process, within and beyond the state, identifying the agencies involved and the relationships between them. I then explain why it is necessary to examine the 'products' of memory, not just as static representations of the past but as dynamic sites, whose meaning is shaped by interactions. After setting out this research strategy, I explain the methods through which it is implemented, including interviews, participant observation and discourse analysis.

The third chapter sets out key aspects of the context for the case study. It situates the analysis, provides an account of the genocide, and undertakes a review of relevant literature on Rwanda, establishing what existing research tells us about post genocide politics and why my study provides a worthwhile contribution to this literature.

Chapters four to six examine the agencies which are contributing to genocide memorialisation, discussing their aims and contributions to the memorialisation process. I begin with a study of the role of the Government of Rwanda. I show that the government has sought to promote a collective memory of the genocide, ostensibly as part of an initiative to forge a new national identity. It has simultaneously invoked the

⁵ Although documentation of testimony is of primary importance to memory and justice initiatives, it is not the focus here. However, testimony is discussed in the context of the memory sites.

memory of the genocide to construct its own moral legitimacy at home and abroad. The chapter highlights contradictions and limitations inherent in this project but also establishes that civic actors and foreign governments and NGOs influence state policy on this issue.

In chapter five, I chart the determination of survivors and other bereaved individuals to ensure that the victims of the genocide are publicly remembered, examining their initiatives and the aspirations which guide them. I establish that genocide survivors have made a substantial contribution to genocide memorialisation in Rwanda, as architects and as participants. I suggest that through this practice, they have managed to exercise a right to speak, while pursuing a felt obligation to restore the dignity of the dead.

The sixth chapter explores international interventions in memorialisation. I consider the role of the Tutsi diaspora and of international civil society groups in promoting genocide remembrance internationally. I suggest that revelations about the failure of the international community during the genocide have led foreign governments and international institutions to expressions of regret and contributions to memorials. Development donors and NGOs have had a crucial part in the construction of genocide memory in Rwanda, but these initiatives are linked not just to regret but to broader imperatives in international politics and post-conflict agendas.

Chapter seven marks a shift in the thesis, away from a discussion of the memorialisation process and towards an analysis of the institutions of memory. I first look at the genocide commemorations, which are now established rituals, locally, nationally and internationally. I analyse the discourses and practices of commemoration and explore responses to them within Rwanda and internationally, uncovering the political contestation which surrounds them.

In the final chapter I look in depth at each of the national genocide memorial sites in Rwanda, discussing the processes through which they were created. I detail their forms and the ideas they embody, and consider visitor engagement with and responses to the sites. I demonstrate that at each site the memorialisation process and its outcomes have varied. But I also draw out some common factors which confirm that, memorialisation after mass violence is marked by political debates and disputes, trauma and mourning.

In the conclusion I summarize my findings and consider what they reveal about the political significance of memorialisation after mass violence. I also explain their relevance to broader debates about the meaning and impact of international interventions in post conflict arenas. I conclude that the Rwandan case confirms that memory is politically contested, but offers new insights into the relationship between memorials, grief and struggles for human rights.

CHAPTER ONE

The Politics of Memorialisation

Memorials are selective representations of the past which are political in content and effect. Previous studies show that they are employed by states to construct nations and sustain the power of nationalist elites (Werbner, 1998b; Davis, 2005). Their political utility derives from the relationship between memory and identity: people view the past through the lens of their identities and, in turn, representations of the past, shared within a group, can contribute to binding together communities. However, this is only the most visible layer of the politics of memorialisation. Memorials may be a means for the powerful to impose a narrow view of the past, but after mass violence they are also an expression of trauma and mourning, and a resource for open or silent resistance.

This chapter explores the politics of memorialisation from several perspectives. I begin by examining the relationship between memory and identity to establish that memorials reflect and sustain a sense of belonging within a community and have been a means for states to promote the idea of the nation, and to ground their legitimacy. I then explain that the possibilities for employing memory are constrained by the ways in which aspects of the past linger in the present. The idea that political agencies can exert a hold over the past is further limited by the fact that memories and identities are not stable, but plural and dynamic.

I review empirical studies of memorialisation in post-colonial nations to see how attempts to use memorials for political purposes play out in practice. In various contexts where there are state interventions to produce or to restrict memorials, it seems that these do not close down questions about community and legitimacy but become a focus for concerns about accountability and rights. This indicates that memorials are a ground of struggle, rather than consistently serving to sustain existing power relations. Therefore, in the next section, I look beyond the ways that states employ memorials in order to further uncover their origins and political meaning. I find that after mass bereavement, the impetus for memorialisation lies in memories of trauma and in mourning. When victims of violence give testimony or express a commitment to the dead, they present challenges to the instrumental thinking associated with nationalist violence. This, I argue, explains why political agencies seek to manage the memory of victims of violence and why they meet with resistance.

MEMORY, IDENTITY AND POWER

The politics of memory has its roots in an interaction between memory and identity. Studies of memorials generally proceed from the view that the relationship between identity and memory is intimate; that “identity depends on the idea of memory and vice versa” (Gillis, 1994: 3). Individuals define and understand themselves, and make sense of the world, through reference to their memories: “we search for a means to impose a meaningful order upon reality, we rely on memory for the provision of symbolic representations and frames which can influence and organise both our actions and our conception of ourselves.” (Misztal, 2003: 13)

However memory is malleable: it is not an imprint of the past but rather an inter-subjectively constituted interpretation of it. As Halbwachs’ revealed,⁶ there is a “collective memory” activated in and informed by the social context in which it occurs: “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories” (1992 [1941]: 38). In order to remember, individuals must engage with the ideas, values and meanings which are contained within language, and shared within a society (Halbwachs, 1992: 173). The consequence of this is that perceptions of the past are influenced by the present in which they are evoked, and by ideas already established within a social group producing: “an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society” (1992: 40). Memory is so deeply linked to identity that a sense of belonging within a group not only encourages the recall of particular events but can even lead the individual to remember events which they did not experience “in any direct sense” (Olick, 1999: 335).

Memories, then, are lasting bonds between people, across time and space, contributing to illusions of stability and continuity and serving as a glue to hold together communities. It is through our memories that we locate ourselves within society and feel a part of it (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 122). Memorials express these bonds and can strengthen them. They can be seen as ways of ordering time and space, creating impressions of permanence and stability to sustain group relations and promote social solidarity (Misztal, 2003: 52). Yet this view, while it acknowledges the plural and overlapping identities of modernity (ibid; 49), and multiple collective memories,

⁶ His study was pathbreaking, see Olick and Robbins, 1998: 109.

operating within families, religious groups and social classes (Cosner, 1992: 22) tends to present social identity as prior – defining and supported by memory. By giving greater weight to the socially and politically constituted nature of identity, we can see that memorials not only reflect identities but can also serve an instrumental political purpose.

Memory and the Nation

Like memory, identity is neither consistent nor inherent, as many scholars now agree.⁷ It forms in context and in relation to others, is potentially fluid and plural, because it is responsive to social circumstances: “Far from being an abstract property or a universal potentiality, a thing or an immanent capacity... ethnicity is a set of relations, its content constructed in the course of historical process” (Comaroff, 1991: 669). Collective identities are not primordial, but imagined. Nations are comparatively modern in origin (Gellner, 1983; Anderson 1991), and we can also trace the historical origins of ethnicity (Comaroff, 1991: 669). Moreover, although the emergence of the concept of identity is associated with western modernity, it now has global relevance (Handler, 1994: 31; Lowenthal, 1994: 45). To recognise that identities are socially constituted is not to dismiss the strength of a sense of belonging to an ethnic, national or religious group. A community is, as Comaroff notes, “objective and real” (1991: 669) for its members. But this “profound emotional legitimacy” (Anderson, 1991: 4) must be actively reproduced and sustained. This is one reason why memorials matter politically.

Memorials are among the cultural forms and practices which constitute the nation as “an imagined political community” (Anderson, 1991). The flourishing of public memory in general is associated with the rise of modern states (Savage, 1994: 146) and the character of modernity: its distinction from and fascination with the past. The advent of a conception of time as linear and the work of a critical history brought with it a nostalgia unknown in the pre-modern era, when the past was felt to permeate the present and future. The pursuit of progress progressively undermined the integration of memory into the fabric of life, leading to its gradual confinement within discrete memory locales, including museums and monuments (Nora, 1989). The pace of economic and political change in modernity meant that people lost touch with former

⁷ See Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 847; Comaroff, 1991: 666. There are important differences of opinion on the details.

ways of life and the experiences of their ancestors; “the past went blank and had to be filled in” (Gillis, 1994: 7).

States have encouraged a “cult of the dead” (Gillis, 1994: 11) with reminders of historic triumphs or disasters (Booth, 2006: 165-166) designed to foster nationalist sentiment. This is a means to gain popular agreement to be governed collectively, and to be willing to defend or even to die for the country. Memorials have a special role in securing this, because they imply that the nation offers answers to fundamental questions of human existence (Anderson, 1991: 10) in ways akin to religion. They offer a sense of continuity, of “links between the dead and the yet unborn” (ibid: 11), which serves to redeem the members of a nation from confrontations with their mortality, the “everyday fatalities of existence” (ibid: 36).

[T]he nation’s biography snatches, against the going mortality rate, exemplary suicides, poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, executions, wars and holocausts. But, to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as our own (Anderson, 1991: 206).

States have an interest in memorialisation because it offers a means to promote a sense of national identity and, at the same time, to forge political legitimacy. Memorials can be incorporated into broader political efforts to manage the past and shape attitudes towards the present and future, as a means to set the “parameters that define acceptable political thought” (Davis, 2005: 271). By privileging certain people, moments or events, memorials present a selective account of the past which encourages memory and forgetting (Suleiman, 2006: 215), serving to mask or rewrite those elements of the past likely to undermine the present social order (Edkins, 2003: 229). Promoting the memory of its own interventions in war or violence is a means for the state to explain and justify these: “What we celebrate under the title of founding events are, essentially, acts of violence legitimated after the fact by a precarious state of right” (Ricoeur, 2004: 79). States also promote memories of violence committed against ‘the nation’ by others. Memories of either victory or victimhood can foster a national identity, and be made grounds for exclusion and violence. In these ways memorials can contribute to legitimizing state sovereignty and its monopoly on violence (Edkins, 2003: xv).

The idea that memorials serve the purposes of the state applies most clearly under authoritarian regimes, where it is possible to see how elites manoeuvre to “construct a

'useable past'" and to suppress those memories which might undermine "the official version of the past" (Miztal, 2003: 59). In democratic contexts, states are not the sole architects of memorials, there are plural accounts in the public sphere, and the workings of power are more complex. Nevertheless, memorials are consistently found to reflect existing power relations, because they are bound up with: "the techniques and practices of power" (Miztal, 2003: 62). Power is already embedded in the discourses and institutions through which memorials are produced, enabling certain representations of the past to become dominant and take root in memorials. Moreover, decisions about which aspects of the past are to be preserved or commemorated and how, are often influenced by those with the best access to material resources: "Public monuments do not arise as if by natural law to celebrate the deserving; they are built by people with sufficient power to marshal (or impose) public consent for their erection" (Savage, 1994: 135).

To some extent, the politics of memorialisation is defined by political elites and by existing power relations and is consistent with nationalist aims. This is a foundational insight into the politics of memorialisation, but it is not sufficient. Attention to the plural possibilities for identity, and a more tentative account of the construction of "collective memory" lead us to recognise that there is also another facet to its workings which might challenge the interests of elites.

Beyond the Nation

The problem for states and other powerful institutions seeking to impose their own account of the past is that memories and identities are plural; and memory is not fully open to social construction. Even if memorials engage with some popular perceptions of the past, certain groups within the territory of the nation remember differently. The past infiltrates the present and constrains political possibilities: "intractable traces of the past are felt on people's bodies, known in their landscapes, landmarks and souvenirs, and perceived in the tough moral fabric of their social relations" (Werbner, 1998a: 2). Social memory is "dynamic" (Miztal, 2003: 69): a product of present circumstances, in negotiation with the residue of the past. Wholesale re-imaginings are implausible because some of the materials from which social memories emerge are inherited. There are limits on the "reconstructability" of memory: "we do not start from scratch" (Schwartz, 1990:104).

Established institutions such as courts and constitutions provide resources for memory and encourage continuities (Booth, 2006: 2). Film, computers, telephones, and written documents all keep records of the past which can last, despite political and social changes (Edkins, 2003: 30). History is connected to social memory and informs its development. The available historical record is, of course, itself a product of selection and interpretation, but the pursuit of a critical historiography and the existence of archives can either sustain or conflict with memory (Schwartz, 1990; Cosner, 1992: 26-27; Zerabual, 1994: 73): “A society’s current perceived needs may impel it to refashion the past, but successive epochs are being kept alive through a common code and a common symbolic canon even amidst contemporary revisions” (Cosner, 1992: 26-27).

Not only do institutions and archives endure, but memory is conditioned by social practices and objects whose origins lie within history and culture: “a thick memory-identity [is] there in habit or space before it is articulated” (Booth, 2006: 36). So many aspects of the way we remember are defined by entrenched social rituals governing our physical conduct. These “bodily automatisms” safeguard communities and explain their continuities, lying behind social “classifications and maxims” and the “inertia in social structures” (Connerton, 1989: 103). This is manifest in commemorations because, even in moments of change, ritual performances are defined by past bodily practices (Connerton, 1989: 40).

We need to think of memory as layered and involving both social and individual strands in a dynamic interaction (Ricoeur, 2004: 95). This is not to say that memorialisation is any less important politically, but simply that the political opportunities for rewriting the past are not unlimited. Because memory is not a wholesale construction of the present it can be a resource for resistance to the dominant way of thinking. When states try to impose a narrative about the past, it is not certain that they will succeed and that such representations will contribute to the commonsense through which their citizens view the world. If people are to be convinced, accounts of the past need to resonate with their own memories: “history cannot be freely invented and reinvented... suppression of alternative interpretations and coercion are insufficient to ensure that particular interpretations will be accepted” (Misztal, 2003: 73).

This is especially pertinent when the national sway over memory, at its height in the nineteenth century, is noticeably diminishing: “memory is beginning to escape the bounds of national political communities” informing regional and global practices of memorialisation (Bell, 2006: 29). In this present era, the nation-state is increasingly giving way to overlapping forms of authority, decentralisation, or transnational forms of governance. With these shifts and uncertainties, come more complex and diverse imaginings of political community, whether by design or default. People develop and consume more “heterogeneous representations” so that the nation has ceased to be the main “frame of memory” (Gillis, 1994: 17). Social identities are multiplying and becoming increasingly politicised (Laclau, 1994: 4).

Collective remembrance is a means to mobilise other forms of social identities (Booth, 2006: 177), and often serves as an “anchor for particularistic identities” (Miztal, 2003: 133). Beneath a dominant account, other versions may endure. Remembering is: “not a homogenous, holistic social practice” (Cappelletto: 2005: 9). Groups struggle to gain recognition for their memories within the public sphere, and some succeed.⁸ Memory is kept alive in covert or familial rituals, or openly communicated, in challenging counter-memorialisation (Miztal, 2003: 68), or in civic initiatives within official frameworks. Groups at the margins of society may not have the capacity or resources to construct memorials on a similar scale, nevertheless it is possible for them to sustain beliefs and practices of remembrance which contradict the dominant view, including in difficult circumstances.

Counter memorials are not necessarily at odds with nationalist thinking, even if they do not chime with the dominant account. Even as opponents of the state as seek to challenge its discourse, they may become caught in a dialogical relation with it, reproducing an idea of a bounded exclusive group identity: the dominant “statist narrative” may structure alternative accounts of the past. (Roberts, 2000: 517).⁹ All the same, we need to keep in mind that there are various potential strands of social memory which might intersect or clash and have potential to resist ‘top-down’ makeovers. Rather than conformity, there are often dissenting voices; where there is freedom to express these, public memory may become “a ‘debating hall’ in which different moral visions of community are contested” (Cole, 1998: 106).

⁸ See Bodnar’s account of the making of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1992: 3-9) or Bills 1998.

The relationship between power, memory and identity is neither linear nor consistent, not least because power is also an effect of memory: to remember is to produce an interpretation of the past which masquerades as, and is felt as, a truth. All accounts of the past are productive of power in its widest sense,¹⁰ and as such the influence of dominant accounts is never monolithic or stable. Instead of viewing memorials as defined by political elites in the present, and achieving mastery over collective identities, we must therefore take account of plurality and resistance. A growing body of work suggests memorialisation is a site of political contestation, negotiation, or renewal (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 126; Booth, 2006). When representations of the past have popular resonance, they can serve among the mechanisms through which consent is produced, but they are always open to interpretation, revision and challenges. This especially applies to memorials after mass violence, for reasons I explain later.

Having established in theory that memorials are employed by states to perpetuate nationalist sentiment, but are also a potential mode of political resistance, I want now to consider what this means in practice. In the next section, I discuss a series of key studies of memorialisation in southern, postcolonial contexts.¹¹ I do so to give weight to the body of theory I referred to above, which is almost entirely generated through reference to experiences in Europe or the United States (Bell, 2006: 12), and to identify a set of political possibilities, as a guide to what to look for empirically. The studies confirm that memorials are a focus for political struggles and provide important insights into what is at stake in these.

CONSTRUCTING MEMORIALS

Authoritarian states invariably seek to exercise a monopoly on public memory. Davis' (2005) analysis of the Ba'athist construction of historical memory in Iraq makes plain the importance given by the state to the production of a shared history in a nation forged through colonial enterprise. First, Saddam Husayn's regime cultivated a national memory of an Arab 'golden age' under the 'Abbasid Empire (750-1258 C.E.)

⁹ Malkki's study of the "mythico-histories" of Burundian Hutu refugees in camps in Tanzania illustrates this point (1995).

¹⁰ This draws on Michel Foucault's definition of power knowledge (Foucault, 1976: 93). His concept of power as diffuse and ubiquitous enables us to see the politics of memorialisation extending beyond the institutions of the state.

¹¹ These are not used as comparative cases but as illustrations. Studies of Holocaust memorialisation are used to inform my methodology in chapter two and enrich the discussion in later chapters.

(Davis, 2005: 4). Later, during the Iran-Iraq war, it built “grandiose” monuments to the dead, most notably the ‘Victory Arch’ in Baghdad, completed in 1985 (ibid: 195-196). But neither of these “megalomaniac attempts to appropriate historical memory” could produce popular agreement about the past (ibid, 194).

Husayn’s regime failed to win popular consent because it could not extend material gains to the population at large, relied upon violence, (Davis, 2005: 273) and marginalised the majority Shi’a religion and culture, including in its “historical memory”. Davis argues that efforts to use the past as a basis for political legitimacy will falter without an engagement with existing beliefs and experiences: “they will be widely accepted only if they build on “organic” processes... already underway.” (Davis, 2005: 274) and a delivery of material benefits (Davis, 2005: 272). He suggests that regimes which seek to harness memory to hegemonic projects battle against memories of violence and loss, which are tenacious. This point is borne out in Werbner’s study of Zimbabwe.

After independence from white minority rule in 1980, the new government of Zimbabwe promoted the memory of the heroes of the liberation struggle. Yet Zimbabwe’s national independence memorial at Heroes Acre in Harare represented only elite heroes. It was a “pastiche” echo of the practices of former British colonizers (1998b: 82); but excluded the memory of the common soldier.¹² Nationalist sentiment ran high after independence, but these ‘top down’ efforts to govern memory could not hold sway against the legacy of violence, including state-led massacres in Matabeleland in the 1980s:¹³ “memory making elicits itself in more memory-making” (Werbner, 1998b: 76). Bereaved relatives of the Matabeleland massacres found their own ways to honour and remember the dead, reviving local traditional practices, as a means towards healing (Alexander *et al*, 2000: 253), exposing contradictions in the idea of national unity (Werbner, 1998b: 73). When the economic situation deteriorated in the 1990s, these contradictions came to the surface as Zimbabwe’s ordinary veterans of the liberation war expressed their discontent in a protest on the August 1997 Heroes’ Day commemoration, disrupting the official ceremony. Notably,

¹² This was in contrast to the “modern democracy of death” which had taken hold in Europe post World War I (Werbner, 1998b: 71)

¹³ See the Legal Resources Foundation and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace report, 1997, which estimates the death toll at 20,000.

the same year, all war veterans were recognised as “heroes” and awarded pensions, and benefits, straining the national budget.¹⁴

As Werbner concludes, when the state seeks to appropriate past traumas it opens the way to “counter-appropriations” (Werbner, 1998b: 75). Memorials cannot expunge the traces of violence which affect not just survivors but entire communities: “the memory of sacrifice... is haunting... it is the relatively few who feel untouched by the wounding trace” (Werbner, 1998b: 77). Memorials expose social hierarchies and exclusions and become subject to demands for “the right to recountability” (Werbner, 1998a: 1) from excluded individuals and groups. Memorials open the way for resentment or struggles for recognition and rights,¹⁵ in contrast with the effects of an indiscriminate silence about the past, such as that imposed by colonial rulers.

Hutchinson illuminates the meaning and impact of state imposed silences about death through her account of the gradual undermining of memory practices among the Nuer during civil war¹⁶ in southern Sudan. Historically, the Nuer people of this region believed that homicide would result in severe and lasting consequences for its perpetrator; this influenced social relationships and encouraged “respect for ... ethical limits” in warfare (1998: 63-64). Rites of purification and atonement were once viewed as essential to treat the dangerous pollution visited upon those responsible for inter-Nuer homicide, while the dead were kept in “procreative immortality” remembered by their descendants or, in cases of premature death or infertility, provided with “legal heirs through established social arrangements (Hutchinson, 1998: 61). Under colonial rule, however, it was established that state officials held a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and Nuer chiefs required to carry out the will of the government would not be held personally accountable for killing fellow Nuer ‘in the line of duty’” (Hutchinson, 1998: 59). This was the first in a succession of political interventions to promote the belief that killing in the name of the state was devoid of moral consequences. Not only did the state give no place to the memory of Nuer losses, but from the mid-1980s, the leadership of the rebel Sudan People’s

¹⁴ This is part of the background to government support for land invasions beginning in 2000 (Werbner, 1998b). Notably, since then the government has supported traditional practices of reburial, organised by the veterans themselves, and the rehabilitation of liberation fighters’ graves (see Tabona Shoko, 2006: 7-9).

¹⁵ See also Jelin and Kaufman (2004) and (Koonz, 1994: 269).

¹⁶ Hutchinson’s research takes place between 1980-1996, when the second civil war which began in 1983 was still ongoing, but the communities she studied had also been affected by the first civil war in 1955-1972.

Liberation Army encouraged a “novel disregard for the memory of the dead” (Hutchinson, 1998: 58). Political authority came to mean the “power to kill with impunity... and to declare such acts devoid of all social, moral and spiritual consequences” (Hutchinson, 1998: 58).

As mortality rose, and resources diminished, memory practices were transformed and then gradually elapsed, undermining personal accountability for violence and weakening the obligations of kinship. By the 1990s, levels of intra and inter Nuer homicide had risen dramatically. People were forced to accept that the victims would not be treated with customary concern: “some slain relatives will be consigned to a kind of social and spiritual ‘oblivion’” (Hutchinson, 1998: 69). They were left with a profound sense of moral disturbance and a hope that one day “when the world becomes good again” memorials would resume (Hutchinson, 1998: 66).

That a moral disturbance arises out of an absence of public memory is very significant, because it helps to explain why people create their own memorials, or resist those created by the state, a point examined further below. Importantly, though, this moral problem has also become the grounds for state involvement in memorials since the 1990s. A political obligation to remember the victims of violence has come to be seen as central to effecting a ‘transition’ from past conflict or repression, towards democracy, the rule of law and the establishment of human rights (Levi and Sznajder, 2006). The place given to memory in post-apartheid South Africa exemplifies this trend.

In the new South African democracy, the government was committed to remembering the atrocities of the previous regime and acknowledging its victims. It made space for debates about memory in the public sphere and encouraged cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional groups to create their own ‘sites of memory’. (Baines, 2007: 174-5). It linked memorialisation to reconciliation and social and individual healing (Hamber and Wilson, 1999; Kgalema, 1999). This was a dramatic shift, informed partly by examples in ‘transitional’ societies in Latin America, and contrasting sharply with past state practices in South Africa, and elsewhere on the African continent.

Though its engagement with memory, the South African government sought to forge a new national identity, but it also sought to construct its own political legitimacy, most

obviously through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC signalled a condemnation of human rights violations committed during apartheid, and created a framework for a form of accountability. It placed a promise of justice at the foundation for the new regime, offering a means to: “create a new hegemony in the area of justice and construct the present moment as post-authoritarian” (Wilson, 2001: xvi). But as ‘restorative justice’ it relied substantially upon an idea that ‘truth-telling’ could deliver ‘healing.’ In the eyes of some critics, it promised ‘therapy’ in place of change, punishment or restitution, failing to engage with popular expectations of retributive and social justice (Wilson, 2001). Moreover, it posited the notion the suffering was all in the past, in contradiction with victims’ personal experiences (Colvin, 2006: 165). The public recounting of memories of violence and abuse at the TRC symbolised the advent of democracy and narrowed the “range of permissible lies” which could be told about the past (Wilson, 2001: 225); but it could not settle the disturbing memories of past violence, or bring about a consensus on the meaning of justice and human rights.

These empirical studies of the politics of memorialisation in post-colonial contexts show how states consistently strive to shape public remembrance of the victims of violence, albeit with different ideas and methods. They illustrate the connection between memorials, the character of the political order and the nature of citizenship. They also show that – even where there are political restrictions on its expression – resentment or opposition coalesces around memorials. Most importantly, they demonstrate that in different political circumstances memorials are associated with struggles for morality, accountability and rights. It is only possible to fully understand why, once the political significance of trauma and mourning after mass violence is explained.

MEMORIES OF VIOLENCE

Studies of memorialisation make clear that the lingering trace of violence gives impetus to memorials and to disputes about the past (Werbner, 1998b: 77). The most profound consequence of genocide and conflict is mass bereavement and it is, in my view, the experience of grief, and empathy with loss, which is central to the politics of memory at such times. But violence also gives rise to trauma, which has an impact on memory and which has also been seen to be at the root of the contestation surrounding memorials. I look at trauma first to establish its relevance, but also to make a

distinction between my analysis and an influential view that the memory of trauma in itself presents an exceptional challenge to state power. Both this view, and my own, can only be explained with reference to the nature of trauma, a somewhat elusive concept,¹⁷ but well-established in relation to the experience of extreme violence.

Trauma usually refers to an experience of atrocity which produces a fracture or dislocation in the mind. It describes a breach of security, an experience of suffering, and a lapse in understanding. Atrocities produce pain and uncertainty and undermine the everyday assumptions held within society: “faced with a ‘world shattering event’, the process of symbolisation is cut off” (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006b: 100). The experience of trauma may be grafted upon the mind, resembling a physical effect, generating unmediated memories (Schudson, 1995: 315).

One important effect is that memories of violence tend to be more literal and insistent, victims are often plagued by dreams or flashbacks, “possessed by an image or event” (Caruth, 2003 [1995]: 193) that they cannot fathom. This leads to prolonged anguish and potentially also a collapse in identity: “trauma brings about a lapse or rupture in memory that breaks continuity with the past, thereby placing identity in question to the point of shattering it” (LaCapra, 1998: 9). Sometimes, reactions are delayed, affecting survivors of crises years after the events (Caruth, 2003 [1995]: 197) – when memories are “blocked” it seems there is a tendency for victims “act out” the experience through repetitive behaviour in some form (Ricœur, 2004: 71). It is as if the link between a traumatic event and its recollection is severed, so that its meaning is obscured, and sometimes is literally buried.

From different perspectives, trauma is seen as politically subversive. It might expose the truth of violence and its complexities, potentially bringing into question those who seek to legitimize its use. Or it might keep the past present in ways that inhibit positive change.¹⁸ On both grounds, political agencies seek to silence, or incorporate ‘traumatic memories’ and employ memorials as a mode of engagement with trauma, whether in calls for vengeance or in projects aimed at ‘social healing.’ Yet it seems that trauma can hold out against political interventions, and that this lies behind the

¹⁷ There is a debate about its precise meaning and about who is affected, beyond direct victims and witnesses (participants in the violence or victims’ relatives might also suffer trauma). See Caruth (2003 [1995]: 192-3) who suggests that the difficulty in reaching a clear definition is also consistent with the nature of trauma itself.

¹⁸ See Snyder 2007 for a review of the debates.

tensions surrounding memorials. Edkins argues that the experience of trauma causes a rupture and produces political “openness” (2006: 108), encouraging questioning of the commonsense “settled understandings” upon which the idea of the nation and the power of its rulers depend.¹⁹ States sponsor memorials as part of their efforts to work traumatic memories into a new national narrative, so as to restore the political order. But trauma is not easy to govern – memorials continue to reflect legacies of violence, posing challenges to sovereign power (Edkins, 2003).

Traces of violence provoke and pervade the politics of memory. But we should be careful not to reduce this only to a focus on the nature and consequences of trauma. Not all victims of violence suffer from traumatic memory in the way outlined above. It is also not clear that the political challenge arising after an atrocity solely originates in and rests upon ‘traumatic memory’ – an absence of trauma, or recovery from it, would not end contention over memory, as is sometimes implied.²⁰ Memories of violence and abuse might demand to be remembered, but memory generally has a hidden automatic quality, coming to mind unbidden; the past “calls us, seeks to impose a duty on us” (Booth, 2006: 67). Memories of trauma seem to have peculiar characteristics, but other memories are also subject to “elisions, interruptions and reinventions” (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006b: 97); they are socially constituted, but still oriented towards disclosure. All remembering is guided by a “truthful ambition” (ibid) towards a lingering trace, which Ricoeur calls: “the bright region of memory, which binds us to what has passed” (2004: 21).

Trauma intersects with memorialisation and shapes its politics. It gives rise to, and infuses, testimony, which is a form of remembrance in its own right and is shared through memory sites and rituals. Not all survivors are able to recount the trauma they endured, but many endeavour to do so. Holocaust survivors speak of a compulsion to remember, a “desperate urge to testify” (Young, 1988: 17). They express a concern about the impossibility of communicating the “enormity and noncredibility of what took place” (Levi, 2003 [1989]: 30). As the “bearers of secrets” (Levi, 2003 [1989]: 31) about the past, they feel a weight of responsibility to communicate its horror.²¹

¹⁹ Edkins (2003) argues that trauma marks an exceptional connection between memory and the “real”, outside of the discourses of power within which we otherwise remember.

²⁰ In accepting the potential for traumatic memory to unsettle power, there is a risk of seeming to “valorize” trauma (Snyder, 2007: 11).

²¹ Levi (2003 [1989]) gives an account of this predicament.

Their testimonies reflect a struggle to overcome the limits of language²² (Young, 1988: 16) in order to bear witness. Sometimes, in giving testimony survivors may appear to be “possessed by the past” (La Capra, 2001: 89).²³ The accounts they give are not always historically accurate, and may contain disjunctions, but they express a more profound truth about violence: its “social significance” (ibid) as the “breakage of a framework” (Laub, 1992, cited in LaCapra, 2001: 88).

Contestation over memory can be better understood with reference to trauma, but this need not depend upon defining its memory in precise and unique terms. Memories of violence reflect trauma, but this does not in itself explain why people engage in memorials after mass violence. After violence memorials are animated not only by expressions of trauma, and attempts to govern them, but by a concern for the suffering and loss of others, and a will to prevent future loss of life. They are essentially a response to the condition of mass bereavement.

Loss

The purpose of memorials is to honour the dead, even if they are also employed politically to promote legitimacy or nationalism. Public institutions, rituals, and practices of memorialisation provide times and spaces for mourning, and encourage a “will to remember” (Nora, 1989: 19) among a wider group than those directly affected by the loss. But death, burial and rituals of commemoration remain profoundly personal and moral concerns. First and foremost, people come together to remember the dead because they grieve for the loss of loved ones or empathize with the losses of others. This is important because it indicates that memorialisation originates in a commitment to others, which is shaped by the political context and is open to manipulation, but which also has its own political character.

The extent to which grief gives the impetus to public remembrance is made manifest in Winter’s study of commemorations after the First World War. He observes a shift from celebrations of military achievement during the war (1995: 82) towards a focus on sorrow and loss in the aftermath (1995: 85) and uncovers the social origins of this change. He shows how the memorials were related to the experience of mass bereavement and to popular efforts to find meaning in tragic losses (1995: 224). He

²² Wolf explains that in the process of recounting, survivors also try to “make sense of the shock” (Wolf, 2004: 7) and as such “interpret” (Wolf, 2004: 8) the source of their trauma.

finds that individuals, families and communities came together in pilgrimages to burial sites, in commemorative ceremonies or at war memorials to grieve “both individually and collectively” (1995: 79) and that this brought them consolation. He indicates that memorials helped to ease grief by helping to make the loss specific, isolating it to “establish its limits” in order to enable the parting of the living from the dead (1995: 115).

Winter (1995) primarily focuses on memorialisation as a process of mourning which leads to an acceptance of loss.²⁴ But he also shows that mass bereavement and collective mourning had political implications. He points to the connection between the memorialisation process and democratization: as a “bond of bereavement” (1995: 228) brought people together, there was a feeling that: “Equality in death meant a dedication to promote equality in life” (1995: 97). In the wake of the catastrophic events of the war, social hierarchies could not hold firm, giving way to a newfound determination to mark the deaths of ordinary soldiers: “officers and men would finally lie side by side” (Gillis, 1994: 11). In this case the commemorations did not seem to mark a profound break with the old order, because they also sustained nationalist sentiment, but Winter’s account demonstrates how and why the memorials mattered for bereaved relatives and how they intersected with social and political transformations.

Memorials created by communities in mourning reflect and propel political changes. Kwon shows how economic and social reform in Vietnam gave space for bereaved communities to create memorials to villagers massacred in Ha My and My Lai in 1968 (2006: 67), whose memory had been sidelined by the Communist regime. The 1990s saw an explosion of “commemorative fever” (Kwon, 2006: 3), with reunions of survivors and relatives of the dead; the excavation of “improper graves” to rebury bodies in family tombs; and the renovation of ancestral shrines. The rites of commemoration centred on the family, in the belief that the spirits of ancestors live on in domestic life. They included an invitation to the dead to socialise with the living

²³ Delbo who survived Auschwitz reflects that the experience is “so deeply etched in my memory that I could not forget one moment of it... I live next to it” (2003 [1990]: 46).

²⁴ Winter relies on a Freudian explanation of the difference between mourning and melancholia (1995: 113-4). In this frame, mourning is perceived as a normal process which once completed allows freedom for the ego. Melancholia is the source of mental turmoil “in melancholia it is the ego that finds itself in desolation; it succumbs to the blows of its own devaluation” (Ricoeur, 2004: 73). I do not find this distinction significant here, as it has also been argued that melancholia is integral to mourning (Eng and Kazanjian, 2003: 4).

(2006: 62) and required substantial commitments of time, energy and money: “to console the spirits” (ibid). In these efforts to lay the victims of the massacres to rest, the villagers seized upon a process of political and economic liberalization and contributed to its spread.

It might seem contradictory that a process of social transformation should be encouraged by investment in the rehabilitation of graves, but this can only be understood with reference to the moral dimensions of the practice. Kwon identifies a norm of reciprocity within this community which extends into the world beyond the grave and suggests that we need to understand the commemoration from the perspective of a moral economy in which “the survival of the historical other” is “part of the preservation of the self” (2006: 83). Memorials were felt as a moral imperative, and regarded as essential to the regeneration of the living (2006: 65).

While reviving ancestral rituals of ancestor worship, the villagers also revitalised them in ways that revealed that this mourning was not defined by a narrow conception of community. In the changed practices, villagers revealed an acceptance that all human beings are equally deserving of mourning and consolation; the homes of the villagers become places where: “kinship, free from traditional ideologies and political control, reconciles with the universal ethic that all human beings have the right to be remembered” (Kwon, 2006: 183). While reconnecting communities, and promoting the family as the centre of moral life, this mourning process presented a counter to the ideas about identity and difference which made the massacres possible, invoking instead a commitment to a shared humanity.

The efforts of the bereaved and others to “keep faith with the victims” (Booth, 2006: 124) are at the root of the practice of memorialisation and have political implications. It is not clear that memorials always mediate grief or are therapeutic to the grieving process; they might equally revive bitter emotions. In practice it is not entirely possible to detach mourning from its political context which, as we have seen, “informs the very templates which are available for the expression of grief, and the arenas in which it operates” (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 41-43). Nevertheless, as people come together to share grief, they display support for one another or solidarity with victims and survivors they do not know personally. Memorialisation invokes a moral imperative to honour the victims of violence and reflects a commitment to others, often held within a community. Memorials demonstrate that a sense of responsibility

for one another is felt within communities and persists beyond death: “absence through death does not sever once and for all the ties of mutuality” (Booth, 2006: 98).

Mourning is not a subversive practice in the sense of contradicting fundamental conceptions of political community and undermining sovereign power, indeed often existing ideas of community are reinforced. However, looking at memorialisation as a practice of mourning allows us to see its association with bids for inclusion and rights within a political community, and with processes of redefining the meaning of community. The practices and ceremonies surrounding death and remembrance display a concern for the dignity of the dead, and seek to entrench this concern politically. The popular will to honour the victims of violence originates in a sense of obligation to the dead and a condemnation of the violence.

Mourning is integral to coping with loss and making social transformation possible after violence. One way to understand this is to consider the consequences of its absence. Failures to mourn and to provide decent burials are generally felt to be “profound wrongs” (Booth, 2006: 96). A collapse in practices of remembrance signals a moral crisis. Without recognition, the dead weigh heavily on the minds of the living, and may enter into a precarious state of limbo, as De Boeck discovered in Zaire. In the latter period of the Mobutu regime an accumulation of the violent deaths and the failure to mark these publicly produced a condition of perpetual moral unease, captured in a common saying: “There aren’t enough tears to mourn all the dead” (1998: 50). In the absence of remembrance, people perceived the dead to be in a persistent state of limbo. They found the deceased “wandering”; coffins would “shake uncontrollably”, husbands and wives were “visited at night by their deceased partner” (1998: 51). Linked to this was a popular withdrawal from politics in the present and from any engagement with past atrocities. Where there was no moral consensus to appeal to, the typical response seemed to be a retreat into a condition “beyond the grave” where both the dead and the living become “severed souls” (1998: 34).

The Ethics of Remembrance

Memorials matter politically because they are intrinsically linked to morality. This relationship rests on the more general ways in which memory is “bound up with our ethical life” (Booth, 2006: 11). Our understanding of the past is coloured by moral beliefs (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006a: 1) and without memory the possibility of

integrity and justice collapses (Booth, 2006: 11). Memorialising the victims of violence is a means of registering the political and moral significance of their deaths; it is “an act of resistance against absence and injustice” (Booth, 2006: 99).” Through remembering we take a position in relation to one another and to the past (Lambek, 1996: 240) and engage in a moral practice (ibid: 248). Memorials are both a product and expression of care: “a mutual affirmation of past interaction, in part the traces of our introjection of one another” (ibid: 239). Memorials are typically tainted by the flaws of the present (Simon, 2005: 1), but because they originate in mourning they are also consistently in tension with the politics of violence.

To clarify this point, it is useful to think about the roots of political violence, starkly exposed in genocide. Rather than a regression to barbarism, the Holocaust was partly a product of the condition of modernity. Adorno explains that it was made possible by a “coldness” between people and by the idea that they are perpetually in competition – the belief that “society is based... on the pursuit of one’s own interests against the interests of everyone else” (Adorno, 2005: 201). Bauman also locates the roots of genocide in the instrumental rationality of modernity (1989). He exposes the limitations of the supposedly civilising morality constituted within modern national communities, and encourages us instead to look for the foundations of morality outside society, in a sense of responsibility which precedes “all interestedness” (Bauman, 1989: 183), arising out of the “intersubjective relations” of living in proximity with others (ibid).

Memorials are inherently political as expressions of human interdependence which are at odds with the instrumental thinking in mass violence. Butler finds that mourning reflects the ties between people, (2004: 23) and that those excluded from public mourning, are most vulnerable to violence (2004: 35). She identifies a politics of grief which “bring[s] to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility” (2004: 22). In grief, she suggests, we may be “returned to a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another” (2004: 30). In other words, memorials are expressions of an enduring bond between people, felt in loss and in empathy with the losses of others. This unconditional concern is at odds with the narrow vision of morality and instrumental rationality held within exclusive political communities. Displays of grief are often harnessed to narrow political agendas, but

they contain a residual challenge and might also contribute to an alternative kind of politics.

From a similar perspective, Simon observes that testimonies from victims of violence open up the listener to a consideration of how they should live, their accountability to others and what this entails, suggesting that memorialisation might contribute to political transformation based on solidarity across borders (Simon, 2005: 9). He argues that the remembrance of victims of violence can be made central to a politics which is not concerned with promoting identification, but with raising questions about the nature of society, based upon an appreciation of difference or, “the alterity of the historical experience of others” (2005: 4). Memorials can be engaged with democratic understandings of community – those “founded not on the terms of autochthony and/or relations of production and exchange, but formed in relation to an incommensurable outside... “a community of hospitality””(ibid).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have developed an account of the politics of memorialisation which recognises its role in the constitution of collective identities and the making of shared worldviews. I have shown that memorials have instrumental value for political groups seeking to impose their vision of political community, and are usually employed by states in the making of nations. But I have also argued that memory is a resource for resistance to the status quo. Memorials stand at an intersection between memory, identity and power and can be articulated to struggles for recognition, rights and accountability as well as to nationalism and violence, with the result that they become sites of contestation.

This chapter has also uncovered the tensions underlying practices of memory. After mass violence, memorials arise out of trauma and mourning, and represent a demand for change and an ethical concern for others. My review of insights into the politics of memory and its ethics indicate that it is intrinsically concerned with questions of duty and rights. Moral commitments are implicit in the act of honouring the dead and committing them to memory and moral ties are produced or reinforced as a result. This explains why political agencies persist in efforts to govern memory and why their efforts are often resisted. We cannot assess the political significance of memorialisation in general terms or assume particular aims and outcomes. We need to

move beyond considering the politics of memorialisation as a function of state interventions and to also explore how and why civic agencies engage in public remembrance, investigating memory projects empirically, in detail and in context.

CHAPTER TWO

Researching Memorialisation

Often studies of memorials explore either their political uses or their social origins. My review of theoretical and empirical studies of the politics of memory established that memorials are sites of political contestation and that they are inherently political as expressions of trauma and mourning. I therefore needed to make space for a consideration of both the instrumental and intrinsic politics of memorialisation and to consider how best to approach this in the context of post-genocide Rwanda, the focus for my empirical study. I decided to examine the politics of the memorialisation process, looking at how states and civic groups and international agencies engage in practices of remembrance, their aspirations, and whether and how these intersect or collide; then to analyse memorials as discourses, symbols and performances and consider responses to them. In this chapter, I explain why I took this approach and how I carried out the empirical study.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the rationale behind my case study and the stages through which it proceeds. From the findings in chapter one, it is apparent that we cannot assume that memorialisation is always allied with power or linked to dominant constructions of identity. This suggests that studies of its politics are best rooted in close empirical analyses of particular cases. The context in which memorialisation takes place, the agencies involved, and the ideas they bring, all shape its politics and therefore each must be given specific attention.

Equally, to understand the meaning and impact of the memorials it is necessary to examine their symbolic forms and discourses and responses to them. These neither amount to a sum of the potential impact of memorialisation nor do they even confirm whether and how the memorials will contribute to the constitution of collective memories and identities over time, since this is a long term and complex process, also influenced by many other political, social and economic factors. But they can offer us a snapshot of relationships between memorialisation, politics, trauma, identity and mourning in the present, as indicated in the previous chapter.

To develop my research strategy, I drew on existing studies of the politics of memorialisation, as well as a broader range of studies with insights on research

methodology and methods. This chapter identifies the processes and institutions which became the focus for the research, explains why and specifies the questions I explored. The final section provides a detailed account of the methods used to carry out the research and the ethical questions which arose.

Studying Post-Genocide Rwanda

My theoretical framework was based on studies of memorialisation and memory (see chapter one), and I found that empirical studies in this field are also a rich source of approaches and methods from which to derive a tentative analytical framework or “sensitising concepts” (Ragin, 1994: 87). Using these studies to inform my research design was also a means to ensure that the thesis would contribute to the wider literature on memorialisation, and to generating theories; it ensured that my study is: “embedded in, and connects with, a wider body of literature” (ibid: 68). Rather than taking a comparative approach, I decided that because struggles over memory may take very different forms and produce outcomes, the politics of memorialisation is best assessed with regard to specific places and moments.

Overwhelmingly, previous analyses of the politics of memorialisation are based on qualitative case studies. Case study research involves applying “an intensive study” to a bounded unit (Gerring, 2004: 341). One benefit of this approach is that it provides scope for detailed historical analysis. Single case studies are appropriate for those with an interest in the processes of politics because they can trace connections “look directly at the sequence of events that produced an outcome, rather than just at the outcome” (Peters, 1998: 141). This is an appropriate means to give an in depth account of an under-researched subject, situating it in context (Grix, 2001: 67).

Case studies are also relevant to research which is concerned with bringing to light the contributions of a range of political actors and providing space for their opinions. An in-depth study requires us to attend to specificities which might otherwise be overlooked – important here because, as observed in the previous chapter, the politics of public remembrance is complex and multifaceted. In analysing the details of a single case these complexities are revealed. A case study is also a suitable format for pursuing some of the key aims of this study: “giving voice, interpreting historical or cultural significance and advancing theory” (Ragin, 1994: 83).

There are limitations on generalising from a single example, so the value of single case studies for theory-building is often questioned (Gerring, 2004: 341), but this can be partially addressed by linking it to a wider literature, as I have done. Moreover the relevance of this criticism depends largely upon the purpose of the study: the value of case studies in enabling understanding of specificity and difference is well established. In contrast with the view that it should be seen as a means to produce insights of more general relevance (ibid), a case might be selected because it is of particular interest on its own merits. The analysis of a single case may be the primary objective and understanding the case in its own right, rather than its relevance for other cases, then becomes “our first obligation” (Stake, 1995: 4).

Studies of the politics of commemoration are commonly based around a single case: sometimes this may be a single monument or town, but often the focus is on the nation as a key site of public remembrance (Bodnar, 1992; Zerubavel, 1994; Jelin and Kaufman, 2002). The importance of studying the memorialisation of genocide, as the most extreme, or ‘limit’ case, has been amply established with regard to the Holocaust (Koonz, 2004; Herf, 1997; Heuner, 2003). The 1994 genocide in Rwanda is a comparatively under-researched case²⁵ and studies of memorials here can expand our understanding of how genocide is remembered beyond Holocaust studies, and thus deepen existing insights.

I selected Rwanda as the case for research in this thesis because it is a unique case which demands to be studied, due to the extreme nature of the violence, the distinctive post genocide context and the paucity of existing research. Above all, my aim was to understand the politics of genocide memorialisation in Rwanda. Indeed, my interest in memorials in Rwanda predated my interest in the politics of memorialisation more generally. But my decision was also informed by previous studies which indicate the value of a single case study to gain a close understanding of the context in which memorialisation takes place, and to carry out in-depth empirical research. In chapter three, I provide an account of the historical context in which the memorialisation has taken place. What follows here is an explanation of the approach I take to analysing the politics of memorialisation in all the subsequent chapters.

²⁵ Existing studies are discussed in depth in the next chapter.

Arenas, Agencies, Processes

It is a core assumption of this study that power permeates society and that its analysis must “extend beyond the limits of the State” (Foucault, 1980: 122). I provided a definition for the politics of memorialisation in chapter one which explains its role in producing a “commonsense” about the past and as a vehicle through which this is contested; and its association with trauma, mourning and ethics. Because of this, it was clearly necessary to begin the analytical task by identifying all the agencies involved in the constitution of public memory, in and beyond the state, and to uncover the aims and ideas guiding their interventions.

Previous studies of memorialisation offer guidelines which are useful here. They show that a range of agencies and ideas may be involved in the construction of public memory, but relationships between the producers of memory vary and so do outcomes. Certain forms of memorialisation politics tend to be associated with particular styles of political regime, or historical periods, and both their nature and their impact may be in part related to these. By tracing memorialisation historically, for instance, it is possible to observe shifts in how public memory evolves through time and in interaction with social and political changes (Heuner, 2003; Marcuse, 2001; Gillis, 1994), or to identify the distinctive ways in which different communities remember the same, or closely related, events (Young, 1993; Wiedmar, 1999). Transitions from one form of public memory to another sometimes take place in a national context (Cressy, 1994: 61); or there may be shifts from national to international remembrances (Levy and Sznajder, 2006).

First, it is important to underline that memorialisation is not a fixed outcome; it is a process whose nature and evolution is politically significant. This process needs to be located in its historical context in order to reveal the existing discourses of memory and identity in play: as the “discursive field within which the symbols were organized and became meaningful” (Spillman, 1997: 7), a task I undertake in chapter three. Second, it is important to explore this memory-making process itself, taking account of the contributions of the architects of memory, their ambitions and the relationships between them.

Often, diverse groups are active in public remembrances, promoting different “narratives of belonging” (Coombes, 2003: 11) but within this forum some groups

may have more say while others are “subordinated” (Baines, 2007: 181). The role of the state is always important in determining the possibilities for memorialisation, but civic groups and individuals may also exercise influence (Winter, 1995), and often there are struggles within the process (Heuner, 2003; Marcuse, 2001). Furthermore, memorialisation is pursued at local and international as well as national levels. Local government and civic interventions are important in the construction of public memory, and in shaping responses to it, and supra-state agencies also participate or respond in significant ways.

In a review of previous approaches to the study of memorialisation, Ashplant, Dawson and Roper observe a typical gap between studies interested in politics and those concentrating on mourning (2004: 9). They indicate the need to widen the frame of political inquiry, to breach this gap on the basis that: “wherever people undertake the tasks of mourning and reparation, a politics is *always* at work” (ibid). They perceive commemoration as a process in which individuals and social groups pursue recognition for their memories in the public sphere, and suggest analysis of the ways in which they “articulate their... memories into narratives, the arenas within which they seek recognition for those memories and the agencies through which they act” (2004: 15). This recommendation serves as a point of departure for my study.

We now need to look beyond the nation to understand memorialisation. In the context of globalisation, groups lacking opportunities for the expression of their memories within the boundaries of the nation may well gain recognition in the international arena. The nation remains a “prime arena” for commemoration, and the attitude of the state still determines political possibilities, but we need to also examine the activities of civic groups, survivors and bereaved relatives within the nation, and international agencies including NGOs as “new kind of transnational agency” in the politics of commemoration (Ashplant *et al.*, 2004: 70). Moreover, we need to examine the “goals, constraints, resources, conventions, and technologies” of the agencies responsible in recognition of the fact that memorials are cultural products, shaped by the circumstances of their manufacture (Spillman, 1997: 8).

With the above insights in mind, chapters four to six focus on identifying the agencies involved in the production of memorials and examining their ideas. The analytical approach in this part of the thesis was based on the understanding that it is necessary to investigate the “processes, practices, particularities, differences and specificities of

memory's articulating institutions and domains" (Radstone, 2005: 147). However, any discussion of the politics of memorialisation would be incomplete without an examination of the memorials themselves: "the objects, places and practices in which cultural memory is embodied." (Miztal, 2003: 3)

Narratives, Forms, Rituals

Memorials are political constructions, reflecting the process through which they were created and, in varying degrees, the ideas and aims of the agencies responsible. Equally, memorials have political effects: as indicated in chapter one, they are implicated in the production of commonsense understandings. In giving accounts of the meaning of the past, memorials, like other cultural representations of past violence, contribute to present politics and the possibilities for future action: "The actions we take in the current world in light of the Holocaust are necessarily predicated on our understanding of the Holocaust" (Young, 1988: 11).²⁶

Often public remembrance involves direct recounting of a story of the past, whether on panels in a museum or in speeches and publications. This means that the study of memorials must involve the study of narratives. Even when the facts of an event are known and recorded they do not in themselves explain the meaning of the atrocity and its significance, which is only made apparent through narrative accounts: "Without a synthesising narrative we would be left with only a set of discrete, atomised accounts in which the horror remains hidden rather than revealed" (Eltringham, 2004:153). The importance of this point lies in the recognition of the distinction between facts and meaning; between the events of the past and the ways they are understood in the present. We need to bear in mind that the same events may be woven into very different narratives (White, 2003). It is not that there is doubt that certain events occurred, or that they have "continuing effects", however the same events can be interpreted differently (ibid: 341).²⁷ Importantly, though, there are limits to interpretation: narratives which ignore established events, in this case genocide, effectively deny them, rather than interpreting them. As Eltringham points out in his own study of narratives of the genocide in Rwanda, denials of "the very existence of events" are of a different order of meaning (2004: 158).

²⁶ Memorials are only one among many social practices and institutions through which significant past events are represented, so the suggestion here is not that their role is definitive but that they contribute.

²⁷ See for instance Campbell, 1998.

Not all narratives are of the same order – for instance testimonies given during commemorations or at memorial sites might be said to have a singular status. I have argued in chapter one that the experience of trauma leaves a particular scar on memory and alters its relationship to the past. This experience is reflected in testimonies from survivors which have a deeper connection with the past than other narratives socially constituted after the event. In my analysis, I am able to draw insights from studies of memorialisation which observe how and why individuals and groups directly traumatised by the violence or abuse, including survivors and bereaved relatives, participate in the making of memorials (Bills, 1998; Alexander *et al*, 2000; Hutchinson, 1998; Kwon, 2006); or which trace the evidence of trauma at sites of memory (Edkins, 2003). I am also informed by Alexander’s approach to a different but related concern with how trauma becomes embedded in the collective memory. He suggests that narratives which take root in the collective must include a definition of the pain of the core event: “What actually happened”; the group or individual victims; the relationship between the trauma victim and the audience; and “the identity of the perpetrator”. (2004: 12-15). These provide useful categories, identifying the key elements of narratives of the genocide, and have loosely informed my analytical approach.

Memorial sites symbolise the past in their forms and material content. Often they are deliberately constructed as monuments and narratives are embedded in their architecture, sometimes they are preserved memory sites such as concentration camps or massacre sites, containing the literal remains of the past within an institutional framework to denote their significance. In each case, memorials derive some of their power from the fact that they are experienced as a concrete place of memory “a physical location.” (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2003: 11). Tracing the history of these places, describing them and interpreting them as symbolic accounts of the past, and documenting the struggles over memory are the central concerns of most studies of memorialisation.

Young’s landmark study of Holocaust memorials explores multiple dimensions of their meaning, situating them in their different national contexts. He argues that we need to be attentive to the “many layers and dimensions of national memory... its many inconsistencies, faces and shapes” (1993: xi) and develops an approach which reflects these inconsistencies and the struggles over the past which is historical and

interpretative, undertaking “biographies” of the memorial sites which integrate discussion of their “aesthetic contours” with the “activity that brought them into being, the constant give and take between memorials and viewers” (1993: ix).

There are many other compelling accounts of memorial sites which confirm the value of this biographical approach. Winter (1995) examines the aesthetic forms of remembrance in their social context. He looks at national, local and personal memorials, drawing out their messages, and investigates the processes through which they were created, revealing the ways that the ‘grieving masses’ contributed to and found some solace in memorials. Werbner’s study of memorialisation in Zimbabwe focuses on a national monument, Heroes Acre – a Harare cemetery reserved for the burial of an elite few. He describes the empty “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier” as a hint of the “official oblivion for most of the common warriors” (1998b: 73), showing how the site stands at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of remembrance. Hughes exposes the contested politics of remembrance in Cambodia through studies of local memorials (2006b) and a national memorial, the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes (2006a), revealing diverse impulses of traditional beliefs, justice, and nationalism and the influence of international discourses which have shaped these sites in distinctive ways.

What emerges from these and other studies of memorial sites is that analysis of the narratives of memorialisation demands attention to mourning and trauma, continuities and new imaginings, and locating the site in relation to wider politics and society. It requires unravelling multiple strands of meaning, with reference to a specific locale. However, memorials often take a ritual, rather than a concrete form, and these commemorative practices are of equal, but slightly different importance.

The meaning of commemorative rituals is partly generated through narratives, usually speeches, testimonies and songs, which must be subject to analysis in the same way as other accounts given through memorialisation. But, rituals are not confined to narratives and it is vital also to consider how remembrances are enacted in rituals, the conventions they establish or reiterate. Connerton (1989) points out that while memory studies concentrate on interpreting their meaning from texts, “inscribing practices” in which memories are articulated tend to be overlooked or simply to be regarded in the same terms as narratives. In analysing rituals we should bear in mind that their significance is particular because it involves bodily practices and entrenches

these; rituals involve “technical skills imbued with moral values” (Connerton, 1989: 83), rather than symbols. Instead of just projecting an image of memory, they simultaneously bring it into being through performances and depend upon participation. In studying commemorations and memorial sites we need to consider responses to them as part of meaning-making.

Sites of memory, including rituals, contain many layers of meaning and inconsistencies and are interpreted variously by those who visit or engage with them. Responses to the memorial sites are part of their meaning in the present and integral to how they change over time: “New generations visit memorials under new circumstances and invest them with new meanings. The result is an evolution in the memorial’s significance” (Young, 1993: 3). Focusing on representations without considering responses from their audience, as many studies of memory do, cannot deliver insights into the implications of memorials for social collectives (Kansteiner, 2002: 179).

In chapter seven and eight of this thesis, I analyse the representations of memory, identity and politics in genocide memorials. I explore whether and how the belief in a ‘duty to remember’ informs memorialisation broadly. I also consider how survivor testimonies are incorporated or marginalised and the intersections and distinctions between these and other narratives; and whether and how trauma is reflected in symbolic and ritual as well as narrative forms. In undertaking this analysis of the rituals and sites of remembrance, I was informed by the lessons of previous studies, outlined above, and by a more general warning against singular, fixed accounts: “the statements made by memorials are complex and multifaceted; the meanings assigned to and derived from them cannot be guaranteed” (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006a: 13).

Overall, my study was designed to situate memorials in context; then to reveal the politics of the process, the meanings generated and responses to them. The intention was to reflect both the production of memory, through the ideas and aims of its architects, and its consumption, through interactions with and responses to memorials (Kansteiner, 2002: 179). I employ a range of sources and qualitative research methods to achieve this.

SOURCES AND METHODS

My approach is ethnographic, empirical and historical in orientation. It is concerned with exploring attitudes and perceptions; seeking to: “understand the experiences and practices of key informants” (Devine, 2002: 197) and to “uncover the meaning and significance” (Ragin, 1994: 91) of the memorialisation. It also documents the memorialisation process, the evolution of the ideas which informed it and responses to it over time. This required documentary research, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis, combining complementary strategies in order to produce more robust research (Milliken, 1999: 234). Overall, it was necessary to use several types of source material and methods of analysis. The “multiple sources of data” (Grix, 2001: 84) amounted to a form of triangulation, albeit within an overall qualitative approach. The “multiple perspectives” add weight to my interpretations (Marshall and Rossman, 2006: 202-204).

The research relies substantially on various forms of primary and secondary sources. The former included the memorial sites directly under study – the monuments, buildings and their contents, including museum panels, human remains, banners and visitor books. Texts associated with the memorials, including brochures and websites, were also analysed as were other documents relevant to the memorialisation process including letters and reports. The ceremonies and marches, speeches and testimony of commemorative rituals were other important sources. Another primary source was interviews. In total I carried out 48 in-depth interviews. I also had many other informal conversations during my fieldwork. The study also drew upon material from secondary sources, including news reports, reports from governments, institutions, and NGOs reports, websites, blogs and video material.

Fieldwork

The research was based on two fieldwork trips to Rwanda, in July-August 2006 and April 2007, and one trip to Brussels in April 2006. I was also able to occasionally draw upon impressions and information garnered prior to the research, during a trip to Rwanda in April 2004 and an interview conducted in January 2005 at the UK headquarters of the Aegis Trust (a key agency involved in the memorialisation process). The research trips had two purposes. One aim was to carry out a series of interviews to inform the discussion of the memorialisation process and of responses to

it. The other reason for the trips was to visit the memorial sites and participate in commemorative rituals in order to inform an account of the memorials and an interpretation of their meaning.

In carrying out the research, I took account of ethnographic studies which place an emphasis on the importance of reflexivity and ethics. This seemed essential given the nature of the research topic, its context, and my own status as an outsider in Rwanda as well as the more general issue that all researchers bring their own assumptions, identifications and experiences and are influenced by their experiences (Smyth, 2005: 17) and must therefore be reflexive.

In her research among Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, Malkki confirmed the importance of acknowledging the partial and sensitive nature of research in such circumstances and building this into the approach. Instead of pursuing an investigation, she advocates that the researcher be prepared to “leave some stones unturned” and become an “attentive listener”. This requires giving space for the research participants to define what matters most: “It may be precisely by giving up the scientific detective’s urge to know “everything” that we gain access to those very partial vistas that our informants may desire or think to share with us” (Malkki, 1995: 51).

Inherent in this insight is an important recognition of the complex nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants in the study. To assume that the researcher should be secure in knowing precisely what questions to ask prior to their encounters in the field is rather to underestimate the potential of the contributions of the participants to the study. Moreover it ignores the fact that the research may have implications in the lifeworlds of research participants. As far as possible there needs to be flexibility within the terms of the research enquiry to give some account to the problem that research is itself a political endeavour and one which can have political consequences:

[T]hose working in the social sciences cannot remain aloof from or indifferent to the implications of their theories and research for their fellow members of society. To regard social agents as ‘knowledgeable’ and ‘capable’ is not just a matter of the analysis of action; it is also an implicitly political stance” (Giddens, 1982: 16).

Difficult issues in the politics and ethics of social science research have often been addressed by researchers working from a feminist perspective, including in studies of

Holocaust memorialisation. One recent study emphasised the importance of wrestling with the sensitivities and ambiguities of research on memorialisation and of pursuing “a self-reflexive methodological approach that insists on the need for moral self-examination” (Jacobs, 2004: 236). Similar concerns are expressed by researchers informed by a postcolonial perspective who acknowledge how legacies of colonialism have shaped global inequalities. They indicate the need to think through your position in relation to the research and its subjects, and to consider the implications of a potential gulf between the experiences, identities and opportunities of the researcher and participants. They emphasise the importance of an appreciation of the “knowledges, theories and explanations” of research subjects (Raghuram and Madge, 2006: 271) to avert the reproduction of a Eurocentric worldview. Thinking from a postcolonial perspective is especially relevant in this project because of the historical role of colonial policy in shaping identities in Rwanda, and its contribution to the 1994 genocide (Mamdani, 2001).

Beyond the relationship between the researcher and participants, it was also important to give consideration to power relations within Rwanda and how these affect the possibilities for participants to contribute, or shape their views. Longman and Rutagengwa found when carrying out fieldwork in Rwanda that there are limitations on freedom of expression and all questions related to the genocide are “politically sensitive” (2006a: 239). My research could not hope to overcome this potential problem, which mainly encouraged me to approach my fieldwork with flexibility and additional care, as well as the usual ethical concern for the interests and views of all the research participants.

My study could, and did, reflect a broader concern with power relations within Rwanda, and Rwanda’s postcolonial predicament, with attention to a range of sources. But the nature of my fieldwork, which focused substantially on practical issues about why and how groups and individuals became involved in memorialisation, what they had done and how they felt about the results, did not prove controversial. Indeed, my existing awareness that it was unlikely to prove problematic – that there would be people willing to talk freely about their contributions to memorialisation – was a factor in my decision that it would be appropriate to carry out field research on this issue in the way that I did. This was an ethical concern because, as a single doctoral researcher in country for a limited period, I would be poorly-placed to follow up on

any difficulties should they arise. I did also gather opinions from individuals about the memorial sites and commemorations, some of which could be regarded as politically sensitive, but I did not place myself in a community for a period of time, or carry out a systematic study which might result in these participants being identifiable. Interviewees not involved in memorialisation, and asked for their more general views on the sites and rituals of memory, were generally encountered briefly and informally as part of my 'participant observation' during visits to memorial sites.

Interviews and Observation

The interviews were all one-to-one, lengthy and open-ended, either unstructured or semi-structured interviews, following along the lines suggested in Bernard (2006, 212-213). This approach was taken because my aim was to "elicit rich, detailed materials" about experience, attitudes and ideas and to find out what "kinds of things are happening" rather than adopting preconceptions about this (Lofland cited in Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 125). The interviews delivered numerous insights which I could not otherwise have learned, in particular regarding why and how the memorialisation matters for genocide survivors and how people living near memorial sites regard them.

There are a number of other important points to note about the interviews. Firstly, I have drawn extensively upon my interviews in the analysis because for ethical and political reasons it was important to give space to the voices of those who participated in the research, as explained above. The interviews include leading representatives of the key groups most closely involved in the construction of a public memory of the genocide in Rwanda, and as such are informative about the process. They do not represent the opinions of Rwandans in general about memorialisation, but do offer some insights into these. Even these few voices can bring forward views not already heard in the public arena and thus contribute, in a limited fashion, to uncovering what Foucault describes as "subjugated knowledges" (1976: 82). The interviews are by no means a scientific sample of views from which wide generalisations can be made, but I have not sought to use them in this way.

Secondly, the majority of the interviews were conducted in French or in Kinyarwanda through a translator and therefore are translations from the original. For points of information this posed no real difficulties and I was also able to cross-check details in

many instances. However, where interviewees express their opinion or feelings it can be more problematic to capture the nuances of their meaning – indeed researchers cannot always be entirely certain that they have achieved this, even when they are speaking the same language. I sought to overcome this problem through my approach to the interviewing; by spending as long as possible with each interviewee, and sometimes talking to them on several different occasions. This helped me to feel confident I had a good understanding of their perspectives and meaning.

Thirdly, overwhelmingly those involved in the memorialisation process were willing to have the information and opinions they shared attributed to them by name. This is important because some of these opinions included criticisms of the role of other agencies, including the state. From the interviews, it was clear that there was scope for some debate about how the process was carried out and indeed many of the issues raised in this thesis were being discussed among Rwandans, some more openly than others.

Although most interviewees did not request anonymity, for two reasons, related to the translation and the nature of the context I decided I would not attribute comments directly in the thesis. Instead, I have labelled interviewees according to their roles. In several cases there will still be no difficulty, for insiders, in identifying the interviewee because of their prominent role; in some cases their identity is also clear from the text. In other instances, however, identity is less certain and in a few cases where in fact anonymity was requested I have made sure that this is preserved by not providing the precise role and obscuring the context.

Attributing comments to people by their role rather than their name has several functions here. It helps the reader to situate the comment in a way that names, unless they are very well known, do not. Secondly it provides me with a further safeguard against the concern that what is a limited study, taken at a particular moment, could have a negative personal impact. In a few cases I have been able to share my written text with participants in the study prior to submitting the thesis, but for reasons of language and practical considerations, for the most part this was not a feasible option. As a result it was not generally possible for the interviewees themselves to verify whether the comments they made were precisely accurately reflected and interpreted. According to Schnabel, respondents should at a minimum be offered the right to access published research results and the opportunity to ... respond" (2005: 31). This

would have been the most ethical approach, particularly since Rwanda is not a settled political environment, and experiences, and opportunities to speak about them publicly, are constantly changing.²⁸ There are reasons not to publicise some critical opinions in Rwanda, where there are constraints upon freedom of expression and the genocide remains a sensitive and divisive issue. Finally, it makes sense to give the same sort of attribution to all the interviewees lest there be a perception that the comments given anonymously were in any sense less valid.

The observational side of the research was more straightforward than the interviews. Part of the rationale behind participant observation is to gain “experiential knowledge” (Bernard, 2006: 342). But often this approach is about immersion in a culture for a prolonged period to assimilate a deep understanding of particular groups and practices and building relationships of trust with the participants. I use the term in a more specific sense here. Before beginning the study I was a minor participant in the process of genocide documentation, having for some years been involved in a human rights programme gathering testimony from genocide survivors and, to this extent, might be said to have had some affinity with, and links to, others involved in this practice. During the study, however, the task of participant observation was confined to visiting memorial sites and participating in commemorative rituals. The crucial point to note is that the data collected in these observations are my own impressions and that the same sites and rituals might well be perceived very differently by others, although I have also included the views of Rwandans I encountered.

Language, again, was a difficult issue. In my discussion of the official national commemoration in Rwanda in April 2007, I was able to rely on the simultaneous translation of speeches from Kinyarwanda into English, but in other examples I have relied on more limited translations by colleagues. Also, in the analysis of forms and symbols, as an outsider, I cannot hope to capture all the nuances of their significance. I have drawn directly and indirectly on observations from Rwandan informants to reflect diverse perspectives on the rituals. I have also used documentary sources to enrich the description and analysis of memorial sites to help overcome these shortcomings.

²⁸ Since my field research I learned of other researchers in Rwanda who faced concerns about their research subjects’ freedom to speak and about official inquiries into their research (eg Thomson, 2007). My experience was different, but this suggests a possible need for caution.

Interpretation

Underpinning this thesis is an assumption that social life is constructed and that memorialisation has a role in the making of moral and political communities, as explained in chapter one. It is consistent with this understanding to view discourse as a mechanism through which memorialisation is implicated in the construction of memory, identity and morality. By discourse I mean not only the narratives, speeches and texts associated with memorials but also the sites and rituals themselves, as symbols and performances integral to making meaning. Discourse analysis is therefore an appropriate method through which to endeavour to extract meaning from the narratives and performances of genocide memory. In my approach to this task I was informed by previous studies which employ this tool, both in the study of memorialisation and in wider contexts.

The significance of discourse in the production of meanings and the constitution of social reality is well established. Once we recognise the impossibility of thinking outside of discourse (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 3) and the consequence that discourse has political effects – that it “does not simply reflect reality, it actually co-constitutes it” (Jackson, 2005) – it becomes important to isolate and deconstruct discourse, conceived of as “the ways of talking, thinking or representing a particular subject or topic” (Hall, 1992: 295). Following Foucault, studies which employ discourse analysis commonly identify and deconstruct the power/knowledge nexus in an “organising concept” (Cowen and Shenton, 1995: 27), an idea which orders our commonsense about the world. Studies in this vein reveal the “limits and forms of the sayable” (Foucault, 1991: 50) on dominant discourses of our time such as imperialism (Doty, 1996) or development (Escobar, 1995). In contrast to these, my use of discourse analysis is as a tool within a broader project concerned with exploring the social constitution of genocide memory. I do not focus on dominant discourses but rather examine the variety of narratives which surface at, or are expressed in, the institutions and practices of memorialisation. I do not analyse a stable systemized discourse which shapes, in Foucauldian terms, “the order of things”, though I do not dispute the political significance of these. Instead, I am interested in contestation and analyse a plurality of competing and intersecting discourses juxtaposed in the field of memorialisation, in order to reveal silences and contradictions and “render ambiguous predominant interpretations” (Milliken, 1999: 243).

Ethics

Often the discussion of ethics in social science research concentrates on fieldwork encounters. The consensus is that it is essential to explain the nature of the study and the possibility of its publication to all participants, gaining their informed consent before proceeding to an interview. It is also necessary to offer the possibility of anonymity or the chance to determine the level of attribution and to store data securely and anonymously, to comply with data protection legislation. During and after the research, I was obliged to conform to the cornerstones of current research ethics guidelines which have as their priority the avoidance of harm to research participants (ESRC, 2005: 1). I also felt it necessary to approach the research with particular care due to its sensitive nature (see above).

In my view, conforming to the highest ethical standards in fieldwork is essential but not sufficient, because ethics ought also to be a consideration in the choice of research topic and in the analysis of material gathered. I have already noted some of the ethical considerations surrounding the interview research, but there was also a broader consideration. Because the research was pursued in a society devastated and divided by the experience of the genocide, there was a particular obligation to consider the purpose of the research.

It has been argued that the researcher in conflict environments should pursue studies likely to have “positive effects for the researched population” (Schnabel, 2005: 30). This is no small challenge for outsiders working in the complex arenas of conflict ridden societies, whose interest is itself embedded in power relations “shaped by the world order” (Smyth, 2005: 11), as development practitioners have found.²⁹ This study cannot claim to deliver any direct benefits for the participants, although, as shown in the conclusion, the findings did raise some issues of relevance to policy makers involved in memorialisation. However it was pursued in recognition of the losses suffered in the genocide and of the struggles of those affected by the genocide to overcome this past and of the need for non-Rwandans to help to “bear the legacy of memory” (Cappeletto 2005b: 31), while reflecting on the political problems and possibilities this entails.

²⁹ I do not mean to underestimate the possibilities of making a difference here, merely to emphasise that regardless of intention this is by no means straightforward, individual researchers can and do manage to rise to the challenge.

Like any study which acknowledges the social constituted nature of reality, this study must also acknowledge the limitations of empirical accounts and of the work of interpretation. In these circumstances, claiming to know is itself problematic. Regardless of the detail or extent of the research, delivering a full and coherent account of how the genocide is remembered in Rwanda would always be elusive. Amid the contingency of knowledge, it is questionable whether attempting to offer a definitive account of how genocide memory in Rwanda can, or even ought to be, a practical and ethical aim. Indeed, Zehfuss has argued that “taking account of the public struggle over memory and its political implications” might have another purpose in undermining certainty and demonstrating the ethico-political questions which lie at the heart of the problem of how we should remember (Zehfuss, 2007: 74-75). At most, I hope that in analysing some of the discourses and uncovering some of the untold stories about the memory of the genocide in Rwanda, the study may serve to contribute to widening debates about genocide remembrance and that it may be consonant with the ethical possibilities of memorialisation itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified various aspects of the social and historical processes of memorialisation and meaning-making explored in this thesis. I provided a series of justifications for why it makes sense to examine the political significance of memorialisation on the basis of a single case study of genocide memorialisation in Rwanda. I then established the importance of investigating the memorialisation process, identifying key agencies, uncovering their ideas, aims and activities. I explained the need to analyse the discourses and rituals of memorialisation. The second part of the chapter explained how the research was carried out, discussing methods and the consideration given to reflexivity and ethics. I have shown that the political significance of memorialisation can be analysed empirically and discursively, and have set out my strategy for doing so. In the next chapter I outline the historical context in which the research took place.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Context

This chapter sets out the context for the study. It begins by situating the work in relation to ideas about history and memory and establishing the differences between them. It then provides a brief guide to the historical events of the genocide and its aftermath, which is essential to understanding how and why the genocide is remembered. The final section reviews existing literature on politics and on memorialisation in post genocide Rwanda, explaining where there are gaps in knowledge and how my study seeks to address them. In these three respects, it offers a background against which the empirical findings can be read and explains why my study is worthwhile and what I hope it will tell us.

History and Memory

In writing about how and why the genocide is commemorated, and outlining the context here, I am involved in producing a historical account and a work of remembrance. History is not entirely objective and separate from memory, and my project in particular involves an intention to contribute to preserving memory by recording a small part of the consequences of the genocide. History intersects with memory because people's memories are a source for the writing of history and in turn historical accounts become part of the archives which contribute to dynamics of memory. Moreover, in practice, history is often equated with a narrow fixed account of the past which is barely distinct from memory, since political actors deploy accounts of memory and history similarly to serve particular goals (for the latter, see Eltringham, 2004: 148) and people feel that their memories represent history (Malkki, 1995).

There is, however, an important difference between instrumental or personal narratives and the writing of history as it is understood here. I am conscious of presenting an incomplete account, aware that my attempts to discover meanings in facts and events must be open to scrutiny, challenge and revision.³⁰ History, in this sense, is a critical discipline which records and interprets past events as part of a

³⁰ Connerton, 1989, 13-16; Ricoeur, 2004, 133-176; and especially Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006a: 1-8 informed my thinking about the relationship between history and memory.

project which can never be fully accomplished, while memory “allows more readily for a certain evasion of critical distance” (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006a: 8).

Historians must be clear about the difference between exploring and reviewing the meaning of the past, necessary to broaden our understanding of it, and the neglect or denial of evidence. As Deborah Lipstadt argues, a process of re-examination and adjustment is inherent in historiography, but denial is both distinctive and profoundly at odds with the essence of scholarship. History inevitably involves interpretation, but its credibility depends upon reference to facts; it builds on “a certain body of irrefutable evidence” (1993: 21). Acknowledgement of this is a touchstone for those tracing the history of a political process such as memorialisation. Moreover, since it provides a point of departure from which to evaluate and dismantle the claims made by those who seek to contradict established facts, as Lipstadt (1993) has done with regard to Holocaust denial, it might also inform the less straightforward task of evaluating the political significance of competing remembrances expressed in the public sphere.³¹

As Paul Ricoeur puts it, deniers can be countered with reference to the evidence: “those who negate great crimes... will find their defeat in the archives” (2004: 147). Nevertheless, he points out, it is a problem for history and for the study of memory, that testimony is a primary source of evidence about the past and contested memory may on occasion be the only source for history. With this in mind, we cannot entirely evade the problems of competing views and an element of uncertainty. Yet, despite identifying the weaknesses at the foundations of historical archives, Ricoeur upholds the potential for history to offer a truth about the past by remaining faithful to the available body of evidence.

Below, I outline the established events of the genocide and its aftermath, the context in which genocide memorials were established in Rwanda. While this account cannot reflect all the complexities and is shaped by my perspective, its validity rests on a review of the sources and the inclusion of established facts (Malkki, 1995: 240). There is now a considerable material to inform an understanding of what happened in

³¹ I am grateful to Vanessa Pupavac for drawing attention to this point. See also chapter seven.

April-July 1994. My account is informed by academic and other sources, to which the reader might turn for a wealth of further insights.³²

The Genocide

Close to a million people died in the genocide of April-July 1994 in Rwanda.³³ The massacres began almost immediately after President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane was shot down on 6 April, killing all passengers, including the President and the Prime Minister of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira. The killings were planned and orchestrated by extremists within the ruling party and military. Their targets were everyone labelled as 'Tutsi'; the political opponents of the 'Hutu Power' agenda; and anyone suspected of sympathising with either of these groups. The organisers of the violence included government officials, army commanders and militia leaders. The killings were implemented by militia, soldiers and ordinary civilians from various social backgrounds. Most of the perpetrators were adult males, but a few women and children also participated. The weapons used included guns, grenades, and farm tools such as machetes, clubs and hoes.

Calls to eliminate Tutsis were broadcast in the media. Public meetings were held locally to organise the task. Killers "worked" in armed gangs, checking identity cards at roadblocks or carrying out house-to-house searches to find victims. People at risk tried to hide or fled, often walking together to seek refuge in public buildings. They were massacred in their thousands, leaving churches, schools, stadiums and government offices strewn with bodies and stained with blood. The corpses of victims were left to decay at massacre sites, on streets and hillsides, or were thrown into the river, toilets, or mass graves by the killers. The killings were "a catalogue of horrors" (Prunier, 1998: 257) with babies heads smashed against walls, body parts mutilated, pregnant women disembowelled and people forced to kill their relatives, or to watch them die. Those Tutsis who survived had often been subjected to torture or rape; most were wounded and destitute.

³² Some key sources which informed this account are Prunier, (1998; 2009); Mamdani (2001); Des Forges (1999); Straus (2006); Uvin (1998; 2001a), African Rights (1995); the ICTR website, OAU (2000), Hatzfeld, (2005a, 2005b), Gourevitch (1998).

³³ In 2001 the Ministry of local government reported 934,218 victims (Straus, 2006:51 fn. 28). Other academic sources give lower figures, (eg Straus, 2006: 1) but rely on general estimates. It is important to note that there are question marks over official and other estimates of victims, including at massacre sites discussed later. However, this is not central to my research, what matters here is the certain fact of mass death in the genocide and its impact.

The genocide was instigated and directed by Hutu elites within or allied to the state, intent upon securing their economic and social privileges. Their power had been undermined by the deteriorating economic situation; internal political opposition; and by the threat posed by the military invasion of the RPF in October 1990: “the genocidal tendency was born of the crisis of Hutu Power” (Mamdani, 2001: 185). They planned the genocide as a strategy to retain power: “the quickest and most “rational” way of eliminating all basis for compromise with the RPF” and ensuring “the reassertion of Hutu solidarities” (Lemarchand, 2009: 84). They began killing before the plane crash, instigating massacres of Tutsis in 1990 in Gisenyi, 1991 in Ruhengeri and 1992 in Bugesera in the context of an ongoing civil war with the RPF. By 1994, with a peace deal and power-sharing agreement with the RPF in place, the extremists’ political options had narrowed. Habyarimana’s death provided a pretext for action;³⁴ the hardliners took control insisted that all Hutus should take part in the annihilation of the Tutsi population.

A defining feature of the violence was that it was carried out “within the confines of a small, tightly knit community” (Prunier, 2009: 1), not just by strangers, but by neighbours and sometimes relatives or former friends. Not all ‘ordinary men’ supported the violence, actively or tacitly, and many were forced to kill: “motivation and participation varied during the genocide” (Straus, 2006: 96).³⁵ But the rate of civilian participation was extraordinarily high, a fact which needs to be understood in the context of fear, civil war and massive displacement of Hutu populations (Straus, 2006); a culture of obedience (Prunier, 1998); structural violence (Uvin 1998); land grievances and youth unemployment (Pottier, 2002: 10); population pressure (Prunier, 1998: 353-354); the role of the media (Fujii, 2004: 103-4); and the killing of President Melchior Ndadaye by Tutsi extremists in Burundi in 1993 (Lemarchand, 2009: 85).³⁶ Above all, however, categorical racist thinking made this violence possible: killing of the Tutsi ‘enemy’ had certainly become “the law” (Straus, 2006: 173) but people

³⁴ The hardliners used Habyarimana’s death opportunistically, but it is not known whether they were responsible for shooting down the plane. A French judge recently alleged that the RPF was responsible. This is a significant point of political tension at the time of writing, as observed later in this study. The question of who killed the President is, however, a specific one which, as Clark and Kaufman emphasise, should not distract us from the recognition that the genocide was a “deliberate catastrophe with much more significant causes” (2008: 5).

³⁵ See Mamdani, 2001, 266 and Lemarchand 2007: 10 for a criticism of official estimates.

³⁶ This point is often ignored but it was important in shaping the thinking of elites, ordinary people, and also brought “highly politicised” Burundian refugees to Rwanda (Lemarchand, 2009: 85).

followed orders because “the definition of the enemy appeared credible to ordinary Hutu” (Mamdani, 2001: 202).

The plan for genocide was developed from and resonated with an understanding of history forged out of more than a century of political interventions to construct Hutu and Tutsi identities in opposition to one another; ideas which had already fuelled a series of massacres of Tutsis since 1959. Despite a complex history of social mixing, Hutus were encouraged over generations to share a belief that they were Rwanda’s rightful indigenous people, under threat from an imagined Tutsi race of ‘Hamitic’ foreign invaders.³⁷ Successive independent governments, Belgian and German colonizers and the Catholic Church contributed in various ways to promoting this view, and a corresponding idea of the Hutu majority as the legitimate political community. From this perspective, the historical record showed that RPF rebels, mainly Tutsi refugees, would impose an oppressive regime over the Hutus. Some Hutus could remember instances of discrimination, violence, or fear, under the rule of the pre-colonial Tutsi monarchy, during colonialism, or after the 1990 RPF invasion. These beliefs were reflected in, and entrenched by, political discrimination against Tutsis over the decades after independence; and by massacres, including in 1959, 1963 and 1973, which had prompted half a million Tutsis to flee into exile (Mamdani, 2001: 161). It was in this context, that the genocidal logic took hold.

Importantly, the international response to the violence was either weak or deeply flawed. Within days of Habyarimana’s death, the magnitude of the violence was clear, but neither then nor later was there sufficient political will for an intervention. Following the murder of ten of its UNAMIR peacekeeping soldiers on 7 April, Belgium focused on its own losses and on the evacuation of foreigners. The United States, still smarting from a disastrous intervention in Somalia in 1992, sought to “steer clear of Rwanda entirely and be sure others did the same” (Power, 2002: 366). On 21 April, the UN resolved to withdraw all but 270 of the 2,548 UNAMIR peacekeeping troops, which had in any case been constrained from action by their peacekeeping mandate. It was not until 17 May that the UN felt sufficient pressure to act, and decided to send more troops, and it took six months before the 5,500 strong UNAMIR II forces were in place. In the meantime, the RPF had defeated the *génocidaires*.

There was one external initiative of note: the French led a multinational force 'Operation Turquoise' into Rwanda in late June, with the aim of creating a 'humanitarian protection zone' in south-western Rwanda. But not only were there very few Tutsis left in this region, the move benefitted the perpetrators of genocide who took shelter in the zone or escaped into Zaire, with French support. Having trained and armed the former government of Rwanda in the run up to the genocide, and maintained contact and support for its leaders during and after, there seems little question that the French mounted 'Operation Turquoise' with mainly diplomatic interests, and "to give at least minimal support to its former allies" (Kroslak, 2008: 232). Meanwhile another potential source of authority within Rwanda, the Churches, were equally compromised by their relations with the government, and their hostility towards the RPF; many clergy were killed in the genocide, but some participated in the slaughter, with the result that: "The church hierarchies were at best useless and at worst accomplices in the genocide" (Prunier, 1998: 250).³⁸

Post-Genocide Politics

The military victory of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) brought the genocide to an end in July 1994, but after three months of genocide, and four years of civil war, the country was devastated. A million people were dead, and some two million had fled, or were forced into exile in neighbouring countries. The rebels had captured the state, but such was the scale of the human losses that General Augustin Bizimungu, military Chief of Staff during the genocide³⁹, confidently predicted: "the RPF will rule over a desert" (cited in Prunier, 1998: 299).

When the *génocidaires* led an exodus across the border, they took with them much of the state property and resources. People in Rwanda were suffering the consequences of the genocide or war; many were injured or traumatised, or displaced: "children could be seen playing with skulls as if they were balls. Psychologically, the place was full of walking wounded" (Prunier, 1998: 327). The justice system and the civil service had collapsed, with former staff either dead or in exile. In principle, the genocide had ended, but in practice the effects of violence continued to define the

³⁷ The Twa minority were not seen as significant in this imagining of the past.

³⁸ 13 priests and a bishop were killed by RPF soldiers at Kabgayi. Priests brought to trial on genocide charges include Father Seromba, Father Rukundo, convicted at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and Father Nsengimana whose trial remains in progress.

³⁹ Bizimungu is on trial for genocide at the ICTR.

political and social landscape, shaping interactions between people, and their relationship with the state.

A new Government of National Unity was sworn in on 19 July 1994. The RPF made alliances with Hutu politicians who had opposed the genocide and established a transitional regime, based upon the terms of a previous peace agreement, the 1993 Arusha Accords. The new regime lacked human and material resources, and international support. Although the genocide had been acknowledged by the United Nations in June, a disastrous cholera epidemic across the border in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) was the focus for international attention. At the same time, more than a million people within Rwanda were internally displaced and there was a stream of human traffic across the borders: with Hutus leaving while Tutsis returned from years of exile in search of land and homes.⁴⁰

A period of insecurity followed. Exiled leaders of the former regime, ex-Rwandan Armed Forces and *interahamwe* reorganised militarily from bases in Zaire, recruiting and training in refugee camps, sending attackers into Rwanda to kill survivors and Hutu witnesses of the genocide. Genocide suspects were being arrested on a scale which neither the prisons nor the ailing justice system could accommodate. Hutus living inside Rwanda feared possible imprisonment on genocide charges and ‘vengeance killings.’ There were also allegations of organised RPF-led killings. On 22 April 1995, an estimated 4000 internally displaced people (IDPs) were killed in Kibeho by Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) soldiers sent to close the camp (see chapter seven),⁴¹ an event which contributed to tensions within the government; according to Prunier (2009: 45) it also contributed to the departure from the government of Prime Minister Faustin Twagiramungu and three high-profile Hutu ministers in August 1995. In October 1996, the government backed a Tutsi-led rebellion in Zaire, forcing a mass return of Hutu refugees’ from the camps, thousands are thought to have been killed (Lemarchand, 2009: 69). In 1997, the remnants of the exiled ex-FAR and *interahamwe* led an insurgency in the northwest of Rwanda,

⁴⁰ Some 400,000 Tutsi returnees are estimated to have returned by November 1994 (Prunier, 1998: 325).

⁴¹ The RPF rejects this allegation and there have been no in-depth inquiries; estimates for the numbers affected vary (see Prunier, 1998: 360). The government’s position is that: “some of the RPA soldiers committed crimes for which they have been punished” but they did so “while fighting to stop genocide” (Kagame, 2008: xxiv). There are testimonies and allegations which need investigation; see

targeting civilians and battling the RPA, which was also involved in attacks on civilians. By 1998, the RPA had again entered the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), backing a struggle to overthrow the Kabila regime – the beginning of a long and devastating engagement in a war of “partition”, “pillage” (Turner, 2007: 24) and mass death.

While the conflict in the DRC raged on, security in Rwanda improved (aside from occasional incidents). Refugees who fled in 1994 were reintegrated. The army incorporated thousands of ex-FAR soldiers and later became the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF). In neighbouring Tanzania the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) arrested key suspects, reaching its first conviction of genocide in 1998. In Rwanda genocide trials began, while a National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) and a National Human Rights Commission were established in 1999. A new constitution was introduced in 2003, and peaceful, though ‘choiceless’, elections followed soon afterwards. The government had by then won substantial support and from donors (financing some 50% of the national budget) and later gained debt relief, having implemented their economic prescriptions. The economy grew; the number of children in primary education rose; and Rwanda’s Parliament set an international standard in gender equity.

Official attempts to deal with the legacies of the genocide initially focused on prosecutions but later incorporated education and reconciliation initiatives. Genocide suspects were given incentives to confess, but it would have taken decades to bring to trial some 120,000 genocide prisoners in the existing courts. In 2001, *gacaca* courts were set up, adapting a traditional mechanism for dispute resolution aimed at restoring social harmony (Ingelaere, 2008: 33) to expedite the genocide trials.⁴² Meanwhile, the NURC organised *ingando*, ‘education camps’ in which students, former genocide prisoners and community groups are called upon to learn about Rwanda’s history and conflicts. More broadly, the government has insisted on the: “eradication of ethnic, regional and other divisions and promotion of national unity” (Government of

Prunier, 2009: 16-23. However, there is no evidence of “double genocide”, which is a revisionist allegation (see Clark and Kaufman, 2008: 6, for a similar assessment).

⁴² The *gacaca* take place within local communities, who elect the *inyangamugayo* (judges), and hold open trials ‘on the grass.’ The courts had convicted more than 800,000 of genocide before they were due to end in 2009. Penalties include imprisonment or, for those who confess, community service (TIG) or restitution in cases of minor crimes such as looting. There have been some concerns about unfair trials (see AI 2007) and, for various reasons, about the possibilities for *gacaca* to deliver justice (see Waldorf 2006).

Rwanda, 2003: article 9), outlawing references to ethnicity in politics. It has increasingly used the language of reconciliation, presenting national unity as an emancipatory project, in the interests of peace and development, and designed to “create a citizen that is above sectarianism” (Musoni, cited in Buckley-Zistel, 2006a: 109). However recent academic studies tend to bring the motives and effects of these policies into question.

Literature Review

Prunier observes that academic literature on the genocide has divided along similar lines to the political actors in the region, with writers falling into either pro-Tutsi or pro-Hutu camps (1998: 357). Studies of the post genocide period are less easily classified, but range from critical studies of the nature of the state suggesting a Tutsi-elite regime of discrimination, political exclusion and violence (Reyntjens, 2004; Lemarchand, 2000: 9; Brauman *et al* 2000) to measured investigations of particular government policies and responses to them (Zorbas, 2004; Buckley-Zistel, 2006a; Clark 2005; Clark *et al*, 2008; Prunier, 2009). Critics observe the government’s control over the media and clamp down on the opposition and civil society in order to “enforce consensus” (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006a: 243) and the general use it has made of the charge of ‘divisionism’ to suppress its opponents (see chapter four). Some warn the international community not to be duped by “easy-to-grasp” RPF accounts of the genocide (Pottier, 2002: 202) or worry that history may be “repeating itself” as donors keep silent about government abuses in Rwanda and the DRC (Storey 2001: 22; see also Uvin, 2001b).

In previous studies of memorialisation, government is typically perceived as monolithic entity, acting strategically in its elite interests. Government efforts to promote the memory of the genocide are perceived by Reyntjens as a rational strategy on the part of the RPF to retain its grip on power: “astutely exploiting the ‘genocide credit’” (2004: 177); enabling the government to “maintain victim status” while “enjoying total impunity” (2006: 1114). Pottier argues that the government is engaged in manipulating “international feelings of guilt” (2002: 202) to establish its own “moral superiority” (*ibid*: 177). Mamdani describes the government as a manifestation of “Tutsi Power” whose “founding ideology is... the memory of the genocide and the moral compulsion never to let it happen again” (2001: 271). Some authors who note that the regime is not “homogeneous” (Zorbas 2007: 2), still agree that a powerful

elite defined by “their association to the President” (Longman, 2006: 39) utilizes the memory of genocide. Longman and Rutagengwa express an opinion shared by many critics that the RPF “kept the memory of the genocide prominent in public discourse and imagination in order to emphasise its claim that as the group that stopped the slaughter and brought peace to Rwanda, it had the moral right to rule” (2006b: 137; see also Zorbas, 2007: 4).

However, a more detailed picture of the significance of government interventions in memory is emerging from studies of *gacaca*, a judicial policy certain to have deep implications for questions of memory, identity, trauma and reconciliation in the long-term. Several studies approach the study of *gacaca* from the perspective of law or human rights, asserting or questioning its value as restorative justice (Harrell, 2003; Tiemessen, 2004; Waldorf, 2006). Other scholars of *gacaca* direct us towards its importance for politics in a broader sense, illuminating how it touches on social relations which are, in Rwandan terms, “a matter of the heart” (Ingelaere, 2008: 50). Clark observes that the government has “handed over the key processes of justice and reconciliation to a wounded population” creating a space in which people “publicly engage and debate” the past, often acrimoniously (2005: 20-21). Ingelaere uncovers contradictions both in *gacaca*, as “unpopular, participatory justice” (2008: 49) and in responses to it, and suggests that insights into politics can be gained from by ‘bottom up’ analyses (Ingelaere, 2007). Similarly, some studies of reconciliation reveal diverse responses at the local level (Longman and Rutagengwa, 2006a; Buckley-Zistel, 2006b).

A recent volume concerned with questions of justice, reconciliation and reconstruction casts new light on some of the complexities and contradictions of post genocide Rwanda. It highlights the overwhelming consequences of the genocide, the difficulty of rendering ‘transitional justice’, the problem of genocide revisionism, and the possibilities of ongoing efforts towards political transformation (Clark and Kaufman, eds, 2008) As its editors Clark and Kaufman suggest, there is a tendency for commentators to want to move on from the genocide, despite the fact that much of its history remains to be told; and despite the problem that in so doing they risk obscuring its broad impact and consequences, and making the suffering of victims and survivors “near-invisible” (2008: 7-8). It might seem unlikely that a study concerned with the memory of the genocide could be open to this charge; yet, remarkably, the

few previous studies which analyse the politics of the memorialisation in Rwanda have paid little or no attention to the views and experiences of survivors.

Existing studies of the politics of the genocide memorials in Rwanda generally argue or imply memorials are state-led and politically instrumental. What they do not discuss, is the broad range of agencies and activities involved in the commemoration, and the many forms and practices it encompasses. The role of local and international agencies in the memorialisation in Rwanda has been largely overlooked.⁴³ Little has been said of the substantial involvement of international agencies in the memorialisation, Steele (2006) is a notable exception. Only a few discuss the contributions of genocide survivors, usually in general terms. Gakwenzire (2005) provides an outline of the memory work of survivors' associations. Cook points out that most efforts at memorialisation are "local undertakings" funded from "private sources" and "overseen by local communities or individuals" (2006: 290). Rombouts also indicates that survivors have input into commemoration (2004: 189). Vidal describes the survivors' "painful and difficult" search for the bodies of the victims and their determination to bury them and "give them back their dignity" (2001: 17-18). Buckley-Zistel comments that while some survivors prefer to "bury the past in silence" for most "it was paramount to have their pain and suffering acknowledged and their dignity reconstituted" (2006b: 146).

Studies which look specifically at genocide commemoration tend to conceive of it as an exclusive nationalist project (Vidal, 2001). Claudine Vidal (2001) provides a detailed analysis of official commemoration ceremonies in the years between 1995 and 2000, and some of the controversies surrounding them and concludes that they were: "conceived and directed by the state authorities." (2001: 15).⁴⁴ Citing human rights abuses by the post-genocide, Brauman, Smith and Vidal argue that the government is engaged in a wholesale "instrumentalisation" of the genocide in order to silence its critics. They criticize the failure to give space to the Hutu victims of the genocide and other atrocities and describe commemoration as "a form of symbolic violence" predicting it will have "heavy consequences" (2000: 13). Longman and Rutagengwa argue that the establishment of genocide memorials at churches is partly

⁴³ Vidal, 2001 does reflect some survivors' experiences but focuses only on their criticisms of the memorials.

⁴⁴ My translation from the French. A number of other articles used in this study are in French, and all translations are my own.

due to the desire of the RPF to highlight the failings of the Catholic Church during genocide and to weaken its authority as a potential source of opposition in the present (2006b: 137). However, while sharing some of the critiques, Rosoux reaches a less firm, more plausible conclusion: “the authorities in Kigali seem to fluctuate between a desire to resolve and heal the emotional and often traumatic heritage of the past and the imperatives dictated by power” (2006: 496).

Several studies argue that the government employs memorials to garner international support (Cameron, 2003; Loir, 2005). Cameron represents memorialisation as an instrument of shaming, enabling the “self aggrandizement” of the RPF and “uncritical acceptance” of its actions in the international arena (2003: 5). This view is supported by Brauman, Smith and Vidal who argue that the government seeks to benefit internationally from sympathy towards the victims of the genocide and that commemorations serve to “enable a tyranny to dress up as a model of virtue” (cited in Reyntjens, 2004, 200-201).

Investigations of attitudes towards genocide memorialisation alert us to the tensions surrounding the practice, suggesting that it is perceived by some as a “Tutsi affair” and resented by some Hutus, although accepted by others. But, opinions do not seem to run clearly along ethnic lines; researchers find some survivors value the commemorations, but others do not (Longman and Rutagengwa, 2006a: 174) and some Tutsi returnees are less enthusiastic (Buckley-Zistel, 2006b: 146; Hatzfeld, 2005b: 82). These studies are an important source of insights for my discussion.

I aim to address gaps in the existing literature on memorialisation and to pursue an analysis from a new perspective, informed by broader theoretical and empirical accounts of the politics of memory. This approach can deliver insights both into the politics of memory and into the politics of post-genocide Rwanda. My aim is not to draw firm conclusions about Rwanda’s political future; as Hintjens points out, there is reason to be wary of writing predictions of “gloom or glory” (2008: 34). My study will simply trace one facet of an evolving and complex politics of memory and identity in post-genocide Rwanda. As later chapters will show, the atrocities of genocide remain an overwhelming part of the present and its remembrance is an unfolding political process in which more than one idea about the meaning of the past is expressed, and brought into question.

CHAPTER FOUR

Official Memory

The post-1994 Government of Rwanda has secured the legal and political foundations for genocide memory and made practical and financial contributions to genocide memorials. This chapter looks at the government's role as an agency in the making of memorials, pursuing direct initiatives of its own and intervening in, encouraging or constraining the work of others. It discusses its aims, and the extent to which it has tried to make the memory of the genocide consistent with its political agenda. It also takes account of differences within the government and of its relationships with other agencies.

Previous studies suggest that the genocide memorials are constructed by the state and employed as political instruments to impose its authority, in a form of "symbolic violence" (Braumen *et al*, 2000; see chapter three). In contrast, I find that although the government has a leading role in memorialisation, its involvement has been at least partially reactive and shaped by plural aims. Officials label public remembrance as a means of genocide prevention and associate it with a policy to promote national unity and reconciliation among a population divided by their experiences of genocide. They connect memory to the pursuit of genocide justice at home and accountability abroad. Meanwhile, implicitly, they are engaged in an attempt to garner political legitimacy through reference to memory of the genocide. The Rwandan government might be seen as typical in its efforts to employ memorials in constructions of nationhood designed to uphold its legitimacy, and to harness remembrance to political goals, however, on close examination, its aims and interventions are not entirely consistent and need to be understood in relation to the circumstances in the post genocide period and interactions with other agencies involved in the memorialisation.

I begin with an overview of the range of memorial activities in which the government is engaged. I trace the history of the process, looking at how the demand for official intervention in memorialisation was related to the consequences of the genocide and examining the emergence of a set of official practices of remembrance. I identify the aims the government invests in memorialisation, including national unity and reconciliation and genocide prevention. Looking beyond these stated aims, I discuss an underlying concern with promoting political legitimacy at home and abroad. I then consider the extent to which Rwandan leaders manoeuvre to employ the memorials

for specific political ends. I investigate the views of other participants in memorialisation, to understand how the government works with these other agencies. I observe tensions and inconsistencies in the government's contribution and debates on key issues among those involved in memorialisation.

I argue that government contributions to memorialisation are related to precarious circumstances and transformative ambitions as well as to its political concerns of the moment. While Rwanda's political leaders seek to extract some political benefit from commemorations, there are also other reasons why they support public remembrance of the genocide and, whatever their intentions, they do not dictate all aspects of the process.

NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE

Within about a year of the atrocities, the Government of Rwanda had established the boundaries within which memorialisation takes place. It upheld the definition of genocide, pursued justice for the perpetrators and sought, in various ways, to promote a collective memory of the atrocities of April-July 1994 (see chapter three). Beyond this decisive contribution, the government has also intervened to institutionalise national commemorations of the genocide and memorial sites. It established an annual week of mourning⁴⁵ in 1995, and has organised a national ceremony on the 7th April every year since. More recently it added a new date to the commemorative calendar, an annual Heroes Day on 1 February to give recognition to individuals who saved lives during the genocide (Rosoux, 2006).

Although the government is not involved in all the events and institutions which have been established to remember the 1994 genocide, it has had a role in coordinating, sponsoring or approving most, generally through the department responsible for genocide memorialisation at the Ministry for Youth, Sport and Culture (MIJESPOC) in existence since 2001. It has contributed to the preservation of massacre sites and the construction of burial grounds, according seven of these the status of national memorials. It has also organised the annual ceremony of commemoration, which is the cornerstone of the official memory of the genocide.

⁴⁵ This used to be held from 1-7 April in 1995- 2003 but was changed to 7-13 April in 2004 (IDRP, 2006: 78).

The national ceremony of commemoration takes place at a different memorial site each year on genocide memorial day, a public holiday on 7 April. The ceremony features speeches from the President of Rwanda and other government officials as well as testimony from survivors; reburials and ecumenical prayers. The burial of the victims of the genocide has always been central to this ritual – bodies excavated from mass graves are often kept for months awaiting their reburial during the time of mourning. As one MIJESPOC official put it: “We disinter those who were killed. We bury them with dignity. We visit memorial sites so as to remember.” (July, 2006). National and international dignitaries are invited to attend, while local leaders call upon all living in the chosen community to participate. To ensure the message reaches non-participants, the national ceremony is covered extensively in the media.

The government’s commemorative efforts intensified and became more diverse around the tenth anniversary of the genocide in 2004 (MIJESPOC, 2004: 3). A review of the programme on this occasion helps to give a flavour of the range of activities associated with official remembrances of the victims of genocide. The commemoration began with a national conference on 4 April, followed by a ceremony at the stadium on 7 April and visits to memorials and to widows and orphans. There were reburials at the Kigali Memorial Centre, a national site. At the stadium, there were speeches; candles were lit and a theatre group depicted the history of the genocide.

In the week of mourning which followed, there were reburials in each province and films about the genocide were distributed to be shown around the country. The Ministry had “given the districts an itinerary” (ibid). The population was divided into categories and from 8th - 13th April the mayor addressed each in turn, beginning with the youth. The mayor invited them to examine their role in peacebuilding – they were to attend a conference, watch a film about the genocide and engage in a discussion. Meanwhile, university students were brought together to work on the maintenance of memorial sites and to hear from local people what had happened there⁴⁶ (‘Rwanda Ten’ coordinator, August, 2006). The 2004 commemoration was on a larger scale, however, this example makes obvious the intention and efforts of the government to

⁴⁶ There was also a basketball tournament aimed at peacebuilding, which had brought together teams from Uganda and DRC and Burundi. They held a minute of silence before starting and at the end of the match the players were taken to the memorial sites.

promote mass participation in genocide remembrance, which is a key element of its contribution.

Not only is the government involved in the construction and organisation of memorials, but officials at all levels participate in remembrances, mainly in the annual ceremonies, but also at other times – for instance, ministry and local government employees have been taken on educational tours of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre during the year since 2004. Within the government and more widely among the population, the leadership has exerted its sway to ensure participation in memorialisation.⁴⁷ Since the genocide, the government has expressed its commitment to genocide remembrance on numerous occasions. It has allocated time and money to this task and given public justifications for why this is necessary. However, although it is clear the government has had a prominent role in memorialisation, and especially in national genocide commemorations, there is little to suggest that this is underpinned by a well-defined political strategy. Indeed, tracing the origins of memorials shows how its role in memorial practices developed over time and in relation to external pressures.

THE ORIGINS OF GENOCIDE MEMORY

The way in which the genocide is remembered has been shaped by official interventions, but it was the practical circumstances in the post-genocide period and the social consequences of mass bereavement which established the need for memorials. After the genocide, the government was obliged to engage in some form of remembrance, not only was it imperative to condemn the slaughter (see below) but there was also a need for mass burials.

The Legacy of Genocide

One of the first contributions the government made to memorialisation was the allocation of material and financial aid to the burial of genocide victims by the Ministry of Social Affairs. This was a matter of practical urgency. In 1994, thousands of bodies lay exposed at massacre sites, or were found in shallow unmarked graves, pit latrines, rivers, forests, or on hillsides.⁴⁸ The burial of genocide victims was a

⁴⁷ Richters et al state that people are “forced to participate in official commemorations” (2005: 211). The nature and extent of this pressure is considered in chapter seven.

⁴⁸ Victims continued to be discovered more than ten years after the genocide, many bodies were found through testimonies given in the *gacaca* genocide trials held in local communities.

public health concern as well as an emotional issue for those in mourning. From the perspective of the government, it was important to prevent home burials as was previously traditional, because of the numbers of corpses involved: “They worried that family homes would all become cemeteries. So they organised that, as in Europe, people would bury the dead in cemeteries or memorials.” (Rwandan NGO director, July 2006).

Soon after the genocide, the government set aside public land for cemeteries in each sector (Gakwenzire, 2005: 29). It gave financial support to the construction of the hundreds of local genocide memorials which have since been established all around the country at provincial, district and sector levels.⁴⁹ It supervised reburials, and in particular organised for mass graves to be disinterred, sometimes insisting that local people should participate in this work as a community duty.⁵⁰ In so doing it was partly responding to disparate local initiatives, some led by priests and survivors (see chapter five), but it also exercised some control in how this was carried out, albeit inconsistently; and was able to impose some restrictions.

Relatives did not have a “free choice” of where to bury the bodies of their loved ones (Vidal, 2004), the construction of genocide memorials depended upon an “agreement between people and local authorities” (Gakwenzire, 2005b). Identifying the victims of massacres, ‘naming the dead’ and giving them a decent burial were a priority for the bereaved and remembrance was principally a personal rather than an official concern at the beginning (see chapter five). The government sought to dictate how these took place (Vidal, 2004), and there were differences of opinion between it and local actors (ibid), but survivors and relatives of the dead remained involved. Especially in the period immediately after the genocide when there were few resources and many other government priorities: “There was not even a policy of memory. Everyone had to conserve the site in their own way” (memorial committee member, July 2006).

⁴⁹ It is not clear precisely how many of these sites now exist. An Ibuka representative thought that they did not yet have a comprehensive list but estimated about 500. The ministry did not give a figure. Many of these sites contain thousands of corpses, but Gakwenzire (2005: 29) points out that some only have a small number.

⁵⁰ For instance, during my research in 2007 a mass grave was discovered in Kicukiro in Kigali following confessions during the *gacaca* trials. People from the local community were obliged to participate in the work of disinterring and identifying the victims as part of *umuganda*, community work.

Memory Policy

In the absence of an official policy on the memory of the genocide, *de facto* official practices became institutionalised, including contributions to burial and memory sites and the organisation of annual national commemorations. It tends to be assumed that the RPF led the drive for commemorations (Vidal, 2001) yet not only did survivors and others press for memorials, we cannot be certain that there was a united RPF position on this issue from the outset, or if there was, that it prevailed. To some extent at least, memorial practices emerged out of interactions and debates within the government and the RPF and between the politicians, survivors' associations and external actors, including foreign donors and NGOs.

The first public commemoration was a mass, organised by the then Minister of Justice, Alphonse-Marie Nkubito,⁵¹ to "honor the memory of those who had perished" on 1 October 1994, the date chosen by the RPF to celebrate the anniversary of the launch of its military struggle. The mass was poorly attended and "its neglect by the government spoke to the challenges of addressing a people's past" (Newbury and Newbury, 1999: 293) and of differences within the government.⁵² There followed "a stormy debate" about how and when genocide remembrance should take place. Some members of the RPF preferred the 4 July, the date of their military victory over the former regime; however, eventually 7 April was fixed upon as a date seen to be inclusive of the memory of the Hutu as well as the Tutsi victims (Kagabo, 2004: 1). By 1995, it had been agreed that a national ceremony of commemoration should be organised by the government and survivors. That April the first such event was held, laying the foundation for the annual ceremonies organised by the government since.

Also in 1995, first steps were taken towards the management of the memory sites: a national commission concerned with the memory of the genocide and massacres of April-July 1994, the *Office National des Memoriaux du Genocide et des Massacres au Rwanda* was set up within the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Culture (Gakwenzire, 2005: 3). Importantly, this body carried out a "preliminary

⁵¹ Nkubito was not a member of the RPF. He was ousted from government in October 1995, but was human rights campaigner in Rwanda until his death in February 1997.

⁵² At that time, the RPF position was less strong within a national unity government.

identification of the genocide and massacre sites” (Gakwenzire, 2005: 4),⁵³ an inquiry which was among the earliest research into the massacres and, therefore, connected to the pursuit of justice as well as to memory.

From the outset, the government gave some weight to input from other agencies. In November 1995, it organised a conference to discuss ‘Genocide, impunity and accountability: dialogue for a national and international response.’ The conference brought the government together with a range of groups and individuals from around the world including scholars, human rights activists, and Church organisations as well as survivors, political parties and NGOs (Office of the President, 1995: 9). In the words of one participant, the government sought to involve the international community in its “search for solutions to the colossal problems... in the aftermath of the genocide” (Doctors for Human Rights, n.d.).⁵⁴ The conference fostered support for the preservation of memory and, looking at its recommendations, it seems also to have helped to clarify how the task should be approached. It discussed the: “on-going work of the government’s ad-hoc commission” and proposed further memorials. It made seven substantive recommendations including: the “construction of a National Memorial of the genocide”; “monuments at the sites of the worst massacres”; “preserve the remains of the victims of genocide in at least every commune; and “commemorate “Memorial Day” on the 7th of April each year” (Office of the President, 1995: 27).

By 1996, there was an official plan to preserve genocide massacre sites, document the genocide and construct memorials. This plan took up the idea of the memory of the genocide as a national and international concern, compatible with and necessary for peace; anticipating that it would be beneficial not just for Rwanda, but internationally, in order to: “educate Rwandans in a culture of humanity and to advance the cause of ending genocide in Africa and the world” (*Office National des Memoriaux du Genocide et des Massacres au Rwanda* 1996, cited in Cook, 2006: 292).

It was several years before the idea of genocide remembrance as educative entered into practice. When it did, there was a shift towards closer partnership with external

⁵³ Gakwenzire notes that this was not a full list since at this time people were still reluctant to speak about the genocide for fear of being deemed responsible (2005: 6). See Straus, 2006: 249 for a discussion of this commission’s work, which he uses to inform his study.

agencies. By 2003, international donors and NGOs were closely involved in memorialisation, alongside survivors' associations. In particular a British NGO with experience in Holocaust memorialisation, Aegis Trust, became involved in the development and management of national memorial sites in 2003 (international NGO director, July 2005) and later developed the Kigali Memorial Centre, a prominent national memorial, at the invitation of the government (see chapter eight). The largest commemorative event held so far in Rwanda, the tenth anniversary of the genocide in 2004, was planned and coordinated by a committee, 'Rwanda Ten' led by the government, but comprising representatives of survivors, development donors and experts on genocide and human rights (see chapter seven).

Alongside international partners, survivors remained the other main partners for the government. The Ministry responsible for memorialisation, MIJESPOC, was said to be working "in parallel" and "in partnership" with the survivors' organisation Ibuka: "we must do as they wish" (MIJESPOC official, July 2006). Survivors' associations were generally "consulted" on questions of memory, even if their wishes were not always heeded (Ibuka representative, August 2006). As well as their direct contributions to memorialisation (see chapter five) survivors' associations consistently worked with the government and sought to influence its policy. They gave recommendations on memorial sites, museums, testimony gathering, mobilisation, and combating genocide denial in anticipation of a policy being established.

It was only after several years in power that the RPF began to discuss the need for a strategy to memorialise the genocide: "We began to talk seriously about how to commemorate properly around 2002, before the election" (RPF member, August 2006). Out of these discussions came a resolution to centralise issues related to the genocide under a single institution, A National Commission on the Fight against Genocide, written into the 2003 Constitution (Government of Rwanda, 2003, Chapter IV, Article 179). Linked to the promised commission, was the intention that the government would produce a policy on memory to provide guidance on the future of preservation and commemorative activities. Both survivors and international agencies working with the government welcomed this proposal and sought to inform the

⁵⁴ Questions of justice, the rehabilitation of survivors, the problem of the "ethnic ideology" (also known as the genocide ideology) and the role and responsibility of the international community were

policy. But as late as 2007, when the legislation to establish the Genocide Commission was finally in place, the government had yet to produce a “clear policy statement” (DFID, August, 2006), a delay regarded by its partners as a “big problem” (academic/survivor, April 2007).

The delay in developing a memory policy was, according to MIJESPOC, due to a lack of resources and expertise and to the need for consultation on the contents of this policy with other branches of government and partners in the memorialisation:

We must consult all key stakeholders, all people concerned, experts, those who can give you ideas... that means people from Ibuka, Rwandese and foreign experts, trying to involve everyone, historians, politicians, conservation experts (MIJESPOC official, August, 2006).

As they awaited its formation, survivors’ associations hoped that the commission would “change things” (Ibuka representative, August 2006), but worried that in failing to drive forward a policy the government was demonstrating that it had other priorities: “The government doesn’t make an effort” (academic/survivor, April 2007). Delays were perceived by some as a lack of will, suggesting the government was not fully committed to memorialisation, or to accommodating the concerns of survivors within the process.

In 2008, there was another key change in the government’s approach. The National Commission on the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) was established in law in 2007 and set up in 2008.⁵⁵ It is an independent national institution, with “administrative and financial autonomy” which works with government ministries and survivors association to provide “a permanent framework for the exchange of ideas on genocide, its consequences and the strategies for its prevention and eradication” and is responsible for coordinating all commemorative activities (CNLG, 2007). While it is too soon to be certain what impact the commission will have on memorialisation, its establishment alone indicates a change in government thinking on this issue. This is confirmed by two other reforms in 2008: a bill was introduced to parliament to establish a government policy on memorial sites and cemeteries of genocide victims; most importantly, the constitution was amended to refer to the genocide as the “Tutsi genocide” (*The New Times*, 11/07/2008). This demonstrated greater clarity about the

discussed.

⁵⁵ This occurred after the field research and, although important, it is still too early to discuss its work in detail here.

purposes of remembrance and a changing political mood, affected partly by concerns about the threat to Tutsis posed by the persistence of an 'ideology of genocide' in Rwanda. But underpinning this and all other government interventions in genocide memory is a preoccupation with political legitimacy, within Rwanda and internationally. The government faced not only practical, but also political imperatives to remember.

THE POLITICAL 'USES' OF MEMORY

The new government of July 1994 was founded on a promise of political change. It had to contend with the devastating consequences of the genocide and war and to find a means to promote social and economic reconstruction. It also needed to rehabilitate the state in the eyes of Rwandans and of the international community. Memorialisation is related to the government's efforts to define the moral terms of belonging in a new Rwandan 'nation' and to fashion its own political legitimacy.

Constructing Legitimacy

Within Rwanda, the government was confronted with twin problems of the need to "restore respect for human life" (Vidal, 2001: 4) and to forge a national identity to overcome the politicisation of ethnicity. Given the perceived 'Tutsi' identity of the RPF, and the fact that the post independent state had previously defined its legitimacy in terms of its representation of the 'Hutu majority', the government had to reformulate the relationship between the state and the people in order to govern effectively. At the same time, it had to create a new image of the nation on the international stage. This is not unusual. There are generally "pressures" upon new regimes to "manufacture legitimacy" (Wilson, 2001: 3). Legitimacy is a particular problem in the absence of a democratic heritage (Ellis, 1996: 270) and where ethnic relations are the usual substance of politics. In post-genocide Rwanda, projecting a credible account of the past and demonstrating a concern for the victims of genocide would be essential to constituting both national and international legitimacy.⁵⁶

The government sought to provide a new account of the meaning of political community, redefining citizenship in national rather than ethnic terms (Buckley-Zistel, 2006a) and constructing legitimacy on the basis of an opposition to genocide.

Memorials could provide another vehicle through which to promote its particular narrative of history and of the causes of the genocide; a “collective memory” to serve as the foundation for national unity. In invoking the memory of violence as the foundation for a new order, it followed a historically-established practice for new regimes (see chapter one) and reflected contemporary thinking about how to pursue post-conflict national reconstruction and how to respond to the crisis of genocide.

It is no coincidence that official discourse on memorialisation reflected ideas which had gained currency in the international arena at this time. The government was informed by initiatives in South Africa,⁵⁷ aimed at promoting a new national identity to override the racial and ethnic constructs of apartheid. Even if the methods were very different, the government took up the idea of forging a shared memory in order to build national unity and reconciliation, and initially sought to make commemoration of the genocide dovetail with this wider project.

More importantly, Rwanda’s leaders were also guided by the comparator of Holocaust remembrance. The naming of the events of April-July 1994 as genocide had given rise a set of preconceptions about how and why it ought to be remembered. Comparisons with the Holocaust were conducive to promoting the legitimacy of the new regime – short-circuiting questions about the war and allegations of RPF abuses (Lemarchand, 2002) and countering racist stereotypes and misrepresentations of the slaughter as “savagery” (Eltringham, 2004: 64-68).⁵⁸ As Hughes found in Cambodia, promoting comparison with the Holocaust: “an internationally recognised discourse of genocide” (Hughes, 2006a: 180) could help to enhance international credibility. Perhaps astutely, in undertaking memorialisation and referencing the Holocaust the government fulfilled expectations, demonstrating the institutionalisation of the discourses and norms of international law within Rwanda, as Steele observes:

[I]nternational legal and political systems have stimulated the proliferation of memorialisation, developing the practice in such a way as to make it a

⁵⁶ As in the example of Cambodia: “The national and international legitimacy of the People’s Republic hinged on this exposure and subsequent production of a coherent memory of the recent past” (2003: 177).

⁵⁷ Practical interactions have also helped to shape this perspective. Rwandan government officials have attended conferences held on this theme in South Africa and the UK. A South African delegation visited Rwanda and offered advice on its memorials. However, the Rwandan government has pursued justice alongside its reconciliation policy, arguing that the latter is a prerequisite for the former.

⁵⁸ This is evident from the comments of officials, such as: “Genocide is also not in the African tradition.” (Thorin, cited in Vidal, 2001: 26) or “isn’t part of our culture” (international NGO director, July 2005).

compulsive reaction to genocide... [memorialisation] has become both an aesthetic extension of, and a performative practice of, international law and politics (Steele, 2006: 11).

Genocide Prevention, Reconciliation, Combating Denial

Echoing Holocaust memorialisation, the core argument for remembrance in the official discourse is that it could prevent future violence, in Rwanda and internationally: "Every genocide is a crime against humanity, people should know what happened and why. What we are doing is intended to prevent genocide not only in Rwanda but elsewhere" (MIJESPOC official, July 2006). The belief that memory can serve this cause is frequently expressed by local and national government officials, usually during annual commemorations, when the President and government officials urge people to commemorate to avert genocide. The memorial sites are intended to teach the consequences of ethnic politics: "to make us reflect on what happened in the country so that it never happens again" (*The New Times*, 13/04/2006).

The government subscribes to the 'never again' principle of Holocaust remembrance and officials emphasise that there are mutually reinforcing connections between memory, truth and justice. Remembering is a means of combating revisionism (Cook, 2006: 291); it is akin to truth-telling in the struggle against denial and is necessary because of ongoing attempts at revisionism: "the *génocidaires* always try to deny it. For us it is very important to show the truth of what happened" (MIJESPOC official, July 2006). Justice depends on memory and is essential to end a culture of impunity for crimes against Tutsis⁵⁹ – the words of the President bring this clearly into view: "Forgetting may be easier for many but it erases history and may lead to a return to our horrendous past. It also gives an opportunity to those who want to negate genocide and revive the culture of impunity" (Kagame, 2007).

Rwandan leaders associate remembrance with justice and see both as prerequisites for reconciliation. Linking memorialisation to the national unity and reconciliation agenda, they place emphasis on the potential for learning the lessons of the past to help overcome the politics which led to the genocide: "reversing the effects of decades of division" (GoR, n.d.). As one official said, memorials are integral to

⁵⁹ In this, they also sought to counter the discourse of the Rwandan political opposition in exile which accused the RPF of "a shameful exploitation of the 1994 genocide used as a business asset" and called for a "true" reconciliation (RDR, 1998)

efforts to promote cohabitation and eventual reconciliation among people divided by the experience of genocide:

We must find a way to live together, the *génocidaires* and the victims. We have to remember. There are people who were not here, people who were not born (at the time of the genocide). People have to know together... see how we can build a nation (Director of Memorials, July 2006).

Memorialisation is thus spoken of as a form of education which can contribute to reconciliation, genocide prevention and justice. Whether or not it can contribute to these particular aims, each of these is also tied up with the underlying aim of promoting political legitimacy, for which remembrance has an inherent value. Any effort to bring about political change had to begin with a condemnation of the crimes of the genocide and displays of regret for these human losses. Some form of public memorial was necessary to rehabilitate the state and create a nation – forgetting would equate to denial.

Extracting Advantage

Previous studies argue that Rwandan officials use commemoration to disseminate their visions of the past, present and future. Commemorative speeches apportion guilt for the genocide and seek to mobilise shame (Vidal, 2001; Cameron 2003; Loir 2005). The government employs genocide commemoration to promote the view that it is morally and politically beyond reproach justify, and to encourage a forgetting of RPF human rights abuses.⁶⁰ These accounts resonate with certain of my findings, (see chapter seven); official contributions to commemoration reveal instrumental interests and practices. But to focus on the interests of RPF elites only is to give a narrow account of the government's motives, which are to my mind neither so clear, nor entirely consistent.

The government does seek, as I have argued, to construct moral and political legitimacy and it does maintain a silence about its involvement in human rights abuses. But the practical use of commemoration is also related to wider political ambitions, upon which both the fortunes of the RPF and the country rested. Firstly,

⁶⁰ It also imposes silences directly, placing constraints upon freedom of expression. What can be said about the past is constrained by a ban on sectarianism or "divisionism" since 2001, and legislation to prosecute those who deny or minimise genocide. This has often been interpreted liberally, leading to some injustices see Human Rights Watch, 2009. Legislation is being tightened through the introduction of a bill in 2008 which also made it criminal for children under 12 to express racist attitudes, with the penalty including imprisonment for up to 12 months.

memorials have been used to give weight to the pursuit of justice. Securing the prospects for justice required convincing people in Rwanda to agree with the definition of genocide, while mobilising commitment internationally, since many of the leading perpetrators had fled abroad. Reminders of the genocide were also a means of demanding accountability from western leaders in the international community who failed to meet humanitarian obligations to intervene in 1994,⁶¹ and in particular from the French, responsible for “acts of commission and acts of omission” (Kroslak, 2008: 272).

Secondly, genocide remembrance was an opportunity to remind donors of Rwanda’s exceptional circumstances as a means to garner their support. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the genocide, when reconstruction depended upon external aid⁶² – former President Pasteur Bizimungu appealed to donors during the 1996 commemoration ceremony: “Remember that the genocide and the massacres were accompanied by vast material destruction” (*Rwanda Aujourd’hui*, 1996: 18). More recently, the government undoubtedly perceived a more direct means by which memorials might contribute to Rwanda’s economy, drawing in visitors on the ‘dark tourism’ trail.⁶³ This is implicit in its interventions since around 2002 (see chapter eight) and in its application to UNESCO to accord one of the national memorials the status of a world heritage site (MIJESPOC official, July 2006). Increasingly, it seems we need to be aware of this further possible utility for memorialisation; its commercial value as ‘heritage tourism’⁶⁴; government officials envisage Rwanda’s memorials as international centres for “training and teaching the history of genocide” (ibid).

Facing political imperatives to remember, it seems that officials sought to manage the practice and extract from it what benefits they could. By looking closely at the

⁶¹ See the chapter on ‘Acknowledging Genocide’ in des Forges, 1999. Also see Barnett, 1999, for an insider’s account of the deliberations at the United Nations.

⁶² Donor funding for “Rwanda” was initially largely directed at the financing of humanitarian aid for around two million refugees in exile in neighbouring countries (Gourevitch 1998: 270). Initially, the restraint of political conditionality hung over the regime. Key donors froze aid following the April 1995 massacre by RPA soldiers at Kibeho (Pottier, 2002: 165).

⁶³ Tourism memorials billed as part of tourist trail see eg Goway, 2008 and visitors to Rwanda are encouraged to tour the sites. This is more of a by-product than an aim of the memorialisation but it affects how the government engages with memorials, including decisions about the appropriate forms.

⁶⁴ In South Africa it has also been noted that “away from the main cities and tourist destinations, heritage is increasingly used for development purposes” (Flynn and King, 2007: 463). In Cambodia, for instance, memorials have become a key source of national income and are “shaped to address overseas

relationships between the government and its partners we can gain further insight into how it has gone about the task of constructing memory and the extent to which it directs the process.

A POLITICAL PROCESS

The government does not work in isolation and its relationship with its partners has an effect upon its attitudes and actions. Memorialisation is a process which involves interactions and debates among agencies about its aims, methods and forms. Other participants, including representatives of genocide survivors associations and of foreign NGOs, have their own ideas on why and how memorialisation should be pursued, explored in later chapters. But they also have views on the government's approach which they may communicate directly or which inform their relations with the government. Moreover these participants also have insights into how and why the government contributes to memorialisation because they work closely with officials. Some 'civil society' actors also have close connections to members of government, personal, professional or political (through links to the RPF) and most are closely familiar with the views of officials.⁶⁵ They offer their own assessment of the government's role and highlight debates among those involved in memorialisation.

Shared Concerns

Unlike government officials, civic participants directly spoke of memorialisation as a foundation for political legitimacy. One academic argued that because the previous government was "a denial of everything the state should be", memorialisation was necessary to show both Hutus and Tutsis, betrayed by the previous government, that the new Rwanda is not "a genocidal state" (RPF/academic, August 2006). As one participant pointed out, the fact that new leaders took power was not sufficient to convince people that the regime had changed:

the state led people into suicide. After a genocide in which the state killed us, it is difficult to conceive of a state as saviour... there is a logic of suspicion. After genocide, the relationship between people and the state is marked by mistrust (local NGO director, August 2006).

visitors" (Ashplant *et al.*, 2004: 71). This does seem to be working in Rwanda since many tourists visit the sites and these are also promoted on tourist websites.

⁶⁵ In any reference to civil society we need to bear in mind that its relationship to the state varies (Cox 1999) and it also reflects social inequalities: "Structures of power and hierarchies of wealth and influence permeate all civil societies, and African societies are no exception." (Abrahamsen, 2000: 56). Note that there have been serious constraints on civil society in post genocide Rwanda, not least associated with the ban on 'genocide ideology' (see Christian Aid, 2004).

From this perspective, state involvement in memorialisation is foundational to change in principle, rather than instrumental to a few elites.

Overwhelmingly, participants agreed with the official view that memorialisation could contribute to genocide prevention through education. The director of the national museum has argued that exposing the “the horror and the consequences of the genocide” will promote an “understanding of the past” which can help to “eradicate genocide forever” (Kanimba, 2005: 141). Another local expert stated that memorials are a means to communicate the lessons of the past and avoid future conflict; “important for democratization, human rights, and genocide prevention worldwide” (memory expert, July 2006). A survivor said that making the memory of the genocide “endure” is necessary to “ensure ‘never again’” (Ibuka representative, August 2006). A National University of Rwanda historian argued that though it may be costly, memory preservation is essential: “There is no other way. We need the sites, we need history and we need the names of those buried; it is one of the ways of helping prevent genocide; if it is forgotten it might begin again” (August 2006).

Matters of Debate

While there was a consensus that memorialisation was necessary for genocide prevention, views on precisely how it might contribute to this, and in particular its relationship to reconciliation, were more mixed. These views were expressed before an important shift to officially refer to the genocide as the ‘Tutsi genocide’ in 2008, but they offered some hints of the tensions within the government’s approach at the time and of debates among participants – some of which may have fed into the change.

For some the link between memorialisation and reconciliation was clear: “We must know our past in order to build our future... [people] want to understand the evil of genocide, including Hutus and Tutsis” (NURC representative, August 2006). But, in contrast, there was also a view that memorialisation might be better dealt with separately from the reconciliation policy; one historian pointed out that there were ongoing debates on this issue:

Not everyone is agreed on the goals of memory. We don’t make a direct relation between memory and unity and reconciliation. Education, respect for others, enter into the principle of ‘never again’ to show the logic of exclusion

– what happened to get there... We shouldn't confuse things. We need to separate the Unity and Reconciliation Commission from a Commission on Genocide (April, 2007).

More than one participant observed that memorialisation was in tension with the national unity agenda; that this posed a dilemma for the government and weakened its commitment: "If one group is talking about the genocide the other group cannot forget and is not at ease. It is a problem for the government to save unity and reconciliation. When we talk about memory, some people are frustrated" (academic/survivor, April 2007).

Some participants felt that the government's failure to acknowledge victims of war, and other human rights abuses led to tensions. But there was a general belief that a distinction needs to be preserved between: "Those who were killed because of what they were and those who were killed in vengeance or through the consequences of war" (Kanimba, 2005: 135). A survivor argued that other victims should not be "commemorated as genocide victims" because "in other cases the killers were not driven by a genocide ideology: by the attempt to eliminate one tribe or clan" (July 2006). An employee of the NURC emphasised that the commemoration was inclusive of Hutu victims of the 1994 genocide,⁶⁶ and pointed out there are also many other victim groups who as yet lack recognition: "Eventually, the RPF may have the courage to create a space to discuss these problems. I don't think that at the moment this is possible. The priority now is still all the problems of the genocide" (August, 2006). An international NGO director upheld the "ideological" distinction between war crimes and genocide: "they should be dealt with at a different time and not in a Holocaust memorial" (July 2005).

Several participants, concerned about tensions surrounding memorialisation (discussed in chapters seven and eight), felt that the current approach exacerbated divisions (human rights activist, July 2006). While supporting the government's aims, some criticised its methods. One participant criticised how local officials pressured people to attend annual commemoration ceremonies (ibid). Another spoke of the problems attached to using *umuganda*⁶⁷ as a means to maintain memorials: "you have to be very careful as it can be misinterpreted by people as forced labour. You have to

⁶⁶ This point was made before the genocide was renamed the Tutsi genocide.

⁶⁷ This is a long established practice of community work.

educate people first, sensitise them. And see that they really understand [otherwise] it's useless to bring them." (Ibuka member, April 2007).

The government's partners in memorialisation identified flaws and limitations in its approach, as later chapters also show, but they did not question the need for state involvement, seeking instead to influence it in particular ways. In this restricted context it would be impossible for other agencies to act independently, but it is worth noting the view of a survivor that without the government involved in a mediating role, the memorialisation might be still more divisive because the government must at least take some account of the national context:⁶⁸ "The Rwandese government commemorates more for the benefit of Rwanda as a country... It is controlled for the benefit of the country. I think the government has done a very good job (memory expert, July 2006).

Displaying Bones

That the government's views on memorialisation are not completely fixed or independent of the other groups is exemplified in the debates around the display of the remains of genocide victims at massacre sites and museums. At present, thousands of skulls, bones and even corpses have been left exposed at massacre sites preserved as memorials around the country. These remains are both the most distinctive feature of the memorials and their most controversial. At the time of the research, groups and individuals working on memorialisation were preoccupied with the question of how to treat the remains, partly because of their contentious nature but also because over time they are decaying and preservation is costly.

It is often thought that leaving the "bones" of the victims on view is RPF policy. This is because the practice of exhumation and reburial is associated with the state (Vidal, 2001: 15), and is at odds with the wishes of some survivors. The practice is seen as a means to "remind the Tutsi that their own people were killed by Hutu" (Vidal, 2001 cited in Lemarchand, 2009: 105), encouraging calls for vengeance. The government is criticised for compounding the horror of the genocide by promoting "the voyeurism of the corpses" (Vidal, 2001: 45). There is also an obvious link to the RPF in that the memorials in Rwanda echo the display of bones in the Luwero Triangle in Uganda, organised around 1986 by the National Resistance Movement, to which some RPF

⁶⁸ In my small sample of survivors' views, however, this was not my impression, see chapter five.

leaders formerly belonged.⁶⁹ Moreover, it was the RPF who began the practice of displaying the bodies as proof of the genocide, taking journalists to see massacre sites they discovered as they gained military control of territory during the genocide (see chapter eight).

Whether or not they initiated the practice, the corpses and bones displayed at massacre sites do not reflect a uniform state-led approach. Survivors have strong views on this issue some arguing for an urgent decent burial, others for preservation (see chapter five). And there are differences of opinion within the government and the RPF: “Opinion is divided about the bones” (international NGO director, July 2005). Indeed, although there was no clear directive, some argue that officials had hoped to complete the burials of all the victims of the genocide by 2004. The government has yet to reach a firm conclusion on how to proceed: “You cannot just have the bones exposed for ever, they will deteriorate and be destroyed... some people say we should bury them; others say bury some and leave others. It is a delicate issue; you cannot take a decision alone” (MIJESPOC official, July 2006). Some of those working closely with the government expressed concern about the implications of the current approach. However, rather than simply blaming the RPF, they defined it as a shared problem for all participants in the memorialisation, suggesting that the reasons why the bones are displayed, and why some people are determined to preserve them, are complicated, and that resolving the matter would need consideration, research and debate:

We need to think about how we can talk to people. Show the bones to traumatise them or educate? We need a certain pedagogy. We don't know. We just wanted vestiges of the past to be conserved. But if we continue like this... there will be an impasse. We need to think about other dimensions of collective activity for prevention... At the moment we are conserving a very violent past. This is not enough (academic, August, 2006).

The bones provoke moral and ethical questions. Is it really human to expose human beings? Is it part of Rwandese culture? Has this mentality evolved? ... It is morally shocking. What is the political impact of this? Will it build the future or destroy it? ... philosophers, religious leaders, and anthropologists need to be consulted (academic/survivor, April 2007).

Opinions diverge on the question of how to treat the bones, and as such their display does not demonstrate that the RPF holds a monopoly over memory. Moreover, as

⁶⁹ See Connect Uganda, 2009 4-6 for a description of the sites and of a recent problem of skulls being

participants in the process point out, there are different attitudes towards memorialisation within the government, and even within the RPF.

Differences of Opinion within the Government

Attitudes towards memorialisation vary within government, not necessarily along ethnic lines. Personal experiences and political considerations inform individual perspectives on memorialisation so that: “Even in the President’s office people may have different views” (international NGO director, July 2005).⁷⁰ In government there are genocide survivors and returnees who lost family members in the genocide who may also be committed to remembrance for personal reasons. Moreover, in contrast with the view of that “Tutsi fundamentalists” (Prunier, 2009: 3-4) are behind official commemorations, it is notable that Hutus have had key roles in memory policy.⁷¹ As a Dutch embassy official emphasised, there is a spectrum of views within the government: “What I completely reject is that there’s some kind of machinery that instrumentalises memory as if the state machinery is not also complex and consisting of different points of view” (August 2006).

Whatever the rhetoric, not all members of government support memorialisation. It was observed, the government may “prefer not to follow things up” because of political ambitions: “The government priorities are to build a strong state to work on the majority, to try and eliminate fear.” (AERG member, August 2006). Especially in the lower echelons of local government commitment to memorialisation can sometimes be less than solid, including occasionally because an official’s own conduct during the genocide has been questioned (Ibuka member, August 2006).

There are different layers of decision-making and sometimes internal debates about the memorialisation within government. The government has adopted a “decentralized approach” (Cook, 2006: 293) and district officials are responsible for the management and infrastructure of local memorials so the fact that there are occasional “disagreements” between local and national officials (NGO director, July 2005) is significant. According to a representative of the national survivors’ association, while

stolen from the graves.

⁷⁰ Family and political considerations are important in shaping attitudes, perhaps more so than ethnicity. This was pointed out to me by a human rights activist in Rwanda (personal communication, September 2008).

⁷¹ For instance, the former Minister for Youth Sports and Culture, Robert Bayigamba; Fatuma Ndagiza, Executive Secretary National Unity and Reconciliation Commission; and Domitilla Mukantaganzwa, head of the gacaca courts are regarded as Hutu.

some mayors were supportive many were not prepared to go beyond the limits of an obligation to organise a decent burial for the victims, and some were reluctant to do even this: “I found that many of them have no desire to contribute. Sometimes I was deceived by some of them who didn’t see the importance of burial” (academic/survivor, July 2006).

The government is often described as an “RPF Tutsi regime” (Reyntjens, 2006: 1110) but it includes individuals from a range of backgrounds. Moreover, although the leadership is dominated by “RPF Tutsis”, this does not mean they consistently represent the views all those who might be labelled in this way – identities in post-genocide Rwanda are complex. Some Tutsis returned after the genocide following years in exile, but others are genocide survivors, whose attitudes towards memorialisation are shaped by direct grief and trauma (see chapter five). Some RPA soldiers and Tutsi returnees lost close relatives in the genocide; soldiers in particular have experiences of suffering and trauma which are poorly understood.⁷² The lives of many government officials have in one way or another been affected by the genocide, or by other episodes of violence, shaping views on the question of whether and how the victims of the genocide should be remembered: “The government is composed of human beings who in many cases lost so much too” (memory expert, July 2006). Certainly, not all of these voices within the government carry equal weight, and a core of Ugandan exiles gained a dominant role in decision-making within the government early on (Reyntjens, 2006). Still, beyond the public rhetoric, the question of how and why to remember the genocide is deeply personal as well as political, and in post-genocide Rwanda separating the two is not straightforward.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the nature and intent of the Rwandan government’s contribution to genocide memorialisation, uncovering some of the ideas and imperatives which shape state interventions. It confirms that the government has a privileged status in setting the parameters within which public memory is made, limiting whom and what is to be remembered, but argues that it has not developed a

⁷² Leaders and officials usually mention the role of RPF soldiers in halting the genocide during commemorations. Some former soldiers want to create a memorial to RPA soldiers who fought in Kigali during the genocide, saving the lives of Hutus and Tutsis. At the time of my research, plans were underway to locate this at the National Council for Development (CND) where the soldiers were based during the genocide and which afterwards became the national parliament building.

coherent strategy to make “use” of memorialisation. It finds that the Rwanda’s leaders did not act decisively to instigate remembrances, but rather responded to circumstances and pressures after the genocide. They have been slow to develop a policy on the memory of the genocide and their stance has evolved over time. The government is not the sole agency involved and there are different attitudes towards remembrance within it, and between it and its partners, leading to ongoing debates on difficult issues. Although the government does pursue a range of political aims through commemoration, it is not in full control of the process, let alone the outcomes.

The state aims to encourage genocide prevention, reconciliation and justice through remembrance, but it is also fundamentally concerned to promote its moral and political legitimacy. After political crisis or regime change, governments generally seek to construct legitimacy and national unity through references to the past; publicly marking out the differences between themselves and the new order: “To pass judgement on the practices of the old regime is the constitutive act of the new order” (Connerton, 1989: 7). This was so in Rwanda, but the sharp tensions surrounding the memory of the genocide complicated nationalist aims; this chapter suggests that there are contradictions in the government’s aims and inconsistencies in its approach. Importantly, it also reminds us that it was the crisis of mass bereavement which called for public remembrance, a point more clearly illustrated by the contributions of survivors to memorialisation.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Politics of Grief

This chapter looks beyond the role of the state in the genocide memorialisation, examining the contributions of civic groups and considering their motivations and aims. It reveals that genocide survivors have been at the forefront of efforts to construct memorial sites and organise commemorations, sometimes with support from other bereaved or sympathetic individuals. It discusses the personal and political concerns which underpin their commitment to this memory work.

Grieving communities are generally likely to engage in memorialisation in a search for meaning and consolation (Winter, 1995), and to regard remembrance as a shared moral imperative (Kwon, 2006). Yet, with a few exceptions, (Gakwenzire, 2005; Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Schotsmans, 2006) there has been remarkably little acknowledgement of the contributions of survivors to memorials in Rwanda. Not all survivors agree with the way that official commemorations are organised, and some prefer to mourn in private, nevertheless they have collectively struggled to influence the government's approach and come together in various ways to demonstrate and share their grief.

The first part of the chapter explains how survivors, relatives of the dead and their supporters participate in the construction of public memory. I describe the range of activities undertaken; then focus upon survivors' roles in creating local memorials and burial grounds. Part two is an exploration of the reasons why the bereaved become involved in public memorialisation and what they hope to gain through it; of the ideas and beliefs they bring to the process. I argue that survivors and relatives of the dead are civic activists who have a distinctive role in memorialisation in Rwanda. They are not simply participants or collaborators in the implementation of a policy developed within the state. They contribute to the context in which government policy on memorialisation is made, and they initiate their own memory projects. For some, memorialisation is central to their existence in the present and their imagining of a future. It is associated with a sense of duty towards the dead; the pursuit of accountability and rights; and a will to prevent future atrocities.

A BEREAVED COMMUNITY

Genocide survivors are the largest group of contributors to, and dedicated participants in, the memorialisation in Rwanda, sometimes along with other relatives of the dead. A recent census of genocide survivors put their total at 309,368 (*RNA*, 08/07/2008), while estimates of the number of 'old-caseload' Tutsi returnees, many of whom lost members of their close or extended families in the genocide, range from 400,000 (Prunier, 1998: 325) upwards.⁷³ A smaller group of survivors and relatives of the victims make up an informal civic network involved in the construction of public memory in various ways, whether alongside the government or international agencies, or acting independently. Overwhelmingly, these 'civic' memory activists are described, in the standard terminology of post-genocide Rwanda, as survivors; but they also include other Rwandans who either lost loved ones, have a professional interest, or simply act in sympathy and solidarity with survivors. Usually, Tutsis who directly experienced and escaped the genocide or whose immediate families lived in Rwanda in 1994, even if they themselves were temporarily outside the country, are referred to as 'survivors'.⁷⁴ This group therefore encompasses those worst affected by the loss and trauma of the genocide, though does not include all victims.⁷⁵ It is survivors' associations which have usually taken the lead in organising the memory work.⁷⁶

In the wake of the genocide, survivors formed associations for mutual support and to bring attention to their plight. Often they were concerned with addressing the specific social and economic problems faced by survivors, but usually they also sought to assist one another in the pursuit of genocide justice or the preservation of memory – some groups formed specifically on the basis of a commitment to remembrance. The many voluntary survivors' groups vary in their size and scope, from the national

⁷³ See Gishoma and Brackelaire, 2008: 177 who note that estimates now run up to 1 million. The labels of survivors and returnees have been in general use in Rwanda since the genocide.

⁷⁴ Hutus take part in memorials, but few are involved in making them. Some Hutu members of the political opposition killed during the genocide were buried alongside other victims at the Rebero memorial site in Kigali during the commemoration in 1995.

⁷⁵ Not all victims fit easily within this category, which can sometimes exclude those of mixed origins or Hutu widows whose families were killed as Tutsis, but whose experiences of suffering and survival are equivalent. According to Rombouts, there are reasons for concern about how survivors' groups deal with "complex inter-ethnic cases" (2004: 220), although Hutu widows are included in some survivors' groups (Buckley-Zistel 2006b: 137-8).

⁷⁶ I will generally refer to participants as survivors here, even if they include individuals who might not fit within a strict definition of the term, having acknowledged the fact that others work with them.

collective of survivors' associations, Ibuka, down to *ad hoc* local "committees."⁷⁷ Ibuka, which means 'remember' in Kinyarwanda is the most prominent association involved in memorialisation at national and local levels.

Ibuka was founded in December 1995 to represent genocide survivors, on issues of memory and justice, including social justice, and is committed to honouring the memory of the victims of the genocide. It has a member of staff permanently working on memory issues and is active in all areas of memorialisation. It has a leading role in organising commemorations, and helps smaller groups who construct and maintain the memorial sites.⁷⁸ It lacks resources for this task because survivors have other needs and because, as a non-profit association, its funding is not stable – it depends on project-based funding from donors, support from the government and some donations from members. This means that it does not generally act independently but must "partner" with other agencies, mainly the government, in the making of memorials (Ibuka representative, July 2006). The association also draws strength from its members, including two other national survivors' groups, Avega, the genocide widows association, and AERG, the student survivors' organisation.

Ibuka is a point of contact and coordination in memory work, and collaborates with other groups, but this does not mean civic participants work in a clear hierarchy or share a single perspective. Not all participants are associated with these groups, since some are returnees or professionals, involved in solidarity or because of their relevant expertise. Furthermore, there are differences within, and disagreements between, survivors' associations – there can be a gap between educated elites and isolated rural survivors, even if they have local branches, as Ibuka does (Rombouts, 2004: 281-320). At times, for instance, there have been tensions linked to attempts by politicians to neutralise the critical potential of civil society (Rombouts, 2004: 292). Yet, even if the bereaved and their supporters do not all agree precisely upon what memorialisation should entail or how best to pursue it, they form a strong network, collaborating and interacting in their shared commitment to memorialisation.

⁷⁷ See Rombouts, 2004 for a detailed discussion of survivors' associations.

⁷⁸ It has recently moved its offices at a memorial site in Nyanza, Kigali, "To look out on ours and to take care of them" (*Hirondelle*, 26/12/2008).

MEMORY WORK

Survivors publicise their memories through testimony, ceremonies, songs or other creative expressions. As a survivor in Kanombe pointed out, some “don’t want their people to be remembered” and keep their memories private (July 2006),⁷⁹ but many are deeply involved in memorialisation. They have written their own stories; taken part in films; and expressed their loss through art or theatre.⁸⁰ These activities influence the forms of memorialisation and reflect a determination to secure a place for the memory of the genocide within the public sphere. Their commitment and initiatives to this end are also manifest in commemoration rituals (see chapter seven). Survivors’ associations extend the official week of commemoration, observing a period of mourning for 100 days between 7 April and 17 July and during that time they organise ceremonies at local memorials in their home district or sector. Less obviously, survivors have also been involved in constructing memorials, and these are especially significant here.

Local memorial sites, and the commemorative ceremonies which take place there, are generally the product of survivors’ initiatives. They have laboured to create burial grounds and memorials for genocide victims, getting together with people from their home areas to raise money.

Survivors lead committees, they organise meetings in the evenings. It is a really positive thing. You see survivors getting together even with those from the diaspora or Hutus. We will bury our loved ones. We all want to do something... If one group of survivors see what has been done by groups in another area they say lets do something even better here. Let’s do some fundraising... They don’t have the means, but people want to tell what happened (Ibuka representative, August 2006).

Finding and identifying the victims of massacres, ‘naming the dead’ and giving them a decent burial has been a priority for the bereaved since 1994.⁸¹ They became involved partly out of necessity, because the bones of victims were strewn around the

⁷⁹ Survivors also honour the dead privately, making archives of the photos, letters, documents or belongings of victims. See Gakwenzire (2005: 29). As an example, a former employee of Ibuka mentioned a woman who kept the bones of her family in a sack in her house.

⁸⁰ For a written testimony see Mukagasana, Yolanda, 1997. Eric Kabera, director of *100 Days*, is the leading Rwandan filmmaker. But survivors were also involved in the making of *Shooting Dogs* (2005) and *Sometimes in April*, (2005). The youth theatre group Mashirika brings together genocide survivors and former refugees.

⁸¹ This was apparent from my interviews and from my reading of hundreds of testimonies, published and unpublished, taken by a human rights organisation, African Rights from 1996-2000. Other observations in this chapter are also informed by my reading of these testimonies.

countryside, or had been thrown into mass graves by the killers. The losses were so extensive that many survivors have an entire family to trace and bury.⁸² The few who survived took on the task of burial and mourning for the many unidentified victims. Survivors contributed to gathering up the remains of the victims to bring them together at memorial sites. They helped disinter the bodies thrown into mass graves themselves, and created memorial sites to house the remains of the victims: “Normally what we are used to is to take out the remains, for instance from toilets, and then wash them and give them burial ceremonies. We bury them with dignity” (AERG member, August 2006).

So many memorials have been created through local efforts that even the government cannot give a total figure, while Ibuka, still in the process of compiling a list, could only give an estimate of around 500 (Ibuka representative, August 2006). Some of these sites have become national memorials, in which government and international agencies have increasingly invested (see chapter eight) and all fall nominally under the local administration. But, despite a general lack of resources, it is survivors and relatives of the dead that have been most active in creating memorials, organising ceremonies, maintaining sites, and asking for support for remembrance from other agencies.

Constructing Local Memorials

Survivors had to conform to the government’s requirement to bury victims in public cemeteries, as I explained in chapter four. How this was carried out varied according to the character of local government, which was to provide the land and, in theory, to manage the process. In the aftermath of the genocide, burials were sometimes carried out by local authorities without consultation, and in a perfunctory manner, distressing for relatives. On occasion, genocide prisoners and local residents were commandeered to dig up mass graves and move the bodies; no precautions were taken to protect the remains and reburials were carried out in an atmosphere of hostility (Vidal, 2001: 20).

At this early stage, survivors made efforts to improve this approach both in small practical initiatives and in appeals to the government. Some survivors’ views were expressed, for instance, by a small group of Catholic priests who recommended that agreements about burials be drawn up between people and the authorities on a sector

⁸² For instance, one interviewee had lost 73 members of his extended family in the genocide.

by sector basis. They recommended a more inclusive approach, referred to victims of “genocide and massacres”, and emphasised the potential for reburials to serve as “collective therapy.” They also suggested that not all communal graves should be dug up and memorials could simply be placed over existing sites (Vidal, 2001: 20-21)⁸³ an approach which sometimes prevailed, at least for many years.

Despite interventions by the state, usually around the time of commemoration, survivors were often left to manage the problem of how to bury the dead, receiving only limited government assistance.⁸⁴ Local genocide memorials were generally “haphazard” initiatives of “people doing it through sentimental reasons” sometimes with help from NGOs (MIJESPOC official, July 2006). Small committees of the bereaved formed to construct or maintain the memorial sites, in efforts to ensure that the victims in their local community were given a decent burial and would not be forgotten. They often got a financial contribution from the Ministry and the local administration, but had to lobby for this since there was no standard practice and the process proceeded on the basis of a “sort of gentleman’s understanding” (ibid). They also turned to Ibuka for help and sought funds from foreign NGOs and private donors, including local businesses. Tracing the history of particular local memorials helps to explain how this process has worked and to illustrate the commitment and achievements of volunteers in these memory projects.⁸⁵

Nyamasheke Memorial Site

One of the first genocide memorials built was at Nyamasheke, a district in the Western Province, formerly Cyangugu. The memorial contains the remains of an estimated 45,000 people, most of them massacred in the local parish on 17 April.⁸⁶ It was created by a small group of survivors and returnees originally from Nyamasheke

⁸³ While Vidal (2004) provides a detailed account of this, it is important to note that she characterizes the work of the Committee for the Relaunch of Pastoral Activities as a Church initiative, when in fact the church was divided and this group included survivor priests seeking to effect reforms in the institution’s approach. The distinction matters because while this group sought to influence how genocide memorials were constructed, they supported the practice, which some priests within the Catholic Church did not. Some survivor priests wished to preserve the churches as memorials while some other priests wanted to remove all traces of the genocide from them.

⁸⁴ This was officially recognised in 2008, as a group of legislators put forward a bill on memorial sites and cemeteries of genocide victims and acknowledged that the maintenance had been left to genocide survivors (*The New Times*, 11/07/2008).

⁸⁵ This also applies to national memorials, as shown in chapter eight.

⁸⁶ See African Rights, 1995: 456-462 for details of the massacre at Nyamasheke.

who met in Kigali in 1995.⁸⁷ Concerned about the fate of their relatives, the group sent two of their members to Nyamasheke to find out what had happened and to search for the bodies of the victims.

At that time, Cyangugu was still under the control of UN forces and the local authorities, appointed under the French,⁸⁸ were “major *génocidaires*” who sought to “derail” the returnees, lying to them about the number of victims and showing them only three of the mass graves in the parish. These graves were in a “deplorable state”; the victims of the massacre had been thrown in by their killers in order to avoid the spread of disease. The group later found other bodies scattered in their hiding places or in toilets; none had been “buried in dignity.” On their return to Kigali, the relatives of the victims from Nyamasheke formed a committee and began to raise funds for a burial ground and memorial.

It took more than a year, but the Nyamasheke committee managed to create a cement tomb for most of the remains, in time for the official national commemoration to be held there in April 1996. During this time, only some of the victims’ families were involved: “They organised it. There was at this point no role for the state.” The tomb was an important achievement, but it was not the end of their work. Survivors needed more money to complete and maintain the site and were promised a donation from ministers attending the 1996 commemoration. This donation was administered by the local administration, but not all of the planned improvements were made (officials and one of the returnees were later accused of mismanagement). Later, the site deteriorated due to flooding. The government could offer no further support because “everyone needed help and everyone demanded to bury their loved ones”, but eventually, survivors raised money through Avega, the genocide widows association.⁸⁹ The site was improved, including constructing a cover to shield it from the rain, and was ready for another national commemoration, held there in 2006.

The Nyamasheke memorial site is at the heart of a survivor community; every April, they gather there to “remember their loved ones”. These local commemorations are

⁸⁷ A member of this original group was my principal informant. Two other members of a committee organising memorialisation in Nyamasheke are also cited in this section.

⁸⁸ The French occupied this region during Opération Turquoise, until August 1994 and were later replaced by UNAMIR troops.

⁸⁹ Avega helped them to raise “around 7-10 million” francs from a UK-based organisation, the Survivors’ Fund (SURF) This is a UK-based human rights group led by a Rwandan survivor. In 2006, at the time of my research, 5000 Rwandan francs were equivalent to \$10.

organised by survivors:⁹⁰ “The victims’ families organised everything, apart from the authorities looking after their security and making speeches.” Other local residents used to “hide”, but “due to the efforts of survivors” relations have improved and increasingly they attend commemorations.

The Nyamasheke site also has a wider importance, because it was one of the first such memorials, and motivated survivors elsewhere to “visit the massacre sites” and to undertake similar efforts. Since the genocide, small groups of survivors and the bereaved have taken on the task of burying thousands of corpses all over Rwanda⁹¹ and, more than a decade on, their efforts to create memorials continue. Each local memorial has a distinctive character and history, as we can see from a more recent memory project at Mugina, in Gitarama.

Mugina Memorial Site

The victims of the genocide in Mugina are thought to number between 25,000 and 40,000⁹² and most of these were buried in big pits during the genocide, dug on the orders of local officials involved in the massacre.⁹³ In September 1994, the diocese built a wall intended to mark out the area of one of the mass graves, but they underestimated its size and the walls began to sink “because of the decomposing bodies underneath”.⁹⁴ A cross was also placed over the graves and a small garden created, but the site was “not well maintained”.⁹⁵ The mass graves lie at the centre of the community near the parish and commune office where many victims were killed, but they are not all properly marked, and survivors realised that cows had been grazing on top of one of them. Moreover, there were so many bodies in the Mugina graves that after more than a decade of soil erosion some of the bones were exposed. These were among the reasons why survivors in Mugina wanted to create a new memorial: “We need the memorial just to bury them decently.”

⁹⁰ Although the members of the committee I spoke to were concerned with the needs and interests of survivors, they included in their group a returnee who had lived many years in exile and a Hutu who tried to save lives in Nyamasheke parish and survived the killings there.

⁹¹ In Nyamasheke district alone, there are now eight other sites, Hanika, contains the bodies of an estimated 15,000 victims; Muyange 8,000; Ruharambuga, 5,500; Kibogora, 3,800. The number of victims at Gisakura, Cyato, Mahembe and Gihombo is not known (human rights researcher, August 2006).

⁹² See African Rights, 1995, pp365-66 and 2002: 54-69 for accounts of the massacre in Mugina.

⁹³ Not all were buried and children were usually thrown into pit latrines.

⁹⁴ My account is informed by meetings with a key member of the group organising the construction of the memorial and a group of survivors at Mugina.

Survivors overcame practical and financial hurdles, including opposition from the nuns at a nearby convent, but with the help of a fundraising committee⁹⁶ in Kigali they raised 76 million from private donors and from the Ministry, and by August 2006, the project was near to completion. The site was designed to hold the remains in the existing mass graves, to be disinterred and reburied along with other bodies found in the area, some after *gacaca* hearings. The new memorial is constructed on three levels, intended to hold decomposed bodies in coffins on the lowest floor, underground; then bones, washed and treated for preservation and display, and on the upper floor, photos, testimonies and a written history of the site.

Survivors hope that the memorial will be a means to teach the next generation of local residents about the meaning of genocide and the need to prevent it. Their relationships with Hutu residents in this community are strained. Some of those involved in the killings have explained where the victims' bodies were buried and how they died, and survivors welcome this information, and say that relations are "improving" but they continue to feel marginalised. One man spoke of the reluctance of those "on the other side" to attend commemorations; of how times have changed in a society where custom once dictated that the death of a relative would bring people to "console and participate in the burial." They hope for a change in attitudes, while insisting on the need to remember the genocide.

The purpose of the Mugina memorial is to ensure a "decent burial" for genocide victims and to call attention to the extent of the losses in this area so that what had happened there could be known "throughout the whole country." In the meantime, survivors from the area and beyond congregate in Mugina on the occasion of the annual local commemoration ceremony, usually held between 22-25 April. The new memorial will be a focus for these commemorations. The site is another example of the remarkable efforts made by survivors and relatives in honour of the dead.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ My account of the construction of the memorial in Mugina is based on interviews with members of the committee, local residents and a trip to Mugina in August 2006.

⁹⁶ One of the key committee members is an Ibuka member originally from Mugina; another is a local parish priest who persuaded the church to contribute land for the site.

⁹⁷ Note also that based on an memorial in Gisenyi, Rudacogora observes: "the survivors associations are leading independent actions" (2005: 151)

MOURNING

Survivors often refer to a duty to remember the victims of genocide, suggesting that “for this community, to remember is an obligation” (Biscro survivor, August 2006). This sentiment seems to arise out of a lasting bond with the dead and intense experiences of loss and suffering. Because the massacres in 1994 were so extensive and brutal, they left survivors carrying a “double overwhelming burden” of grief and trauma (Sezibera, 2008: 14). One of the manifestations of this “traumatic bereavement,” is a “yearning and searching” for the deceased (ibid). Relatives of genocide victims share an overwhelming need to know what happened to them and to find their remains (genocide researcher, August 2006). One man spoke of years of seeking information about how his sister was killed and then, learning of her death, of a search in the forest in order to find her remains and bury them (August 2006). Another spoke of recently learning that his sister was buried in his street near his home in Kigali and of his hope of recovering her remains (April, 2007). A woman, studying abroad during the genocide, told of how she came back to Rwanda to ask the man who killed her mother to show her where he buried the body (April, 2004). Many other survivors have only managed to find out where their loved ones died but not to identify their remains. There are so many painful stories of the search for the dead in Rwanda.

For survivors who find their relatives’ corpses, reburial is a means to live with their loss. This helps to explain why reburial is the main purpose of the memorial sites and a central focus of commemorations. The practice was described positively by several of those involved in memory work: “Survivors’ sense of relief began with the first burial. Recently they feel much better. Although their relatives were killed inhumanely they are buried in a dignified way... It is way of healing for survivors, and the people who returned from exile” (memorial committee member, July 2006); “If you bury someone it’s like a medicine you have taken” (architect, August 2006). These individual experiences are supported by recent research with young survivors, which indicated that those who found their relatives corpses, and buried them during annual commemorations, were less affected by the symptoms of grief (Sezibera, 2008: 145).

Survivors seek to give victims “reburial in dignity” and their collective engagement in commemoration undermines criticisms that it simply inhibits “the private mourning of

survivors” (Vidal, 2004: 1) “prevent[s] wounds from healing” (de Lame cited in Webley, 2004: 97); or that constant reminders of “painful and traumatizing experiences” necessarily make “healing more difficult” (Hintjens, 2008: 33). Reburial is a central part of commemorative ceremonies, which are thus related to efforts to recover from bereavement after genocide. As one participant commented: “Commemoration is not about leading but about healing. You can’t lead people who are sick without first healing them; their priority is getting rid of the sickness” (businessman, August 2006).

Memorialisation is felt to be a means of healing, partly because of a belief in an enduring relationship between the dead and the living. Memorial sites are places in which the dead can dwell and where the bereaved can visit them and feel at home; a place in which they become “eternal.”⁹⁸ The bereaved seek to rehabilitate and restore genocide victims to their rightful place within the community. This echoes traditional religious beliefs that the fortunes of the living depended upon the fulfilment of duties to the dead:⁹⁹ “In the ancient society we had to honour the dead. If not there would be consequences... there was a concern about spirits.” (elderly returnee, August 2006).

The idea of commemorating the dead was central to Rwanda’s indigenous religions... The most common religious practice in precolonial Rwanda, *guterekera*, consisted of rituals that showed respect to the dead in one’s family and demonstrated that those who have passed on are not forgotten.” (Longman and Rutagengwa, 2006b: 133).

While it is evident that a sense of the need to pay respect to the dead lingers, this now sits alongside a change in attitudes, which also contributes to the forms of memorialisation. In pre-colonial culture, people had no need for monuments: it was “useless to tell people to remember the dead because they continue to live with them” (businessman, 2006); now, laying the spirits to rest properly involves both ritual and symbol.

The change is a reminder that traditional religious beliefs have mostly been eroded in Rwanda and therefore may not generally affect people’s emotional responses to bereavement directly. A young representative of Ibuka argued that people have “forgotten the question of the spirits.” An elderly returnee pointed out that

⁹⁸ A view expressed by a survivor about the KMC (Our Memory Our Future, n.d.).

⁹⁹ Mbiti, 1970, confirms that ancestor worship is common in Bantu traditional religions, including in pre-colonial Rwanda.

remembrance is any case part of mourning and a universal concern: “I don’t know of any people who don’t cry for their dead” (elderly returnee, August 2006). But there are signs that remnants of traditional ideas and practices persist alongside the Christian and Muslim beliefs which now predominate.¹⁰⁰ Even if people no longer believe that spirits exert an influence in the present, it seems that the unsettled dead still press upon the hearts and minds of the living. This helps to explain why the bereaved create memorials and why these can help to ease people’s hearts: “According to Rwandese culture if you don’t bury relatives they haunt you. This brings some relief” (Mugina resident, August 2006).

When the bodies are not buried, or “when you haven’t respected the will of the dead” restless and malicious spirits *umuzimu w’umgwagasi* can be felt as a burden, haunting their relatives, according to a Rwandan psychiatrist. He explained the significance of reburial for recovery through an account of the experiences of one of his patients: a university student plagued by headaches and insomnia, and frequently prone to outbursts of grief. The girl was plagued by a recurring dream: “Every night she was carrying a basket on her head. There were three people in the basket but she couldn’t see them. The basket was very heavy and she had to walk around with it. When she woke up her head ached.” Her condition was only resolved when she discovered the location of a communal grave in which the bodies of her two sisters and brother lay and obtained permission from the local mayor to destroy a house which was built on top of it. The owners of the house were compensated, the grave was dug up and the dead reburied, with the result that the student finally found some peace of mind: “allowing people to bury their loved ones means that they are no longer haunted” (psychiatrist, August 2006).

Reburial and remembrance are the fulfilment of duties to the dead, which survivors enter into out of grief. But their bereavement is also traumatic. The trauma of the genocide is etched on their minds, as one woman said, many years after the massacres: “It’s all around us, the genocide is everywhere. How can people just go on as normal?” (*The Guardian*, 2008); another woman pointed out: “People were killed there on the street just outside here.” (August 2006). Even if there are no visible traces

¹⁰⁰ The estimated number of adherents to traditional indigenous beliefs was only 0.1% of the population in 2006 according to the US Department of State International Religious Freedom Report 2007. Elements of indigenous beliefs survive alongside Christian beliefs in many African countries; some of

of what happened, images of the genocide exist on the landscape of survivors' minds. Memorialisation seems to be important in both acknowledging the horror and at the same time containing it in particular times and places, helping some survivors cope with their feeling that "death is everywhere," so they can continue with life (genocide researcher, August 2006).

Memorials do not give comfort to everyone, much depends on particular circumstances. Survivors regularly collapse in extreme distress and traumatic episodes during commemorations (see chapter seven).¹⁰¹ '*Traumatisme*' is becoming a characteristic¹⁰² of these ceremonies, which begs the question of why survivor participation remains strong and implies an almost compulsive practice.¹⁰³ In other words, memorialisation may contribute to healing, but is not selected as a therapeutic choice with the intention of aiding personal recovery; its restorative effects are secondary and related to an endeavour to keep faith with the dead, as one man put it: "When you work with memory you meet the victims" (August 2006). Furthermore, for survivors who have lost so much, remembrance is quite simply all they have left.

Whether the government commemorates or not, I'm a victim. I lost 86 members of my family in the genocide. I commemorated myself so much before the government itself. I know that I'm one of the lucky ones because I only lost my mother, father, sister and brother and I still have five siblings. I know families where no one is left. My auntie lost all her children. Wherever there is a commemoration she is always there. The government doesn't call her to commemorate, they don't even know her. But she goes because that is her life (memorial worker, July 2006).¹⁰⁴

those suffering from psychological illnesses related to the genocide turned to traditional medicine (Rutembesa, 2004, cited in Gishoma and Brackelaire, 2008:173).

¹⁰¹ Trauma is thought to be an underlying condition affecting thousands of survivors' everyday lives and it might be that enduring suffering is partly explained by an inability to express it (Gishoma and Brackelaire, 2008). Also see IDRP, 2006: 69-70 for a description of the problem.

¹⁰² Traumatic episodes are also triggered by other reminders, in particular by encounters with genocide perpetrators according to Sezibera, 2008: 179. He also suggests memorial sites are a trigger for memory, and trauma, but reburials contribute to healing. What is clear is that the survivor trauma in Rwanda persists and more research is needed. Trauma is also provoked by *gacaca* trials where survivors are called upon to testify and to listen to the testimony of perpetrators, see Brounéus, 2008.

¹⁰³ Trauma surfaces at national commemorations, but also at ceremonies organised by survivors (see chapter seven).

¹⁰⁴ Onyango-Obbo, 2005, describes the 2005 commemoration in Buliza district: "The women who dissolved into sorrow at Nvuzo Hill, I was told, represent something you don't find in many parts of the world. They are people who don't have a single relative alive. And when the ones who are beyond child-bearing die, their family line will be extinguished. To these people, the genocide left wounds that will probably never heal. And if the commemorations were no longer officially observed, they will probably continue carrying wreaths to the burial sites whenever April 7 comes round."

RESISTING GENOCIDE

As well as personal commitments to honouring the victims of genocide, survivors have several more obviously 'political' reasons to remember publicly. They express the view that public remembrance is a means to prevent genocide, echoing official discourse, but offer different perspectives on how and why. Their concerns have to do with justice, recognition and with securing rights now, and for future generations.

Memorialisation partly arises out of the survivors' compulsion to bear witness to the past and to ensure that the nature and consequences of the genocide is acknowledged. It is generally accepted that the killings of April-July 1994 were genocide, and in Rwanda genocide denial is illegal. However, whether at a national, local or even at an individual level, aspects of the past are disputed and revisionist accounts circulate (see chapter seven). Any attempt to deny or minimise the experiences of survivors or victims awakens fear and does "enormous harm" to survivors (Ibuka spokesperson, August 2006). Survivors see remembrance as an essential part of their efforts to combat genocide denial and pursue justice.

The fact that some survivors want the bones of the genocide victims to be preserved and displayed, as noted in the previous chapter, exemplifies how remembrance is bound up with a demand for accountability. The display of the bones might seem to be in contradiction with the desire for reburial but some survivors see both as essential, demonstrating that while memorialisation is integral to mourning it is also part of a quest for justice: "We all want people to know; to show them the evidence. But we all want our people buried with the dignity they deserve" (memory expert, July 2006).

The bones are the most powerful material evidence of what happened in 1994. Some survivors fear that burying them would erase the traces of the genocide and enable people to forget, as many Rwandans would doubtless prefer. Less tangibly, there is a connection between the display of the corpses at the massacre sites and the trauma of the massacres. Survivors consistently give testimony about the events of the genocide but their efforts to convey the horror of their experiences are limited by language. The display of the bones reflects a determination to convey the meaning of the experience of genocide, to counter denial and to pursue accountability, a perspective which an Ibuka staff member expressed with great clarity:

I have a mission as a survivor to tell you what happened... They say a lot of things... They say the survivors are exaggerating; they say we are lying. I bear the traces.¹⁰⁵ The bones will be the proof which will stop these denials (August 2006).

Survivors want people to know and acknowledge what has happened; they want the genocide to be remembered by all Rwandans. Massacre sites preserved as memorials display the evidence of the atrocities; in commemorations, survivors give testimony about their experiences. Keeping the memory present is part of keeping the way open for justice. And, as existing mechanisms for justice consistently prove painful and inadequate, memorials force killers to regularly confront the evidence of their crimes. These are among the reasons why survivors insist upon remembering publicly and why criticisms of the memorialisation can be felt as a further injury, as Kamanzi writes, from personal experience:

They have disparaged our devotion to the bones as if those which are now dried out skeletons were not once our sisters, our friends, our relatives our neighbours, teachers, priests, workers... Why relegate them to the silence, into a past expelled from the present, into the invisibility of the underground? Would it be enough to bury them so as to forget them? What dignity then, would the survivors have?

For the genocide survivors, that is incomprehensible. Can we not mourn in honour and dignity, cry for our loved ones and cry for ourselves, whom death did not want? How does anyone dare to prescribe forgetting for the survivors, condemned to the guilt of having survived the massacres and in search of a new meaning to give to life? How can we do so when we can sometimes meet former killers on the hill? If we really want to overcome this, we need to memorialise... (Kamanzi, 2004: 584).¹⁰⁶

Struggling for Survival

Since the genocide, survivors have called consistently for memory and justice, whether in survivors' associations, in testimonies, in *gacaca* hearings, in the construction of memorials, or in commemoration. While keeping in mind these demands, it is important to also be aware that many impoverished rural survivors can hardly manage to sustain an existence – they often have no family support, are ill, with high rates of trauma and HIV/AIDS infection, and lost material possessions in

¹⁰⁵ Survivors bear the scars of the genocide, in bullet wounds, machete scars, and other visible injuries. In this case, the interviewee fled the massacre in Nyamata to hide in the marshes of Bugesera, and his feet were badly scarred.

¹⁰⁶ My translation.

the genocide.¹⁰⁷ They also risk further marginalisation or threats in pursuit of justice.¹⁰⁸ In these circumstances, the construction of memorials and obligations to commemorate might be regarded as a diversion from ‘basic needs’ for shelter, food and medical care. Yet there are also ways in which memorialisation is connected to ongoing struggles for economic and social security.

Survivors are a small “constituency” facing a myriad of shared problems (Buckley-Zistel, 2006b: 138) and lacking in political influence. Memorialisation builds mutually supportive relationships among survivors and between them and others, across social and economic distinctions. The memorials can also serve as reminders to the government and the international community of what survivors suffered during the genocide and of its enduring impact. While remembering the dead, survivors can, and do, call attention to their present circumstances and demand change: “The period of commemoration is an opportunity to give dignity to the victims and also to find out about people’s economic and psychosocial situation... This is the opportunity for survivors to express themselves” (academic/survivor, April 2007; also see chapter seven).

There is also a more specific practical aim. Survivors’ groups try to garner economic assistance for their members, appealing to the government and donors, and have been engaged in a long term struggle for reparations. For instance in a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, Ibuka wrote: “Victims of the Genocide have lived in inhuman conditions ever since with the hope that justice will someday be rendered in form of compensation” (RNA, 26/06/2007).¹⁰⁹ Memorials might be seen by survivors to give the demand for reparations some weight. Although no one mentioned reparations during my research, Rombouts observes that commemorations and the display of bones at memorial sites are ways for survivors’ associations to keep the memory of the genocide “cuttingly and physically present” to win reparations.¹¹⁰ The need for economic assistance may well be a consideration in memorialisation, but on the whole it is driven by less utilitarian and longer term concerns.

¹⁰⁷ See Ibuka, 2007 for a recent assessment of the problems facing survivors. This report estimates that 90% of the victims have now been found and buried (2007: 30).

¹⁰⁸ See for instance Brounéus, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ In February 2008, the UN responded with the establishment of a fund to assist survivors.

¹¹⁰ See Rombouts, 2004, for a comprehensive discussion of the pursuit of reparations. My findings about attitudes to the bones suggests that the issues are much broader, see chapter four.

Survivors prioritise remembrance beyond any immediate strategic value. Reburial and the construction of memorial sites are costly, but survivors sometimes devote their own resources to the task, on occasion choosing funding for memorials over practical assistance.¹¹¹ An Ibuka member recalled, for instance, how a woman who received a donation from a survivors' association to pay for her child's school fees, used the money to pay for her husband's reburial. He observed: "Memorials can be a kind of symbolic reparation. They must be a priority for our government and donors" (former Ibuka representative, August 2006). What is foreseen here is not healing and closure, but recognition which can safeguard future lives. It is a reminder of the extent to which the living feel a duty towards the dead, but also that an association is made between public remembrance and the rights and security of survivors, and their descendants.

Survivors worry more about their security as much, if not more, than about their economic situation. Memorialisation is part of an ongoing "fight against the ideology of genocide" (academic, July 2006) because survivors live in fear and seek protection. Ibuka estimates that there have been more than 150 attacks on survivors since 1995, (*News24*, 19/08/2008) a situation the organisation describes as a "continuation of the Genocide" (*The New Times*, 02/04/2008). In the context of the persecution of survivor witnesses in *gacaca* trials, local hostility and regional instability, survivors seek protection from present and future attacks.¹¹²

In their own lifetimes, survivors have seen what happens when the victims of violence are not publicly remembered; their commitment to commemoration is built upon the experience of previous atrocities shrouded in fear and silence. They resolve not to make the same mistake as their parents who kept silent about the losses they endured in 1959 or 1963. One survivor recalled childhood memories of his mother's regular unexplained lapses into sorrow and his later discovery that she cried because her mother and sisters were killed in the Tutsi massacres of 1963. Today, he said, "I am living the same life." State-imposed oblivion on Tutsi deaths after previous massacres is seen as among the causes of the genocide: "the Tutsis had no right to demand the commemoration of those they lost... You were obliged to put yourselves in front of

¹¹¹ For instance, in an African Rights' project to give economic assistance to survivors some asked for memorials rather than other forms of assistance (personal communication, September 2008).

the person who had killed as if nothing happened. Then, after a few years, they committed genocide” (businessman, August 2006). This history underpins a widely shared conviction that: “Memory can help to combat genocide” (former local official, August 2006); “Memory is the real way forward... If we don’t remember it will happen again” (genocide researcher, August 2006).

Their experience of atrocities encouraged many survivors to believe that their security depends upon making their memories public. Some also wanted clear public acknowledgement of the fact that the genocide aimed to eradicate Tutsis. Referring to the genocide as the “Rwandan genocide” might leave room for confusion and denial. Even if they agreed that ethnic groups in Rwanda are “a construct,” survivors wanted an acknowledgement of their experience that the genocide targeted “a known group: the Tutsis and those related to them.” (writer, August 2006). As an IDRP report concluded, this label is at the origin of survivors’ experiences of suffering and the meaning of their identity: “[they] have in effect been persecuted for having been born a Tutsi...failure to recognise that is to erase memory... not mentioning their Tutsi identity is equivalent to being dispossessed of their history” (IDRP, 2006: 68). This need not constitute a denial of the fact that other Rwandans were also killed, as a young female survivor explained:

Hutu were killed during the genocide but we don’t consider them Hutu; they suffered like we suffered. The main objective was to kill Tutsi and those who supported them. But I don’t care about the words; it is the principles of genocide... What were the objectives of the genocide? To eliminate the human beings called Tutsis and those who have the same physique, ideology or understanding (August 2006).

In 2008 this recognition was embodied in a change in government discourse about the genocide, renaming it the Tutsi genocide.

Memorialisation is an expression of Tutsi identity and a call for its recognition in the interests of justice and security, but this is not to say that survivors perceive community in narrow terms. It is important to keep in mind that the “Tutsi community” in Rwanda encompasses plural smaller groupings, with returnees from neighbouring countries and further afield, whose attitudes have been influenced by their diverse experiences in years of exile. Some may well be ‘extremists’, who label

¹¹² See HRW, 2007, footnote 40, which underlines the extent to which survivors fear attack on the basis of their ethnicity. The report also discusses a range of perceptions of the attacks on survivors and the

Hutus with collective guilt and seek to engineer a monopoly on political and economic power (Prunier, 2009 3-6). Indeed, some returnees have also been critical of survivors, or even abusive towards them, especially in the years immediately after the genocide.¹¹³ Meanwhile, among survivors, there are debates between those who seek to encourage Hutu participation in survivors associations, and those who believe survivors should act independently (academic/survivor, April 2007). But it is notable that several of those involved in creating memorials present an inclusive perspective, arguing for the need to accept that “the killers are human beings” (memory expert, July 2006). They express a belief that “resisting future genocide” depends upon a shared agreement about the past and a hope that memorialisation can contribute to social transformation.

Human Dignity

Some survivors speak of commemoration as a means towards remaking society in Rwanda and internationally. They express a wish for wider participation in rituals and at sites of memory: “We don’t hide when we commemorate. We invite people to come. We want to show the world.” They measure progress in terms of the growing number of local participants: “this way we will understand that they know this was wrong.”¹¹⁴ They recognise that “not only survivors lost” and voice the hope that one day “the Rwandese people will commemorate all together” (July-August, 2006).

Consistent with this, is an insistence on remembering individuals who showed courage and humanity during the genocide. In 2001, Ibuka began gathering testimonies in order to identify those who saved lives during the genocide and in 2007, the organisation awarded certificates of merit and recognition to five Hutus who saved Tutsis (*Hirondelle*, 06/08/2007). Survivors have led the way in paying tribute to the courage of individuals who saved lives:¹¹⁵

We need to tell the whole story. We are learning from day to day about the genocide. Not everyone killed. There were some people who saved the lives of

extent to which these are linked to a “genocide ideology” and discusses a reprisal attack by survivors.

¹¹³ See Hilsum, 2004 for an example. She observes: “Being alive attracted suspicion, as if the morally correct position was to have died. Also see Prunier, 2009: 3-4 for an important analysis of differences between Tutsis in the post genocide period, although his view that the reburials were organized by “Tutsi fundamentalists” contrasts with my findings.

¹¹⁴ The issue of participation will be examined in more depth in chapter seven and eight.

¹¹⁵ See for instance African Rights, 2002. See Rousoux, 2006, for an alternative analysis. One of the difficult issues here is that often the lives of one or more Tutsis were saved by soldiers or militiamen who participated in the genocide.

others. There were people who refused. The names of heroes need to be remembered (architect, April 2007)

Remembering the heroes is another way of emphasising that the future depends upon keeping faith with a common humanity.

Memorials, in this sense, are a call for the recognition of the human dignity of the victims of genocide and of survivors (Kanimba, 2005: 135) in an “act of respect” for the dead (historian, August 2006). In 1994, the killers sought to destroy all traces of their victims’ existence: “they wanted to kill not just people but their memories too” (survivor from Nyamata cited in Hatzfeld, 2005a: 94). Memorials respond to this with a subversion of the intentions of the genocide: “The killers did everything they could to make sure their victims didn’t die in dignity. Extermination is all about erasing someone’s presence in history. To memorialise is to give to the dead.” (writer, August 2006). As Kanimba argues, the architects of the genocide appealed to people’s worst instincts; they: “not only destroyed the human dignity of the victims but also the human sentiments in the perpetrators who committed acts of savagery.” (2005: 137). In contrast, the practice of remembrance contradicts the ideas of the genocide and can lead to an acceptance of others.

To memorialise, is to remember that every person is a sacred history, that the other is the same as oneself... So we consider remembrance as an indispensable condition and prerequisite for justice” (Kamanzi, 2004: 584).

Above all, genocide survivors and relatives of the victims are engaged in an ongoing effort to find “solutions to extraordinary problems” and they place memory “at the heart of the matter” (architect, August 2007). While some acknowledge the challenges involved (see chapters seven and eight), many regard remembrance as vital to their existence in the present. They see remembering the victims of genocide as necessary to enable future generations of Tutsis to live in peace and to promote wider recognition of universal human dignity and rights.

This commitment underpins the practices and sites of genocide memory. Survivors support one another, with isolated rural survivors drawing strength from educated urbanised survivors or returnees. They are not generally able to dictate the forms of memory sites and practices, since they must collaborate with other agencies for financial reasons, but in any case they do not themselves all agree. They formed associations in which ideas about memorialisation are developed, but they entered

into the practice as individuals with complicated personal and political reasons for involvement and do not have a collective rational strategy on how to remember the dead. These are spontaneous and organic struggles to create memorials in divided communities, amid poverty and grief. What they demonstrate is that survivors enter into memorialisation with immense strength of purpose, a tenacity which can only be understood in relation to their immense losses.

Commemoration is above all an affair led by the victims. If there is one thing that survivors are involved in it is that. If the state doesn't want to do something, then we organise our own. If the mayor of a district doesn't agree... survivors will pursue it ... No one can tell us we can't do this. They have to let us mourn our loved ones. It's the survivors who make things happen (Ibuka representative, August 2006).

Conclusion

After the genocide, survivors were described as *bapfuye buhagazi*, the 'walking dead'; many felt life had no meaning and could barely imagine the person they were before 1994 (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 83). Their lives continue to be scarred by the atrocities, as Colvin finds in South Africa, the past is not "prior" for the victims of atrocities; its effects pervade the present: "the suffering and the struggling continues" (Colvin, 2006: 165). However, this chapter shows that, in defiance of their circumstances, survivors have devoted energy and resources to giving loved ones a decent burial, creating memorials as an expression of their enduring commitment to the dead and to each other. Their commitment to memorialisation originates in grief, but also has purpose. They seek to expose the truth of the atrocities of 1994, in the interests of justice and to prevent a recurrence. They call for wider recognition of the human dignity of the victims of genocide. They continue to suffer from trauma and loss, but memorialisation helps some to live with their knowledge of the atrocities and their experiences of suffering.

After genocide, the usual community practices of mourning and burial cannot apply (Edkins, 2003: 2) but in Rwanda, the few survivors have come together, as in other different contexts, as a "community of mourners" (Damousi, 1999: 5) defined by their shared "reverence for the dead" (Bodnar, 1992: 13). Alliances and relationships among the bereaved, and between them and others who support their work, cement through interactions in memory work. It has been argued elsewhere that survivors ought to be brought to the centre of the "consultative and decision-making processes

of locating, exhuming, reburying, and memorializing the dead” (Stover and Shigekane, 2004: 98). The findings in this chapter suggest that they should be supported in their efforts to lead these processes.

Genocide memorialisation in Rwanda is partially rooted in and rests largely upon, the will of survivors. For this group, above all, memorialisation is primarily an intrinsic response to the atrocity; part of the meaning of existence after genocide. The impulse for memorialisation originates beyond the state, in a sense of duty towards the dead. However, survivors also perceive that memorialisation is a means to create new bonds with others, in the interests of political transformation. They want to change attitudes towards difference in a nation where ordinary citizens participated in killing their neighbours and a world where political leaders were willing to stand by and allow the slaughter of Tutsis in 1994. For this reason, as the next chapter will show, survivors have been at the forefront of efforts to promote remembrance not only in their local communities and in Rwanda, but also internationally.

CHAPTER SIX

The Politics of Regret

The victims of the 1994 genocide are commemorated beyond Rwanda's borders and by foreign institutions and individuals within Rwanda. There is an 'international' aspect to the politics of memorialisation which impacts upon the forms and practices of remembrance and shapes the terrain within which the government and survivors pursue their different aims. Given that in the past the nation was the typical frame of public memory, international commemoration is revealing of the changing nature of politics and identity in the contemporary age. It is a sign of the interconnectedness of the world that people who have no personal or national bond with the dead commit time and resources to remembering them. Examining how and why they do so sheds light on relationships between global, national and local agencies in the making of public memory and on its political meaning and uses.

It took some time before the genocide came to be acknowledged as an event of global consequence. Despite increasing recognition of the nature and scale of the atrocity and rising interest in its causes and consequences, the victims were commemorated by only by a few outside Rwanda in the first few years: "the reaction... was relatively muted and slow in coming" (Levy and Sznajder, 2006: 40). Indeed, so little attention was paid to the memory of the genocide outside Rwanda that, years later, the tragedy was said to be forgotten by anyone other than its victims (Alexander, 2004: 26). As compared with other more prominent traumas of recent times this was a fair assessment, but it was not entirely accurate because, by around 2000, there were a number of commemorative initiatives going on outside Rwanda and from 2004 there was considerable international interest and involvement in the genocide commemoration.

This chapter reveals the pervasive influence in Rwanda of ideas and practices arising from Holocaust memorialisation. I identify a range of international groups involved in memorialisation, and unravel the political pressures and motives behind their involvement. I discuss their contributions, first reviewing commemorative practices around the world, then the role of foreign donors and NGOs in funding and constructing memory in Rwanda. I consider the various reasons why international support for remembrance of the genocide emerged and grew. I discuss the role of diaspora Tutsis in promoting awareness and observe how the memorialisation fitted

with existing concerns in international civil society. I observe two strands in international support for commemoration. On one side, governments and institutions display regret in response to criticisms and as an explanation and justification for institutional reforms. They employ memorials to reconstruct their legitimacy. On the other, civic groups harness the memorialisation to concerns about justice and human rights, which place demands on the international community and the Rwandan government. In practice these strands intersect and are interwoven with the ideas and aims of survivors and the government, in shared memory projects to which each have contributed (see chapter seven and eight).

I argue that it is useful to speak of a politics of regret in relation to the memory of the genocide in Rwanda, but that this applies in more than one sense. Commemorations of the genocide around the world reflect a growing concern in international civil society for 'distant strangers', these regrets fuel questioning of the existing order and struggles for human rights. Commemorations are also a mode of diplomatic engagement with Rwanda; regrets are thus associated with a visibly tolerant approach towards the government, which allows it some room for political manoeuvre. But commemoration is also a means to construct the moral legitimacy of powerful international actors and is associated with a deepening of external intervention in Rwanda. International agencies make their own bids to govern the memory of the genocide.

INTERNATIONAL MEMORIALS

International institutions, civil society and the Rwandan diaspora have promoted the memory of the genocide in the 'international' arena, mainly in the US or Europe. Meanwhile, international development donors and foreign NGOs have provided financial support and expertise to the government in the construction of genocide memorials and implemented their own projects inside the country. Because the global pervades the national and local both in terms of ideas and practices, it is not possible to completely separate Rwandan contributions to memorialisation and their aims from those of other agencies and vice-versa – the groups and individuals involved do not

operate in isolation from one another.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, we can identify a number of memorials located outside Rwanda, or created by foreign agencies within it.

It is important to keep in mind that in the first few years after the genocide, there was little will to engage in memorialisation among international institutions and governments. At most, diplomats based in Rwanda attended national commemorations, sometimes reluctantly (see Vidal, 2001). But there were commemorations outside Rwanda from 1995 onwards, mainly organised by bereaved relatives, survivors, embassy staff or other Rwandans, living or studying abroad. Soon after the genocide, some members of the Rwandan diaspora began to come together to create memorials or to send contributions home for reburials or memorialisation. Groups of Rwandans continue to mobilise friends, colleagues and supporters in genocide remembrances around the world. Since 1995, they have organised numerous commemorative events in various European and African countries, in the US, and Canada.

Belgium is home to an established community of Rwandan exiles from all ethnic backgrounds; as the former colonial power it has historically often been the first port of call for refugees. Since 1994, this has expanded to include genocide survivors who have left Rwanda, either temporarily to study or in fear of persecution.¹¹⁷ They have been at the forefront of organising genocide commemorations, held in and around Brussels each year since the first event on 7-9 April, 1995.

The commemorations have been led by *Ibuka Mémoire et Justice* Belgium, a grouping of survivors and their supporters whose central activity is genocide remembrance as a means towards justice, prevention and combating denial. This branch of *Ibuka* was established in Brussels in August 1994, and since then others have been set up in a few other Belgian towns as well as in Holland, France and Switzerland. Each year, *Ibuka* convenes a conference in Brussels, “for reflection”, a week before the commemoration. On 7 April, survivors organise a march of remembrance and a night vigil during which participants listen to testimonies, songs and poems (coordinator *Ibuka M&J*, April 2006). Genocide survivors and relatives of the dead, including Belgian citizens, generally give testimony. Academics, lawyers, politicians, Holocaust

¹¹⁶ As Beck points out “it is neither possible to clearly distinguish between the national and the international, nor, in a similar way, to convincingly contrast homogenous units. National spaces have become denationalized” (2003: 458).

specialists and human rights activists, both from Rwanda and from Europe, have been among the speakers. The 13th genocide commemoration in Brussels in 2007, for instance, started with a conference at the Belgian Senate on the theme of “Repression of Genocide Denial and Reparation – Issues and Perspectives,” and included addresses by the president of the Belgian senate, Mrs Anne-Marie Lizin, and Senator Alain Destexhe, formerly of Médecins Sans Frontières (*Hirondelle*, 21/03/2007).

The commemorations in Belgium are the most prominent and well attended outside Rwanda, but diaspora groups also organise similar events in other parts of the world. The scale of these events varies but the style is usually similar. For instance, in Hobart, Australia, where a small community of genocide survivors have settled, a commemoration was first organised at the local St Mark’s Anglican Church in 2003, with 50 people in attendance, although numbers have increased in the years since. (The Anglican Church in Tasmania, 2006). Yet whatever the numbers involved, most gatherings feature similar practices and statements. Usually, the bereaved give testimony, mourn and protest at the losses of the genocide; they express an intention to contribute to the prevention of genocide around the world in the future and they seek ways to help survivors at home and abroad to cope with their present circumstances.

Rwandans who suffered or lost relatives in the genocide; Tutsis from Rwanda and the wider Great Lakes region; and sympathetic individuals of all backgrounds and nationalities have collectively garnered support for survivors and worked to educate people around the world in the lessons of the genocide. As well as convening their own commemorations, survivors have encouraged recognition of the genocide in the international sphere and taken central roles in events coordinated by wider activist groups dedicated to genocide remembrance and prevention. In the first few years after the genocide these commemorations generated limited interest beyond those directly involved, however over time an international commitment to remember the genocide emerged.

As time passed, initiatives were also taken by non-Rwandans, suggesting a widening of concern about the memory of the genocide outside Rwanda. A mobile exhibition on the genocide ‘100 Nights’ was developed in Britain by Aegis Trust, specialists in

¹¹⁷ See Hintjens’ 2008 for an insight into the circumstances which led some to leave Rwanda.

Holocaust memorialisation, and taken to a conference in Cape Town in 2000. In the same year, Fest' Africa's¹¹⁸ literary project 'Écrire par devoir de mémoire' (writing as a duty to memory) brought ten African writers to Rwanda in 1998 to develop their own responses to the genocide. The participants wrote on the premise that the genocide "concerned us all" and that to forget it would be: "to walk in darkness, feeling your way with outstretched arms to avoid colliding with the future." (Tadjo, 2002: 2). Fest' Africa was a "Pan-Africanist" (Steele, 2006) critique, but before long, several other international groups and institutions mounted similar efforts in recognition of the global significance of the genocide.

Prominent among the international efforts to commemorate the genocide was *Remembering Rwanda*, a civic initiative to promote remembrance of the genocide internationally which included in its membership "diaspora Rwandans, friends of Rwanda, civil society in Rwanda itself, and several Armenian and Jewish individuals and organizations."¹¹⁹ This group argued that the memory of the genocide was fading, its lessons were ignored, and that this was a "second betrayal" of its victims. They focused upon promoting worldwide events to mark the 10th Anniversary of the genocide in 2004, as a means to "inspire a new commitment to policies and behaviors that would transform 'never again' from a jaded slogan into a meaningful call for action" (Remembering Rwanda, 2003).

By 2004 similar concerns were being expressed by international institutions. The UN dedicated the 7 April 2004 to an 'International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.' For the first time, there were commemorative events in UN missions around the world and many member states took heed of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's call to observe one minute of silence in memory of the victims of the genocide to "unite the world, however fleetingly, around the idea of global solidarity" (UN, 26/03/2004). Candlelight vigils were held; survivors gave testimony; documentaries were shown and genocide, its consequences and prevention were discussed not just in Kigali, but also in world capitals including Brussels, Addis Ababa, New York, London, Geneva and Montreal.

¹¹⁸ A festival of African culture held annually in Lille, France.

¹¹⁹ Many journalists or academics who had reported on or analysed the genocide supported the initiative, for instance, Samantha Power, Alison des Forges, Linda Melvern and Victoria Brittain. General Romeo Dallaire, former UNAMIR commander, and Esther Mujawayo-Keiner founder of Avega were also among the supporters.

For the most part, the 2004 memorials followed a familiar pattern to those organised by the diaspora or in Rwanda, with conferences, testimonies and vigils. In March 2004, the Rwanda Forum, a one day seminar on responses to the genocide, was organised in London by *Never Again*,¹²⁰ with the Imperial War Museum and the Rwandan Embassy. In Brussels, there was a conference to discuss the responsibilities of the international community during and after the genocide, organised by Ibuka. In Addis Ababa, at the headquarters of the African Union, there was a candlelight vigil, films were shown, debates held and ten minutes of silence were observed (African Union, 2004). Meanwhile at UN headquarters in Geneva, after two minutes of silence, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan voiced the consensus which underpinned this flurry of commemorative activity: “we must all acknowledge our responsibility for not having done more to prevent or stop the genocide” (Annan, 2004).

The 2004 commemoration was an achievement for the Rwandan diaspora and the government, both of which had laboured to promote awareness of the genocide internationally. It established a precedent and in the years that followed there were further commemorative initiatives, although not on the same scale; now student and human rights groups, international institutions and governments mark the anniversary of the genocide. Moreover, against this background of activity, mostly in Europe and North America, development donors and NGOs became more involved in memorialisation within Rwanda, contributing to funding and organising the events of the 10th anniversary and to creating memorial sites. As Steele writes:

[M]emorialisation has attained such a privileged position in the post-genocide international community that it has moved beyond merely being a rite and ritual for the victim/witness and their community, becoming a compulsively practiced politicised rite and ritual for ‘international society’.... Euro-Western projects of memory and international criminal law have permeated projects in non-Western locales, shaping both their form and content to reflect the view of genocide as a grave crime against humanity (Steele, 2006: 1).

In the run up to the tenth anniversary of the genocide in 2004, development donors and NGOs became involved in a series of memory projects within Rwanda.

Funding Memory Projects in Rwanda

International agencies have provided funds for the preservation of massacre sites in several locations in Rwanda and for the construction of a museum and memorial in

¹²⁰ An international students association dedicated to ending genocide.

Kigali (see chapter eight). This is not unprecedented – increasingly those seeking funding for heritage projects must appeal beyond their borders and seek to cater for visitors from around the world¹²¹ – but in this case bilateral and multilateral development agencies were key funders, which is unusual. The sites all have government approval, but they show that foreign governments and NGOs have an independent interest and role and supported Rwandan efforts to create memorials.

Notably, the Belgian government has been most active in the construction of memorials, partly because of a national concern for the memory of Belgians killed in the genocide. The government sponsored a memorial to the Belgian soldiers and civilians at Camp Kigali, the army barracks where the Belgian UNAMIR peacekeepers were murdered by soldiers of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), on 7 April – located in the centre of Rwanda’s capital city. It was opened by the Belgian Prime Minister during the commemoration in 2004 and has since become a place of annual pilgrimage for the relatives of the soldiers. It highlights the sacrifice of the peacekeepers and is a reminder that “we in Belgium also lost”, as a representative of the Belgian embassy explained (August 2006).

It is worth briefly recounting the history of this memorial, which shows that it has been created mainly by, and for, Belgians. The Camp Kigali site had been left unused and unrepaired since the genocide, so that the bullet holes and damage from shrapnel on the building showed the evidence of the peacekeepers last fight for survival against the FAR soldiers. In 2000, the Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt unveiled a plaque in memory of the Belgian soldiers. Later, the families of the victims visited the site and created a shrine with candles and flowers and wrote messages of anger and grief. As the 10th anniversary approached, a Belgian engineer working for the military was commissioned to design a monument to the dead soldiers. Working in Belgium, he created a circle of 10 stone pillars, each representing a single soldier – identifiable by the number of marks cut into the stone as a symbol of their age – with a larger flatter stone at its centre to represent the rest of the victims of the genocide. The sculpture was sent to Kigali and installed at the site in time for the 2004 commemoration. At the same time, a small museum was created inside the damaged

¹²¹ See for instance the International Coalition for Historic Site Museums of Conscience website which highlights this trend.

building: a series of panels list the names of 22 Belgians civilians and soldiers killed in 1994; recount a brief history of the genocide; and remember the Rwandan victims.

The Belgian government has also contributed to memorials for the Rwandan victims, designed to express its regret to the people of Rwanda for failing to prevent the genocide and to acknowledge that “the international community as a whole carries a huge and heavy responsibility in the genocide,” (Verhofstadt cited in BBC News, 07/04/2000). Importantly, the Belgians contributed to a memorial in Nyanza, Kigali, which was the site of Belgian UNAMIR peacekeepers’ most blatant failure: the 11 April massacre of more than 2,500 people who had sought the protection of Belgian soldiers stationed at a school, but were killed in the wake of these soldiers’ sudden withdrawal.¹²²

After the genocide, the Rwandan government and survivors had constructed a burial site at Nyanza with hundreds of graves marked by wooden crosses and one marble tomb and headstone listing the names of some of the dead, which included both Tutsis and Hutu ‘moderates’. The Belgian government contributed funds for a memorial garden and a sculpture, in a symbolic gesture of apology. In the event, this state-to-state gesture was marred by tensions and a failure of either government to consult survivors,¹²³ but its intention was clear. The aim was to represent “the connection between the two communities as well as remembering the genocide” (Belgian representative: August 2006).

Not only did they contribute to Nyanza, but the Belgians were also the first to offer support for the creation of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre (KMC) – the most prominent national memorial, and international memory project, which opened in 2004 under the stewardship of a British NGO, with funding from a number of other international donors.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the Belgians were the largest single donor to

¹²² See African Rights, 2001 for an account of this massacre.

¹²³ Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium, Louis Michel, had been supposed to unveil a plaque at the site in 2004, but this had to be cancelled because of survivor’s protests. In 2006, the sculpture – one of a pair produced through collaboration between a Rwandan artist and a Belgian artist – remained shrouded from view due to ongoing disputes. Meanwhile its partner sculpture in Woluwe St Pierre in Brussels had become a site of controversy (see chapter seven). The failure to fully engage survivors was described by a survivor living in Brussels as the persistence of the “colonial mentality” (April 2006).

¹²⁴ See chapter eight for details.

back the events and ceremonies organised by the government and survivors to commemorate the 10th anniversary.¹²⁵

As the anniversary approached, international donors and NGOs worked with government officials and survivors to organise an intensive programme of activities. The organising secretariat, Rwanda 10, was based at the department responsible for genocide memorials in MIJESPOC. The Ministry helped with “function and finance” but most of the \$7 million spent on the commemoration was raised from international donors. The international participants in Rwanda 10 included Belgium, Canada, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UK (DFID), Germany, China, Netherlands, Aegis Trust, African Rights and the Survivors’ Fund (SURF).¹²⁶ A steering committee formed included representatives of three government ministries and the survivors’ association, Ibuka, alongside six foreign ministries, and Aegis Trust. Official events during the week of commemoration were held mainly in Kigali and designed to engage Rwandans and invited guests from around the world, with extensive media coverage and three months of cultural activities, aimed at Rwandans nationwide (see chapter seven).

The 10th anniversary marked a relative high point in the international profile of the genocide. It seems that, aside from some tensions surrounding the making of memorials (see chapter eight), in principle the contributions of the Belgians and other donors to memorialisation were invited and largely welcomed by the government and survivors in Rwanda. Symbolic gestures of regret were seen as appropriate and necessary because of the failure of the international community to meet its obligation to respond in 1994 and donor contributions to memorialisation offered a practical means of assistance in the context of limited state resources. Yet, despite the donor funding, the commitment of international governments and institutions to the memory of the genocide continued to be questioned by the government and survivors.

Although the 2004 commemoration was an international event, the Rwandan government and survivors felt much more could still have been done; a few donors,

¹²⁵ They funded the conference and also contributed to the memorial at Nyamata as well as those discussed here. In total the Belgian contribution amounted to close to two million Euros, see Embassy of Belgium, 2004.

¹²⁶ The Belgian government donated 1 350 220 thousand Euros; UNDP, 20 million 465 372 Rwandese francs; Canada gave 100000 Canadian dollars; DFID 3000 US dollars while other donors also made smaller practical or financial contributions (coordinator, August 2006).

notably Belgium, had made important contributions but the rest undertook just a “few initiatives here and there” according to a representative of Ibuka (August 2006). Members of civil society and individuals with a personal connection to Rwanda or professional commitment to memory came to the commemoration in force, for instance, the commemoration conference was attended by Armenian and Jewish survivors and genocide specialists, academics and activists from Europe and North America. Several African leaders also attended the annual commemoration, including the Presidents of Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya and the president of the African Union. However, the only non-African head of state to accept the invitation was the Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt who was accompanied by the families of the ten Belgian peacekeepers killed in the genocide: “The ceremony was marked by the absence of leaders from the most powerful countries” (*Hirondelle*, 07/04/2004b).

It may well have been that international leaders preferred to stay away from a ritual that usually involved a lambasting of their conduct in 1994. Certainly, President Kagame did voice strong criticisms during the 2004 ceremony at the Amahoro stadium, in front of a large crowd of Rwandans and visitors.¹²⁷ Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt reiterated his apology and called upon Europe to “review its sad history in Africa” (*Hirondelle*, 07/04/2004a), and Kagame welcomed this apology. But African leaders, including Thabo Mbeki, voiced stark criticisms of the international community (*ibid*). And when Kagame spoke about the genocide and its consequences, he dwelled on the failure of the international community. In particular, he chastised France for backing and arming the perpetrators, provoking the French ambassador to walk out of the ceremony in protest (BBC News, 07/04/2004b).

Looking at commemorations before 2001, Vidal argues that the fact that high-level western delegates did not attend the ceremonies “was symbolic of a refusal to get involved in a step of “repentance; a step which would bring with it an acceptance of the need to compensate the victims of the genocide.” (Vidal, 2001: 32). This still applies since funding for commemoration did not amount to reparations, and moreover did not wipe the slate clean for foreign governments and institutions. Support for the government’s memory projects was not matched by accountability. This disjuncture is a hint that it was not only regret which encouraged the investments in memorials, as I explain below there were other considerations involved.

THE MEANING OF REGRET

To understand why the commemoration of the genocide gained international momentum we must take account of the role of diaspora Rwandans and of civil society groups concerned with international human rights. Their contributions are important in both a direct sense, in that they organise and participate in genocide commemorations, and indirectly, in that through public remembrances of the genocide, and more generally, they criticized the ‘international community’ and called for accountability, shaping the context in which other institutions and governments began to engage in commemorative practices.

Civic engagement in memorialisation outside Rwanda has been driven partly by the personal commitments of the Tutsi diaspora who retain their sense of community in exile. They remember because of their identities and experiences: like survivors and relatives of the dead in Rwanda they mourn the victims of the genocide and promote their memory as part of an effort to gain recognition, secure protection and prevent genocide. Although they have links with survivors’ groups in Rwanda, their situation differs in that they are not preoccupied with the problem of the reburial of the dead, and they organise in the context of western civil society, acting independently of the Rwandan government. Moreover, they perceive their fate to be tied up with international politics to a greater extent – some of this group will return home; some will straddle, keeping one foot in exile and another at home; still others are settled residents, based in Europe or the US. In each case their identities escape the boundaries of the nation-state; they generally maintain their connections with other Rwandan Tutsis, but also have diverse experiences and may have multiple loyalties and allegiances.

The diaspora organise annual commemorations (see above). These are designed to honour the victims of genocide and of the massacres of political opponents in 1994 and are conceived as an “expression of mourning” (Ibuka M&J, 1995). Participants come together to find solutions to problems facing survivors including justice, reparations, security, the preservation of memory, trauma and poverty. They see themselves on the frontline of combating genocide denial and revisionism which, outlawed within Rwanda, is voiced in exile (Ibuka M&J Coordinator, April, 2006).

¹²⁷ Estimates of the crowd vary up to 65,000 (BBC News, 07/04/2004a)

Ibuka activists abroad have from the outset clearly defined the victims of the genocide as Tutsis, having less need to conform to the language of the Rwandan government's nation-building agenda. In April 1995, they called for recognition of the "specificity of the genocide of the Tutsi" and were critical of the "voices raised" to advocate national reconciliation, at a time when this was the demand of Rwanda's exiled leaders, including some who were responsible for the genocide. Survivors in the diaspora maintained their stance, arguing years later that "cohabitation, if not reconciliation, might be possible in the present"¹²⁸ and that victims were killed for the "simple reason of being born Tutsi", or "because they constituted an obstacle to the will to exterminate the Tutsi" (Gakumba, 2006).

From the perspective of the diaspora, the fate of Rwandans at home and abroad is seen to depend largely on the attitudes and actions of the international community. Public memorialisation here is a protest against the atrocities first, but also places an emphasis on criticising the international political indifference which allowed them to happen, in parallel with criticisms expressed annually by the Rwandan government, though not linked to them. As one survivor commented, holding a living flame at the annual commemoration in Brussels is not necessary to his personal work of memory since he carries a "flame of remembrance in my heart everyday"; the flame is necessary to call the attention of others, and gain their recognition that the atrocities were unacceptable as a crime against humanity. Memorialisation is linked to a vision of an international community in which human rights, in particular the rights of Tutsis, must be secured. Their remembrances are expressions of sorrow but they are directed into demands for "moral universals" (Ibuka M&J, 1995) to be upheld. The Tutsi diaspora see their fate as dependent upon an international struggle for justice, rights and recognition.

The diaspora retain strong connections with their homeland, but they have also forged bonds with others in their new places of residence where they "sustain many more ties" than those of origin (Levi and Sznajder, 2006: 50). In particular, they have found allies among the survivors of other genocides and gained "support" from "western civil society" (Ibuka M&J, 1995), finding solidarity from groups and individuals concerned with promoting human rights and justice. Survivors of the Tutsi genocide made connections with the survivors of other crimes against humanity, including the

¹²⁸ Gakumba was Ibuka's coordinator on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the genocide.

Holocaust. This is reflected in the speech given by Anne-Marie Revcolevshci, the executive director of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, at the inauguration of the 10th commemoration of the genocide in Brussels. She voiced beliefs similar to those articulated by survivors in Rwanda and in the diaspora, arguing that preserving the memory of genocide was essential to restoring the human dignity and identity of the dead; that whether it was the Nazi genocide of the Jews, or the Hutus of the Tutsi: “the will of the killer is always to dehumanize his victim... in remembering their names, in naming the disappeared, we give them back this individual human dignity which was stolen from them.” (Revcolevschi, 2004) Gaining this recognition must be a prerequisite for justice, she insisted.

Survivors have gained solidarity and some practical assistance from the groups involved in Holocaust memorialisation, but there is also another wider set of civic activists for whom this memory matters. The genocide in Rwanda is regularly invoked as an example of failure by groups lobbying for an end to ongoing crimes against humanity, some of which also organise genocide commemorations. For instance, an anti-genocide movement emerged in the United States in response to revelations about the failures of the international community in Rwanda and Bosnia, and with a focus on the urgent need for international intervention in the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan. For this movement, the memory of the genocide in Rwanda is both a spur to action and a platform for demanding international interventions to halt violence elsewhere.

The Genocide Intervention Network, created by students in 2004 is a good example. The organization was established with the aim of giving “concerned Americans the opportunity to help protect civilians from genocide.” (GI-Net, n.d.) It has developed a range of innovative tools aimed at making genocide “a domestic political issue” and has supported the remembrance of the genocide in Rwanda annually. Its message was clearly stated on the occasion of 2008 commemoration of the genocide: “We failed to protect the people of Rwanda 14 years ago. We don’t have to make the same mistake today” (GI-Net, 2008).

Shame, Apology and Reform

Civic initiatives to investigate the genocide and to promote its memory brought to light the shameful record of the international community during the genocide (see

chapter three). As the evidence of the scale of the atrocities, and of political failures, spilled into the media, some leaders came forward to express their regrets. In 1998, President Bill Clinton, acknowledged his personal failure to respond to the genocide and called for interventions to prevent violence in future: "Never again must we be shy in the face of the evidence" (cited in Gourevitch, 1998: 351). When official investigations confirmed, and further exposed, the failings of international policy there was a growing recognition among powerful individuals and institutions of the need to respond.

Official investigations into the genocide accumulated damning evidence of international failures, in particular the United Nations Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, 1999, known as the 'Carlsson report'; and the OAU-commissioned International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events (IPEP) in 2000. Not only did IPEP indict world leaders for their failure to intervene, but it charged them with a "heavy responsibility" in the genocide (OAU, 2000).

In 1999, Secretary General Kofi Annan, responsible for personal errors of judgement, expressed "deep remorse" (Annan, 1999), and seconded the Carlsson report's call for states to acknowledge responsibility for "the failure of the international community" and to demonstrate a "will for change" (1999: 3). In April 2000, the Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt apologized, asking forgiveness for his country's part in failing to prevent the genocide. As the findings of the IPEP report confirmed, these apologies were due, but largely inadequate.

Significantly, the IPEP report called for apologies to be matched with reparations (OAU, 2000: 132) and it described visits to memorial sites in Rwanda which left panel members "forever haunted by the world's betrayal of those who will slaughtered, and... pledging 'Never again!'" (OAU, 2000: 231). Its report, along with the other investigations exposing international failures, contributed to the climate in which international commemorations of the genocide in Rwanda became seen as necessary. Moreover, some IPEP members directly contributed to the foundation of *Remembering Rwanda*, the initiative aimed at promoting international commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the genocide. This "decentralised network" of volunteers was coordinated by Gerald Kaplan, an IPEP member, genocide specialist Carole Ann Reed, and Rwandan author Louise Mushikiwabo. It had support

from influential public figures such as Ingvar Carlsson, former Prime Minister of Sweden and chair of the UN inquiry (see above), and Sir Quett Masire, former President of Botswana and the chair of IPEP.

Meanwhile, and not unrelated to the revelations about Rwanda, strategies for genocide prevention became a more general concern in international politics around 2000. With this, the idea that memorialisation was a moral obligation and a means to averting future atrocities also gained ground.¹²⁹ In 2000, the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson launched the first in a series of four international conferences on genocide, and emphasised the need to “learn from history”, promising that the conference would mark “the end of silence” for the victims of atrocities (Persson, 2000). The conferences, known as the Stockholm International Forum, set a precedent in bringing together politicians, decision-makers academics and activists from 46 nations to discuss genocide education, remembrance and research. This initiative captured and encouraged a new mood of political reflection on the past.

Although events closer to home in Bosnia and Kosovo were probably uppermost in the minds of the many European delegates as they declared their adherence to the principle of ‘never again’ in Stockholm (Levy and Sznajder, 2006: 173), Rwanda was also on the agenda. By the fourth Stockholm conference in 2004, the questions of how to bring about truth, justice and reconciliation and genocide prevention in Rwanda had been given specific consideration and survivors and groups lobbying on genocide remembrance in Rwanda were given a hearing. The conferences signalled a new interest in “learning the lessons” from Rwanda. They also promoted an international consensus that remembrance of genocide was an obligation calling upon all to: “remember the victims who perished, respect the survivors still with us, and reaffirm humanity’s common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice” (Stockholm International Forum, 2000).

It is not a coincidence that rising interest in the problem of genocide and the need to prevent it followed critiques of international conduct in Rwanda in 1994. Governments and international institutions had reason to rethink international responses to genocide, and to undertake practical initiatives to this end. Some powerful individuals also had reason to express feelings of personal shame and regret.

¹²⁹ Note also that Holocaust Memorial Day only recently became an international commemoration; the UK held its first in 2001.

The investigations, together with a growing body of journalism and academic literature on the genocide (eg Power, 2002; Melvern, 2004) raised profound questions which brought not only particular decisions or policies into question, but opened up the moral character of the 'international community' to scrutiny. Remembrance and reform became essential to restore credibility. As Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights declared:

The international community let down the people of Rwanda. The least we can do to honour the memory of the victims and to do justice to the survivors and their families is to redouble our resolve that such horrors will never be allowed to happen again. (Khan, 2000: vii)

Steps were taken to integrate the lessons of Rwanda into international policy. With Rwanda and Srebrenica in mind, Kofi Annan called in 2000 for mechanisms to respond to "systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?" A year later, the 'Responsibility to Protect', a guide to humanitarian intervention was elaborated. The report referred several times to the genocide which, it stated, "laid bare the full horror of inaction" and it observed the damage it had done to the notion of a humanitarian international community, especially in the eyes of Africans who now believed that: "for all the rhetoric about the universality of human rights, some human lives end up mattering a great deal less to the international community than others." (ICISS 2001: 1). The report emphasised the "equal worth and dignity" of all (ICISS, 2001: 75) arguing for the need to conceptualise sovereignty as a responsibility to protect from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Where states deviated from their responsibility, the international community would be obliged to intervene, with conflict prevention as a priority, but if necessary with military force (ICISS, 2001: xi).

The memory of the genocide permeated the international sphere. The 'Responsibility to Protect' took the genocide as a key point of reference, as a lesson in failure, and it has had an important impact on the discourse of international relations since, having been unanimously adopted by more than 150 states at the World Summit in 2005. It also contributed to a shift in the meaning of the genocide in the international arena: rather than just a source of shame the memory of the genocide in Rwanda had been incorporated into a discourse of renewal. Genocide prevention, both "strengthening the capacity" of states to avoid conflict (Ban Ki Moon, 2008) and intervention to halt

atrocities, would henceforth be explicitly defined as responsibilities of the international community.

This change was underlined when UN secretary-general Kofi Annan launched his UN Action Plan to Prevent Genocide, timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary on 7 April 2004. Describing the plan as “the only fitting memorial the United Nations can offer to those whom its inaction in 1994 condemned to die” (UN, 07/04/2004) Kofi Annan acknowledged the failings of the international community while mapping out an agenda for restoring its moral legitimacy. He argued: “Anyone who embarks on genocide commits a crime against humanity. Humanity must respond by taking action in its own defence. Humanity’s instrument for that purpose must be the United Nations.” The international political commitment to genocide prevention was thus symbolised in the memorialisation of the 10th anniversary genocide in Rwanda.

Memory as Moral Legitimacy

It is often argued that the Rwandan government taps into a sense of guilt among international development donors about their failings during the genocide (Thomson, 2004: 12; Zorbas 2007; Loir, 2005). In the years since the genocide Rwanda has gradually managed to regain its “historical position as a favourite of the donor community” (Webley, 2004: 117)¹³⁰ despite its pursuit of war in the DRC and its involvement in human rights abuses. Not all donors have been equally supportive, but Loir describes the UK and the US as “literally paralysed by the postponed guilt for a “genocide that could have been prevented” (2005: 419) and argues that they, together with the Netherlands, Sweden and, to some extent Belgium, are “prepared to overlook the Kigali regime’s failings” (ibid) and to heed the Rwandan government’s calls for displays of “repentance” (2005: 416). This oversimplifies the issue, since other factors influence the allocation of aid, as discussed below, but it is notable that these same governments have been key donors to memorialisation.

The sentiment of regret is expressed explicitly in and through contributions to memorialisation, whether or not it affects donor contributions in general. Asked about the UK contribution to the Rwanda 10 commemoration and to memorial sites, the DFID representative in Kigali explained that the UK “shares collective guilt,” having

¹³⁰ Webley establishes that between 1997-2002, Rwanda received an average of \$322 million in aid in contrast to its central African neighbours. For instance the DRC received \$263 million in 2001 for a population nearly seven times greater (2004: 116).

“failed to deliver” on its international responsibility to intervene in 1994. In part memorials were a means to “show solidarity with Rwanda.” (July 2006). In a similar spirit, the Swedish Embassy, though facing no specific reproach of its national conduct, supported the creation of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre and has since encouraged a tour of this site as a necessary introduction for all its visitors in Rwanda (Our Memory Our Future, n.d.). Among the motives underpinning foreign contributions to memorialisation is: “[the] international desire to express, rectify and heal a contemporary guilt over the genocide, and to demonstrate solidarity in both grief and disgust” (Steele, 2006: 11).

This is not an institutional matter only; some individuals have linked their participation in remembrance to personal feelings of guilt or sorrow and to commitment towards promoting Rwanda’s recovery. Since his apology, President Clinton has become a regular visitor to Rwanda, each time offering praise for its people and government. In the words of his spokesperson: “His heart is close to the people of Rwanda” (*The New Times*, 14/07/2006). He has supported healthcare and social and economic development projects through the Clinton Foundation, which also contributed to the Kigali Memorial Centre. Another advocate of remembrance is General Romeo Dallaire, commander of the UNAMIR forces in Rwanda during the genocide. Having been present during the genocide, his commitment to memory is also linked to his personal experience of trauma. He has written a memoir of the genocide and has since become one of the leading proponents of the ‘responsibility to protect’ and a regular speaker at memorialisation events. Echoing the demands of genocide survivors, he calls for a reform of the racism which left them outside the boundaries of international concern in 1994:

Are all humans human or some more human than others? Do some humans count more than others? Do Yugoslavs, Europeans, whites count more than whole bunch of black Africans in central Africa who are simply slaughtering themselves (Dallaire, 2004: 10).

Sentiments of guilt, regret and sorrow are likely to arise out of the interdependence of the world and of our common humanity, as well as in response to criticism, and there is no reason to doubt that these are felt and meant by the individuals concerned. However, it is also important to point out that such sentiments now have political currency. It increasingly seems that expressions of regret for the genocide in Rwanda are a means to convey a cosmopolitan sensibility and to present the moral credentials

for leadership of powerful governments or global institutions. At one time, it seemed visit to Rwanda, and to its memorial sites, was becoming standard for those seeking to establish moral credibility.¹³¹ A sense of guilt and a desire to express regret shape the actions of individuals, institutions and governments to some extent; but contributions to commemoration are also inherent to the performances of international diplomacy. They can even be a means to reinforce bilateral relationships (Belgian representative; DFID representative, August 2006).

Participation in commemoration is a means to publicly reconstitute the moral legitimacy of the institutions and individuals whose conduct during the genocide, or in international relations more generally, has been criticised. Contributions to memorialisation are also a diplomatic means to foster good relations with the Government of Rwanda. However there are another set of reasons why donors are involved in funding memorialisation, which have less to do with regret for past failures, and more to do with their ongoing involvement in the international development enterprise.

Aiding Post-Conflict Reconstruction

The commitment of international development donors to funding memory projects is not simply a function of regret. To some extent, their support is simply “logical” because it fits in with the recognition and commitment of the United Nations to commemoration (Belgian Representative, August 2006), but it also rests on a set of assumptions about how the nation of Rwanda should be repaired after the genocide and about the need for a particular kind of social transformation. It is underpinned by the rationale that international agencies ought to have a central role in shaping techniques for peace-building in Rwanda. The new framework mapped out by the ‘responsibility to protect’, establishes that international strategies for prevention are a moral obligation in the aftermath of mass violence “even” (and no doubt especially when) “the international community has failed to prevent genocide” (ibid). These ideas inform the contributions of governments and NGOs to memorialisation in Rwanda.

The memorials are a minor element in a comprehensive donor-funded post-conflict reconstruction programme in Rwanda but are seen as compatible with this endeavour.

¹³¹ For instance, Tony Blair and George Bush have visited, as has UK Conservative leader David

The foreign donors who sponsored memorials and NGOs involved in their construction consistently linked genocide remembrance to recovery. For the Netherlands representative, memorialisation was closely associated with the question of justice: “The tragedy of what happened should be made known, that’s clear... there is a legitimate right for victims to have no ambiguity about what happened” (August, 2006). Others emphasised the educative function of memorials. The aim, according to the Belgian representative, is to encourage Rwandans to learn from the past: “Part of the concept of knowing your own history is probably going to help to avoid it happening again. It is a tool to understand better and a tool for reconciliation.” Or, in the words of the UK representative: “those who don’t remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (DFID representative, August 2006).¹³² For a British NGO director, the memorials are “about acknowledgement”; a contribution to addressing “fear and mistrust,” in order to prevent the memory of the genocide from impacting negatively upon future generations. President Clinton, whose foundation contributed to the Kigali Memorial Centre took a similar view: “No visitor to the memorial could ever forget what happened in Rwanda; I hope that it will ensure that it will not happen again, and I am honored to have played a small role in its construction.” (Clinton, 2005).

Contributions to memorialisation are undertaken in the interests of conflict prevention, however, sponsors and practitioners recognise that they also have the potential to exacerbate tensions. They are aware that public memory is inevitably selective; that some Rwandans do not welcome the genocide memorialisation and that some seek recognition for other victims. One donor representative noted disputes over the past within Rwanda and among exiles in the diaspora: “there is a perception of one sidedness which can become a rallying point internationally... it is a sensitive issue” (August 2006). Another suggested that burial of the bones which lie exposed at memorial sites might be necessary “to turn the page” and pointed out that “the suffering of Hutu women exposed to violence is not remembered... there are forgotten people in this region” (August, 2006). An NGO director explained: “What we’re worried about is the outcome. We need to evaluate how people are viewing each other” (international NGO director, January 2005). Associating sponsorship of

Cameron.

¹³² See chapter 4 where I establish that each of the groups involved share this aim.

memorials with funding for *gacaca*, one donor commented: “the benefits are not so clear. They’re visible in one or two generations, at the moment you cannot measure the results” (August 2006). Indeed it seems that part of the impetus for the external interventions in memorialisation is a concern to mitigate or avert the negative uses of memorials: “There is a danger that they could become focal points of accusation... tools for propagating collective guilt... it is up to those responsible for the memorials to see that they are used to educate for a better future, to foster understanding, to make them inclusive” (personal communication, March 2005).

International agencies work closely with and through government agencies and, in some cases, with survivors, but they do so not only out of regret but also with a concern about existing Rwandan approaches and in an effort to directly influence the prospects for peace in Rwanda, and in the region. Donors do not have a free rein in their interventions; they must at least nominally defer to the requirements of “partnership, agreement and participatory methods” (Duffield, 2001: 261). By the time donors reoriented their priorities on Rwanda, moving from funding from refugee camps to support within Rwanda, the state was under the management of an organised group of exiles with political experience and strong links to the government in Uganda; it was on its feet politically and engaged in efforts to remake the nation. Support for these initiatives, including commemoration, has been tailored to Rwanda in response to the unique nature of the genocide and stimulated partly by criticisms of the international community but, by locating memorialisation within contemporary approaches to development and post conflict reconstruction, we can see that it is also in line with a wider trend.

In post conflict environments, donors have increasingly extended their reach into new realms, becoming engaged in diverse projects oriented towards ‘transitional justice.’ Approaches to post-conflict reconstruction in post-genocide Rwanda have ranged from prosecutions to restorative justice and reconciliation, with a greater emphasis on the former, but increasing endeavours to make them compatible. Rwanda has been the field for experiments in justice and innovations in thinking about its relationship with reconciliation.¹³³ Funding for genocide memorialisation is consistent with donor support for the reconciliation policy and for *gacaca*. It is also in line with the wider

“judicialization of international relations” (Oomen 2005: 887) which leads to donor sponsorship for trials, truth commissions and memory projects. Support for transitional justice in post-conflict environments draws upon two strands in global liberal governance, bringing human rights discourse together with contemporary development thinking.

Development is now preoccupied with influencing how people relate to one another within society; it has become a “mission to transform societies as a whole, including the attitudes and beliefs within them” to make them compatible with an existing idea of liberal governance (Duffield, 2001: 258). The dominant view that development would depend upon economic liberalization¹³⁴ married with strategies for ‘good governance’ (the ‘post-Washington consensus’) left development agencies preoccupied with how to foster the ‘right’ institutions and citizens. This task meets both its greatest challenges and opportunities in post conflict societies, where international interventions can influence the forms of social and political reconstruction.

Efforts to deal with “spoiled identities and ruined histories” have become part of the development mission (Scheper-Hughes, 2005: 166). This concern needs to be understood in relation to a wider merging of development and security based on a view of impoverished and conflict-prone populations as a threat needing to be ‘contained’. International support for national reconciliation projects are premised on a belief that strengthening the interior sovereignty of the state is a means to promote peace (Humphrey, 2005: 207): “‘national reconciliation’ projects are therapeutic strategies designed to promote individual well-being and healing through behavioural and attitudinal change as the basis for conflict prevention” (Humphrey, 2005: 205). They are consonant with a scaling back of the development mission, away from an emphasis on material progress and towards promoting social healing and the “well-being” of populations, an approach best characterized as “therapeutic governance” (Pupavac, 2004). Donor contributions to memorialisation offer ‘symbolic reparation’ to victims, in part to close down the threat to governance which past trauma might pose.

¹³³ International support for transitional justice in Rwanda focused principally on the ICTR, which has made some important high profile convictions but is well known for having prosecuted a few “at extraordinary cost” (Call, 2004: 105) and for failing to reach out to people in Rwanda.

¹³⁴ See Thomson 2004 for how this approach has been pursued in Rwanda.

For development donors the justification for any expenditure in Rwanda, including memorialisation, is that it fits with existing policies on support for countries in transition towards a better system of governance. As one donor put it: “DFID is interested in peace and reconciliation as a prerequisite for development. The overarching aim is poverty reduction... supporting the memory of the genocide is part of supporting good governance” (August, 2006). On a similar basis donors have provided support for reconciliation, educational and trauma counselling programmes in a variety of forms in different locations. The government’s reconciliation policy is a point in its favour among donors: “donor projects betray a clear emphasis on the importance of democratic governance, on the centrality of the history and memory of the 1994 genocide and on the idea of healing as critical to the process of reconciliation” (Webley, 2004: 124). In this sense, donor contributions to memorials in Rwanda reflect the “ideological shift which has taken place within the development community” (2004: 120).

Conclusion

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda has become an event in a transnational culture of commemoration which asserts that we have responsibilities towards one another globally. In 1994, the loss of Rwandan lives was met, at best, with only qualified concern, now the victims are remembered by people with whom they shared no personal, ethnic or national connection. International commemoration is partly a consequence of the efforts of Rwandans at home and abroad to win recognition of the genocide and the role of the international community in it. It is also shaped by diplomatic concerns, the development paradigm, and by NGOs which, here as elsewhere, are “coming to constitute a new kind of transnational agency in the politics of war memory and commemoration” (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 70).

This chapter has shed light on some of the ways in which ideas and practices of memory travel across borders and how they reflect and sustain the “interconnectedness of states and political forces in the global era” (Abrahamsen, 2000: xi). I have shown that the memorialisation is both a genuine expression of regret, and a means to counter criticism. I have also suggested that it serves international political actors and agencies in endeavours to symbolically make, or rehabilitate, their moral credentials, in a way not dissimilar to its utility for the government of Rwanda – it is a means to move forward with new promises and

interventions. It also fits with an approach to development which places an emphasis on “therapy” while leaving the possibilities for material change to be decided in global markets. Against this background, and counter to the intentions of its international sponsors, intense struggles over memorialisation have taken place both in Rwanda and internationally, as the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Time of Mourning

This chapter analyses the contents and forms of commemorative ceremonies and responses to them. It moves the discussion from the memory-making process, and the institutions and ideas which influence it, to an inquiry into the memorials, the meanings they generate and responses to them. It studies the discourses and rituals of commemoration, identifying the representations of the genocide and of political community they project, and considers how these are shared or resisted.

The government of Rwanda has declared an official time of mourning for the victims of the genocide, from 7-13 April, when many commemorations are organised. The 7th April is now an official national and international day of remembrance of the genocide in Rwanda, marked in the UN calendar. Survivors observe a longer period of mourning, lasting for the 100 days of the genocide. These commemorations honour the dead and mark out a period for mourning and reflection upon their loss.

The importance of commemorations in sustaining collective identity has long been appreciated (Durkheim, 1976 [1915]: 358). As rituals which must be performed, unlike other representations of the past, they forge solidarity through action – “to enact a rite is always, in some sense, to assent to its meaning” (Connerton, 1989: 44). This can be a means for those in power to use the past to create their own vision of community: indicating what is to be held sacred by a group, identifying who and what ought to be remembered and how (Gillis, 1994). After the rupture of mass violence, commemorations may contribute to restoring the social order.

The government, survivors and international agencies all perceive a use for the commemoration of the genocide in building unity around a collective display of opposition to genocide, as I have explained, but this is not the only reason why these rituals have emerged in their existing forms. Analysing commemorative rituals is a means to see whether and how the range of ideas about the meaning and purpose of remembering, explored earlier, are applied in and shape the memorials. It is also a way to assess the potential instrumental value of the rituals, by considering whether and how people participate or resist.

The chapter explores the ideas contained in the rituals, their forms and the responses to them. I begin by considering how the genocide, its victims and its perpetrators are

represented in the discourses of commemoration. I examine official speeches alongside the statements of survivors and representatives of international institutions. I then uncover the meanings expressed in the ritual performances of commemoration. Finally I consider responses to commemoration, discussing the nature and extent of participation and detailing opposition, including critical views and counter-memorials. My analysis indicates that competing bids for political legitimacy and rights are expressed in the commemorations and diverse responses to them. Moreover, the past surfaces in the forms of commemoration in important ways, limiting the possibilities for it to serve a particular political agenda. I find that the commemorations reflect the trauma of the past and a moral concern for the victims, amid the political clamour which surrounds them.

MEMORY NARRATIVES

The Rwandan government has the leading role in the organisation of official commemorations in the annual week of mourning. It arranges an annual national ceremony of commemoration on 7 April, held at a different location around the country each year. Government officials, dignitaries, representatives of survivors' associations, and local people are invited and encouraged to attend. This ceremony is at the core of the national commemoration and an analysis of its discourses can illuminate its political significance. But, given my finding that several agencies are engaged in memorialisation with different concerns, it is also important to look beyond this national ceremony to consider parallels and differences with other commemorations at the local and international levels.

The narratives produced in commemorations reveal the extent to which political agencies seek to employ memorials for particular political ends. They also help to specify the meaning of the past for the present; mark the boundaries of the political community and establish the moral grounds of belonging. Identifying how the events of the genocide are recounted, and how responsibility and victimhood is assigned, in these rituals offers access to their underlying politics. Below, I analyse the speeches given by the President, local government officials, survivors and representatives of the international community during three different commemorations.

The Official Account

National commemorative ceremonies follow a set pattern. Every 7 April, people who gather at the chosen memorial site, or tune into the local media, will expect to hear the President of Rwanda give a lengthy speech about the genocide, its consequences and the importance of remembering it. The President's speech is a prominent element of every national ceremony. It is significant in that, more than any other official statement, it reflects and actualises a dominant discourse about the genocide. All the more so since 2000, when Paul Kagame took over the Presidency, because by all accounts he has been the most powerful figure in Rwandan politics since the genocide. Analysis of the speeches given annually by the President can therefore reveal precisely who and what participants in the commemoration are officially called upon to remember, and what they are encouraged to forget.¹³⁵

Officially each commemoration centres on a particular theme, related to the genocide and its consequences. On the fourteenth anniversary, for example, the theme was "let us commemorate genocide while fighting against genocide ideology and render assistance to survivors while working for development." These decrees tend to link commemoration to ideas about justice and social transformation. However, alongside these declared purposes, the narrower political interests of the leadership are manifest in the speeches, as Vidal observed in her analysis of commemorations from 1995-2001.

A political issue of the moment is reflected in each of the President's speeches. At the time of the 7th anniversary, in Rukumberi, Kibungo, the government was facing accusations of economic exploitation and human rights abuses in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. President Paul Kagame used his speech to deny the accusations and defend Rwanda's involvement in the war: "Those accusing us of going to the DRC in search of gold have been exploiting those minerals since the 19th Century... We are only interested in our security and survival" (Kagame, 2001). In 2006, at the ceremony in Nyamasheke, President Kagame said: "people accusing us of divisionism have no moral right to sing to us about divisionism" (2006). He also

¹³⁵ I have analysed the full texts of speeches in 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2007, available on the Government of Rwanda website, and used news reports to find extracts from other speeches. Each of the speeches under review was originally delivered in Kinyarwanda and although I am using the official translation this may still lose sight of meanings which resonate in a local context; moreover it may be that the full content is not always translated.

criticised Paul Rusesebagina, whose role in saving lives during the genocide has been depicted in the film *Hotel Rwanda*, (Kagame 2006; 2007), but who is also a critic of the government (Church, 2007) involved in building a Rwandan political opposition in exile.

In 2007, faced with existing accusations of war crimes and a specific charge, from French and Spanish judges, Bruguière and Merelles¹³⁶, that he was responsible for ordering the attack which killed President Habyarimana on 6 April, the President asked his audience in Murambi: “What could have been in that plane that was worth a million Rwandan lives and gives the French the right to judge us?” (Kagame, 2007). He also spoke heatedly in response to the allegation of RPF war crimes: “I would like to state clearly that had the RPF killed, millions of killers who fled would not have escaped.” He warned those engaged in “mockery” or attacks of genocide survivors: “RPF now has the capacity to do what it was not able to do before” (Kagame, 2007). The following year, again with the French and Spanish judges’ indictments of RPF leaders in mind, Kagame described them as “vagabonds” and announced with sarcasm: “Some people claim that the Government is trading in genocide for political gains. Those who say so probably need to have genocide in their own countries so that they too can enjoy those profits” (Kagame, 2008).¹³⁷

Shifting political priorities filter into the President’s speeches, but these sit alongside consistencies in their content, more closely linked to the stated purposes of commemoration. Demands for justice and truth-telling came to the fore in the first commemoration (Vidal, 2001: 26) and have surfaced repeatedly since, alongside regular calls for genocide prevention and for the recognition of the dignity of the living and the dead.¹³⁸ As will become clear, these concerns are expressed by participants in the commemorations in many forms, but they are also articulated annually in the presidential address.

President Kagame has called upon those implicated in the genocide to speak the truth about the atrocities “we must strive to speak the truth and avoid presenting ourselves

¹³⁶ See Robinson and Ghahraman, 2008, for a discussion of the allegations brought in the Bruguière and Merelles investigations.

¹³⁷ The 2008 commemoration took place in Nyamata, Bugesera.

¹³⁸ Vidal (2001: 26) suggests that after 1995 the character of commemoration shifted such that these issues were lost sight of. There were obvious political changes at this point following a split in the government of national unity, but my analysis suggests that the same issues continue to surface in the discourse.

as untainted when we are not” (2007).¹³⁹ He asks for support to bring genocide suspects to justice: “The ex-FAR and interahamwe are still at large and those in the international community who are not still supporting them are beginning to forget them” (2004). He levels criticism at the international community for its conduct during the genocide and demands accountability (2004) – foreigners are urged to “admit the crime so that we can all move forward” (2007). The President insists that remembrance is essential to learn “the lessons” (2006) and that Rwandans must engage in the making of a new society: “Let us make it our culture to resist the circumstances that may lead to a repeat of this” (2001).

The dignity and rights of the Rwandan people is another regular theme in the speeches. The President emphasises that the genocide was an aberration and that recovery depends upon restoring the dignity of the victims. He refers repeatedly to the inherent dignity of Rwandan people; the nation as a whole is called upon to “regain the value that they deserve” (Kagame, 2007). Survivors are described as the “real heroes” (Kagame, 2004), and the need to offer them support in the present is emphasised: “it is our duty to give them all the assistance in our power” (2006). Those who saved lives are commended for their “enormous courage” and “act[s] of human kindness” (ibid). The message is that justice and memory are central to the restoration of dignity and rights and that Rwandans themselves must reclaim these: “we are capable of giving ourselves dignity, even if we may be denied it by others.” (Kagame, 2006).

Identity and Genocide

The commemoration is more than simply another political platform upon which politicians can air views. The claims and injunctions expressed here are embedded in a discourse with a particular significance in the constitution of meanings and identities. President Kagame invariably gives an account of the genocide during the commemoration. He emphasises the distinctive nature of the crime which began in April 1994 and was ended in July through the “sacrifice of a few brave Rwandans” (2001). He speaks of previous massacres in 1959 (Kagame, 2004) but describes the

¹³⁹ He is referring particularly to the members of the church. The ceremony was held in Gikongoro and Mgr Augustin Misago was present. Misago has been accused of involvement in the genocide by survivors. He was publicly denounced by former President Pasteur Bizimungu during the 7 April commemoration ceremony in 1999 (IRIN, 16/04/1999) and shortly afterwards was arrested. He was later tried and acquitted.

genocide as “unprecedented” (Kagame, 2007) – it claimed the lives of “over a million of our innocent fellow Rwandans” (2004). Responsibility for the killings, the President asserts, lies with the “elites” the “men and women who held the highest offices in the land” and the “machete-wielding neighbours, soldiers and militiamen” who followed them out of “hate or hope of profit” (2004). The causes were “bad politics” (2006) and “a distorted ideology” (2004) with its origins in colonialism. Some church members were party to the slaughter (2007).

Some of the blame is allocated to foreign interventions or failures. In Kibilira, Gisenyi in 1997, President Pasteur Bizimungu denounced the colonists for their part in spreading ethnic sentiment: “Ethnic division, after centuries of national unity, is the undeniable work of colonisation.” (cited in Vidal, 2001: 30). In 1998, in Bisesero, he argued that the Europeans and the United Nations were “principally responsible” (Vidal, 2001: 32). In 2001, President Kagame spoke of the failure of the international community to intervene: the genocide “occurred before the very eyes of the world, and they did nothing about it” (2001). Later, he argued that this failure exposed “flaws in the way the international system is governed” (2004) and a lack of concern for the lives of the victims: “powerful nations regarded one million lives as valueless” (2004). Frequently, the French are singled out for condemnation, most notably in 2004, when Kagame stated: “they deliberately designed a strategy to protect the killers, not to save the victims.”

Overall, what happened in 1994 is clearly established in these narratives as a “deliberate, calculated, premeditated” genocide whose victims were “all innocent civilians, unarmed and defenceless.” Interestingly, aside from accusations against foreigners, there is less clarity on the question of responsibility. The “people of Rwanda” (2006), to whom the speeches are addressed, are rendered an ambivalent subject in the discourse. At times, they are portrayed as having shared responsibility for the atrocities. The genocide, President Kagame states, “befell us because there was something wrong with us as Rwandans” (2001); it was “mostly authored by Rwandans, and especially by Rwandans in leadership (2006). The blame, he suggests, lies with: “us Rwandans for subscribing to the destructive politics”, indeed with “the entire Rwandan community” (2007). “We denied ourselves this dignity when we engaged in the internecine slaughter” (2006). The President apologises for the crime: “we Rwandans take primary responsibility for what happened 10 years ago. And I

stand here in the name of the Rwandan government and the people of this country and apologise in their name.” (BBC News, 07/04/2004b). At other times, Rwandans appear to be collectively victims or saviours. It was “our people who perished”; those “we have come to bury” are all “Rwandans” (2006). “A million Rwandan lives” were lost; they were “our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, our children” (2007). Atrocities were “committed against the Rwandan people” by the French and others. Rwandans are also the source of hope: their “resilience and courage” is celebrated; they are described as “forgiving and asking for forgiveness” (2001).

The government of Rwanda seeks to cultivate a collective memory of the genocide as the foundation for national unity and to suppress “divisionist” references to Hutu and Tutsi identity (see chapter three). However, official narratives at commemoration reflect the difficulty of promoting a stable meaning of a “Rwandan” identity through memorialisation. The genocide explicitly targeted all “Tutsis” and in the process enforced the idea of a Tutsi community in opposition to a Hutu majority. While in practice, many Hutus died and a few people of mixed or “Tutsi” origin participated in the killing,¹⁴⁰ invariably identification as a Hutu provided a safeguard from the slaughter, while imposing an obligation to support it. The Twa, a marginalised group overall, were among the killers and the victims (Willis, 2005), although they were not directly targeted. These starkly divided experiences of the genocide cannot be made to fit comfortably within a single narrative of national loss and recovery.

The possibility of producing a coherent narrative of the national past is further destabilised by indirect references to the 1990-1994 war. The victims and consequences of the war are, for the most part, obscured in public remembrances, but there is mention of the role of the RPF soldiers in ending the genocide. In 2004, the President spoke directly about the RPF struggle for “freedom and liberation” and acknowledged that “every soldier in the RPF knew that the cost was likely to be high.” The victims to be remembered are those exclusively targeted in the genocide, as the President’s statement that “our soldiers fought by day and rescued victims by night” emphasise.

There is a disturbing silence about victims of war during these accounts, commented upon by many critics, but this also distracts us from another profound amnesia. The

¹⁴⁰ For instance, Robert Kajuga, the national head of the interahamwe militia.

war in Rwanda is held at the sidelines of the discourse, but war and acts of genocide in the region are mostly forgotten, despite close connections between these and the 1994 genocide or its aftermath. It is not surprising that there is no reference to Rwandan refugees killed in the DRC during the 1996 RPA invasion, which closed the camps and forced the return of most refugees. But this is not simply a selective forgetting of Hutu lives. The ongoing loss of Congolese lives, including Tutsis, in a conflict involving ex-FAR and *interahamwe*, are also not mentioned.¹⁴¹ If it is mentioned at all, the DRC appears as little more than a terrain for a war to protect Rwandan lives. Similarly victims of acts of genocide in Burundi, both Hutu and Tutsi, go unacknowledged.¹⁴² Although the genocidal targeting of Tutsis is a regional phenomenon,¹⁴³ this shared memory is not officially promoted. These omissions are explained by the specific focus of commemorations on the memory of the 1994 genocide, but they illustrate how this memory can distract from other episodes of past and present violence, and confirm the national emphasis of the discourse.

The President principally addresses the nation but he does so with a consciousness of other audiences and other conceptions of community. He refers to an “international community” and to the shared humanity which the genocide violated: “This is a blot on all of us; it should not have been allowed to happen.” He singles out genocide survivors as a distinct group and acknowledges their suffering: “I wish to once again call upon survivors to persevere” (Kagame, 2007). Occasionally, he identifies other groups, for instance, he has appealed to Tutsi returnees to support survivors, albeit without naming them as such: “for those of us who were not direct victims, who may have been in areas where we were not directly targeted, it is imperative that we find the courage to empathise with our people” (2006). Moreover, there are also exceptions to the general avoidance of references to ethnic identity. During the 1997 commemoration President Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu, is said to have publicly castigated the people of Muhororo, “By your acts, by your cruelty, you have shown that we all, Hutus, are animals” (cited in Kagabo, 2004).¹⁴⁴ In 2007, President Kagame recalled that “crimes had been perpetrated against the Batutsi from 1959”.

¹⁴¹ Congolese refugees living in camps in Rwanda commemorate these losses themselves in May (personal communication, December 2008).

¹⁴² See United Nations Security Council, 1996 on 1993 killings and Lemarchand 1996 on the 1972 ‘selective genocide’.

¹⁴³ For instance see SurviT-Banguka, 2005.

¹⁴⁴ Also see Gourevitch, (1998, 250-51).

Finally, in 2008, the most significant shift occurred when the “Rwandan genocide” was officially renamed the “Tutsi genocide”. This resonates with some of the survivors’ accounts given during commemorations (see below).

Local Accounts

During national commemorations, local officials tend to echo their leaders’ accounts. For instance the Governor of Southern Province, speaking on the thirteenth anniversary of the genocide, referred to “Rwandans killing Rwandans even though they did not have a choice of which ethnic group they were born into”. He emphasised the need to promote unity and reconciliation and to halt the spread of the “genocide ideology” and was highly critical of the French intervention in 1994. But he also spoke directly to the local community, criticising those who “misuse resources for survivors” (Murambi commemoration, 2007), urging people to “testify and confess”; to participate in *gacaca*, commemoration and in the maintenance of memorial sites. The governor thus employs the moment to communicate the requirements of good citizenship to the residents of the region under his authority, an approach which is typical not just in national, but in local ceremonies.

In sector or district level ceremonies, a wider range of “local authorities” gain a platform and they too issue orders to local residents. At a commemoration held in April 2007, in a sector of Southern Province, the local police chief and army commander each gave lengthy speeches alongside the local mayor, and survivors in a ceremony which lasted some two hours. Although officials briefly mentioned the genocide, they concentrated their address on problems of security and justice in the present. Overwhelmingly, they lectured local people on the need for participation in genocide commemoration and vigilance against the “genocide ideology”. They castigated residents for not turning up in sufficient numbers to the previous nights’ reburial and vigil for victims of the genocide. Each in turn referred to a recent discovery of 500 bodies in pit latrines nearby and demanded why this had not been revealed by local people until now. One speaker noted that recently residents in nearby sector had been found “collecting funds for opposition forces”. Another, the army commander, suggested that the only reason people were attending the commemoration that day was because it followed directly on from a Catholic mass. He recalled the historical role of the church in dividing Hutus from Tutsis and complained that people “give more importance to mass than to commemoration.”

Later, the mayor warned that: “no one doubts that there is still genocide ideology in the sector” and called on people to identify those responsible for the genocide and to take part in commemoration as a way of asking “pardon”.

In their contributions to commemoration, government officials tend to present an image of local communities as divided by the genocide, resistant to justice and commemoration and potentially vulnerable to a resurgence of the beliefs expressed in the genocide. Yet even as they impose authority on some residents, during commemoration officials are obliged to give way to the expression of the opinions of survivors and to recognise that it is an objective of commemoration to “look after survivors” (mayor, April 2007).

Survivor Accounts

In contrast to any other official gathering, survivors have a leading part in commemorations inside Rwanda and around the world. These ceremonies are a rare occasion upon which they have a platform to recount their personal experiences during the genocide publicly. Their testimonies, alongside the reburials, are focal points for the ceremonies. In the national ceremony, survivors address the audience before the President, who sometimes reflects on their testimonies in his own speech. In local ceremonies too, survivors recount their experiences in detail, communicating their anguish and bereavement. They also recite poetry or sing together about their losses in all night vigils. They list the names of loved ones killed in the slaughter and denounce the perpetrators. They demand justice and ask for support. They condemn the role of local people or of foreigners in the genocide and sometimes voice criticism of government policies and practices.

In the narratives of survivors, the genocide is seen to be the culmination of a long succession of discrimination and abuse aimed at Tutsis. They date its historical origins according to their personal experiences, but they consistently refer to having been targeted as Tutsis. “In 1963, the Tutsis began to be attacked in primary school. There were jobs Tutsis couldn’t get.” (Survivor A, April 2007); “Genocide started in 1973... the gendarmes persecuted Tutsi”; “whoever was called Tutsi was attacked” (Survivor B, April 2007). They give detailed and uncompromising accounts of the atrocities they endured and those they witnessed, naming the victims individually or

collectively, as Tutsis. The killers “used machetes to kill Tutsi” (survivor poem, April 2007); French soldiers “beat up Tutsis” (Survivor C, April 2007).

After relating their experiences during the genocide, survivors often reflect upon their present predicament and the attitudes of their neighbours. They emphasise the enduring consequences of the violence and losses and their determination to bring the perpetrators to justice. They issue pleas for people to speak openly about the killings: “our neighbours are concerned that the truth doesn’t come out... people don’t want to talk. Imagine if your people were killed!” (Survivor A, April 2007). The commemoration is a time in which survivors bring to the fore their pressing concerns, decrying those who: “use *gacaca* in the wrong way (Survivor C, Murambi, 2007) or “threaten survivors” (Survivor A, Mata, 2007).

Concerns raised by individual survivors are reiterated by their advocates, representatives of survivors’ organisations, who are also given a hearing in local and national and international ceremonies. During the official ceremony in 2007, one speaker pointed out that “when survivors go back home after testimony they have nothing” (Murambi, 2007). Another, representing Ibuka, commented on government policies. He criticised the *gacaca* trials, indicating that: “survivors are not comfortable with the reduction of sentencing”. He called for attention to the social and economic plight of survivors. He emphasised the need for funding for the maintenance of memorial sites and to promote wider participation in commemoration. He also pressed for the formulation of a policy on commemoration, suggesting that the government should urgently review the results of the study it commissioned into the question and that cabinet must “make a decision” (ibid).

Survivors have an important part in commemorations organised by civic groups outside Rwanda, by international institutions and Rwandan embassies. Abroad, as at home, survivors and relatives of the dead give devastating testimonies of their losses, crying out for recognition and accountability. At gatherings organised by survivors’ organisations, testimony, songs and poems of loss are central to the proceedings. Survivors recall how their loved ones were killed simply for “being Tutsis.” They communicate the magnitude of the violations and their enduring consequences. They demand justice; action against genocide denial and an end to attacks upon

survivors.¹⁴⁵ Often survivors speak of their own experiences, but they also express a universal concern. During the 2008 commemoration at the UN, for instance, a woman survivor described how it felt when you no longer have a home, children, or a community and related her own experiences to those of mothers in Darfur (UN Commemoration, 2008).

An International Account

The UN has organised commemorations at its headquarters in New York and in other missions around the world since 2004. While survivors and Rwandan government representatives are included in these ceremonies, giving their own views, the speeches of UN representatives are distinctive. Although they are by no means the only commemorations which take place outside Rwanda, they offer the nearest approximation to an institutionalised ‘international’ account of the meaning of the genocide.

Overwhelmingly, in these accounts, the genocide is represented as sealed history and a lesson learnt. The victims are remembered as a loss to humanity. The message is that, to avoid such events in future, we must all adhere to the “values of common humanity and global community” (UN Commemoration, 2008). International institutions are presented as representatives of an international community, which have a “moral duty to act” (ibid). The UN is shown to have the will to protect ordinary victims of violence, and to be engaged in developing improved mechanisms for doing so. References to other atrocities, present or more recent, are generally made in commemorations organised by international civil society groups, but the institutional focus is on the past of the genocide and an imagined future.

A key element of these ‘international’ commemorations is that they tend to focus on policy reforms, placing the UN at the centre of solutions to genocide or conflict prevention. In 7 April 2004, Kofi Annan set out his action plan to prevent genocide during the commemoration. Four years later, Ban Ki Moon announced that he had “created the full time position of a Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide and appointed a Special Adviser with a focus on the responsibility to protect” (UN Secretary General, 2008). With these promises, UN events project an image of a better future, described in legal or bureaucratic formality. During the 2008

¹⁴⁵ See for instance Kalisa, 2008.

commemoration, this message was also conveyed through the presence on the sidelines of a group of Rwandan children, brought in to witness the lighting of the candle. The children, a UN representative explained, were intended “to symbolise hope for the future” (UN Commemoration, 2008), a reminder that meanings are contained in the symbols and practices of remembrance as well as their narratives.

MEMORY RITUALS

As acts of memory which are performed and invite participation, the rituals of commemoration have a particular potency.¹⁴⁶ Examining some of the forms and practices through which the memory of the genocide in Rwanda is constituted offers a glimpse into another layer of meaning, revealing that the symbols and practices of commemoration do not always reinforce representations embedded in narratives. There are differences between ceremonies, as well as continuities, partly because the past is evoked literally and figuratively. Genocide memorialisation does not produce a stable account, not least because there is a relationship between some of the practices of public remembrance of the genocide and the atrocity itself and because meaning is also shaped by popular responses, or absences.

For the majority of Rwandans, experiences and perceptions are defined by the official ceremonies, national and local. The national ceremony is a typical feature of state-led rituals of remembrance in other postcolonial contexts (see Werbner, 1998b). In genocide commemorations in Rwanda, the template is both imitated and revised. Though different in content, the main national ceremony on 7 April resonates with the style of political communication entrenched under the previous regime. During national anniversaries and celebrations the former President Juvénal Habyarimana would outline the moral terms of belonging within the nation in lengthy speeches to public gatherings (Verwimp, 2000).

Yet while evoking this familiar configuration, the annual genocide commemoration also subverts it. There are no celebrations of heroism or of victory; it is not state elites who are remembered, but the ordinary victims of state-led violence. The tone is sombre and the affair lacks ostentation. The national flag flies at half mast and people are forbidden from taking part in any festivities. The official ceremony is only occasionally held in the capital, taking place in different massacre and burial sites

¹⁴⁶ In general rituals are of historical importance in Rwandan society see de Lame (2004).

around the country each year. It features not just speeches from government officials, and the President, but also from survivors' representatives and the testimonies of survivors.

In general, the national ceremony is a choreographed, formal occasion designed to symbolise the return of order. There are burials of the victims of the genocide, a minute of silence, the laying of wreaths on the mass grave and ecumenical prayers. It displays an image of a stable civilian authority, which is later broadcast on national television and in other media. It brings together the political leadership and elite, including foreign dignitaries; genocide survivors and people from the surrounding area. It is led by the political authorities and is largely secular – although church leaders participate, their role is mainly confined to prayers at the burials.

Ceremonies organised by survivors or local leaders vary, depending on the context, the number of survivors, the will of the local authorities and the nature of relationships between people in the community. They may include many of the same features as the national ceremony, such as official speeches, burials and survivor testimony but also typically involve marches and vigils. Some are held during the official week of mourning, others take place during the three months of mourning observed by survivors, usually they are held on the day of the worst massacre in a particular location. Local survivors generally take a leading role but other survivors come as a mark of solidarity with friends or colleagues.

Describing one such event in Kanombe, Kigali a local teacher and survivor explained: “Survivors get together themselves to prepare the days. Authorities are not always there. Other people also attend, people from cellule and Ibuka people, even people who committed crimes.” (July 2006). She pointed out that this diversity, cooperation and support for commemoration in Kanombe was not assured elsewhere. In rural areas, where people recognise each other and know their pasts, a survivor “can see where her children died and who killed them” and the atmosphere can be tense. The contrast can be seen in the example of more rural Ntarama, where: “Only survivors take part in this” (Ntarama guardian, August 2006). Participation in commemorations differs according to location and the identities and experiences of residents.

Large crowds attend national ceremonies and the turn-out at local ceremonies can also be healthy, but this is in part because of government pressure. As member of the

NURC explained, in the past mainly the authorities and survivors took part, but people are now told to go by local officials. Commemoration is: “obligatory for survivors, Hutus, those whose families were involved in the genocide... This is one activity of memorialisation in which the whole population participates” (August 2006). This is neither new, since an element of compulsion dates back to the *ad hoc* reburials which began in early 1995 (Vidal, 2001: 10), nor is it always successful. The ‘duty to remember’ is not easy to impose in town, but in the countryside, “it is very easy to verify.” The result is that while those who participate in commemorations in town are “convinced” and “openly commemorate, they talk,” in rural areas many “come against their will” (Ibuka representative, August 2006).

In both urban and rural areas some people exempt themselves from commemoration, whether because they have other priorities, or because they resent this focus on the past. However, it does seem that increasingly survivors feel less isolated. For instance, survivors organising the commemoration at the University of Butare spoke of “resistance among students and workers at the beginning”, but a new willingness to take part, both among Tutsi returnees¹⁴⁷ and Hutus: “It’s a different generation now. Some of the students here were in primary school. They want to know what happened. Maybe their brother or father is in prison” (AERG Butare, July 2006). This participation is also leading to new revelations: “People invite testimony about what happened and you know the truth... Even at the last commemoration, we found a mass grave, the remains of 100 people. If we hadn’t had ceremonies, we wouldn’t know” (NUR student, July 2006). In particular there is growing youth participation: “I have noticed a lot of young Hutu who participate voluntarily; they ask us how can we join you in the commemoration. This is positive; it began around the tenth anniversary” (Ibuka representative, July 2006).

This widening of the community of mourning is seen in the mixed populations of the towns but also extends beyond them. In the early days in Nyamasheke, only survivors and the government took part and “People didn’t understand”, “were afraid” or worried about vengeance. By 2006, however, “participation was numerous and people began to understand” (elderly returnee, August 2006); “People began to come little by little with the demands of survivors” (memorial committee member, July 2006). Some also choose these rituals to publicly reveal details about the crimes which they have

kept hidden for years: “The education of the masses has had a positive effect on memory” (ibid). Some of those involved in memorialisation take heart from the growing numbers of people now attending:

There is some comfort; people are not threatened by the commemoration. They are mixing up. Many are married to survivors. They have to commemorate with you... Those not involved, who were detached from the killers, are now able to come, which would not happen at the beginning. There was no space. Even for survivors commemoration is a difficult time. They come by will; they are not forced. It’s working very slow motion (memory expert, July 2006).

Through commemorations, some survivors feel they are forging new bonds among themselves and with others:

When we commemorate properly we really feel that we are with the dead. All the survivors come together, rich or poor. The rich sit down on the ground with the poor. They are like one single person – rich or poor they are real survivors. Those from the diaspora and Hutus, those who have nothing to reproach themselves for also join us. This is a way towards reconciliation. When you see someone wants to help you commemorate, it is as if they were with you during the genocide. You really open up to them. That educates their children who have nothing to do with this (Ibuka spokesperson, August 2006).

The Nature of Participation

Participation involves interaction, not just attendance, and people engage in commemorative rituals in diverse ways. While many attend the national ceremony, they come for different reasons and their experiences are not uniform. Elite guests sit apart from the masses, marking Rwanda’s social hierarchies and economic divisions. Survivors often arrive and sit together and are visible by the purple scarves or armbands they wear. But the presence of security officers adds to a general sense of regulation, which impacts most upon local residents – packed closely together on the ground.¹⁴⁸ They are called to listen and learn; officials at both national and local commemorations teach the lessons of the genocide in a style reminiscent of the obligatory political meetings of the previous regime (Uvin, 1998: 130).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Note that Tutsis returnees did not generally attend in the early years (Hatzfeld, 2005: 82).

¹⁴⁸ For instance, during the commemoration in 2007 some locals were forced to sit outside listening to the speeches on the radio, although there appeared to be space within the venue. Others were kept inside and not allowed to leave.

¹⁴⁹ These meetings were designed to educate the peasantry on the development agenda. Also see de Lame (2004). Note that local officials used similar meetings to incite genocide.

These didactic aspects of national and local ceremonies contrast with other features of the commemoration. The time of mourning has become a time for dialogue and deliberation. It is now customary, in Rwanda and abroad, to create a space for discussion of the causes, nature and consequences. There are debates, conferences (eg Rwanda Forum, 2004), viewings of documentaries or films about the genocide (eg *The New Times*, 17/04/2005) and theatrical productions (eg Collard, 2006). Such events acknowledge the place of interpretation and discussion in the search for understanding about the past and addressing its legacy. In practice, however, these modes of public remembrance are usually only attended by a few, mainly educated elites, including Rwandans from various backgrounds and foreigners.

All commemorations, however, are also defined by the contributions of survivors who bring mourning to the heart of the practice. For them, the 7 April is only the beginning of the 100-day mourning period which involves many rituals organised by local groups. Survivors retrace the last journey made by the victims together, in long marches to churches or public buildings where their loved ones were killed. Thousands gather at the memorial sites where their loved ones were killed, on the anniversary of the massacre, and cry out the names of the dead.¹⁵⁰ They recount intimate and distressing testimonies in a restrained manner, a practice which draws upon oral traditions (academic, April 2007). They keep all night vigils at memorial sites singing memorial songs and praying by candlelight. For survivors, commemorative ceremonies are defined by an outpouring of grief. Their references to the atrocities are sometimes so direct that they seem to blur the line between past and present.

Trauma

There has been a rising incidence of traumatic crises during commemorative ceremonies, both in the vigils led by survivors and during official events. For some, it seems the reminders are unbearable. While some participants are provoked to tears and distress as survivors recount their testimony, others appear to be transported back to the moment of the genocide and begin crying or trying to flee. On 7 April 2005 at the official ceremony in Kiziguro, the panic spread so quickly that within thirty minutes fourteen people were being treated for “pronounced crises” in a room set

¹⁵⁰ For an example, see Kabera, 2004.

aside for counselling, while others were in Red Cross tents or taken to hospital. That same year, nationally the Ministry of Health recorded 627 incidences of trauma at different commemoration sites (Gishoma and Brackelaire, 2008: 167-8).

In a clinical analysis of the problem, which suggests that it rose significantly after 2004, Gishoma and Brackelaire explain that atrocities inscribed on the body surface in the space of commemoration, where survivors “no longer know how to avoid thinking”; they re-inhabit bodies from which they have psychically detached. They find that trauma is both an individual and a collective condition expressed in commemoration.

During the commemoration periods, the suffering accumulated within the body breaks out, is expressed in traumatic crises, translates the distress which inhabits the bodies of individuals as well as the social body in Rwanda. It is not, therefore, only about the suffering of a single subject, but the suffering of bodies and of an entire social body (2008: 166).¹⁵¹

Traumatic crises draw attention to the ways in which commemoration is defined by past experiences, a point confirmed by the conflicts which surround commemoration.

TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS

Commemoration is a focus for questioning and sometimes opposition, ranging from disputes over how to remember (see chapter eight), to resistance. Often, resentment of commemoration is expressed in silence or withdrawal but at its most serious, it has included violence. In Rwanda, and internationally, there are criticisms, calls of injustice, threats, and counter commemorations, all of which highlight the limits of agreement about the meaning of the past.

Protests in Exile

Genocide commemoration has been seized as an occasion by opponents of the Rwandan government to criticise or to present their own account of the events of April-July 1994.¹⁵² There are strict limits on genocide denial in Rwanda, but members of the former regime and political opponents of the government have expressed their

¹⁵¹ For a more general discussion of trauma in post-genocide Rwanda see also Pham, Weinstein and Longman (2004).

¹⁵² I do not evaluate the claims of these groups against the evidence since I am principally concerned with the ways in which commemorations are constructed and contested. Nevertheless it is important that these and other claims made in counter-commemorations be assessed against the available body of evidence about the genocide, a task which could usefully draw on Lipstadt's approach (1993) and

views in exile. The statement by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)¹⁵³ on the 10th anniversary is a typical example. It blamed Kagame for the “Rwandan tragedy” and rejecting the “one-sided account” of the “events” of 1994, arguing that: “The official remembrance ceremonies could not conceal the fact that numerous Rwandans are neither allowed to mourn, to bury with dignity nor to express publicly the suffering of their friends and relatives” (FDLR, 2004). Alongside such statements, political opponents issue a challenge to genocide remembrance through counter-memorials, mainly in Brussels.

Rwandan exiles living in Brussels are divided on questions of politics and identity. Although the annual genocide commemoration is open to all Rwandans, Europeans and any foreigners wishing to take part, and many do, attitudes towards remembrance are polarized. Rejecting the existing approach, several groups of Hutu political exiles, some associated with the Habyarimana regime, have tried to use the occasion to promote a revisionist account of the genocide, which focuses on the assassination of President Habyarimana, and places the blame upon the RPF.

Key among these groups is the Collectif du Six Avril 1994 Rwanda (COSAR), formed in Brussels to “demand equal and unconditional justice for all Rwandans” (COSAR, 2000).¹⁵⁴ In 2000, when it first became active, the group organised a demonstration to demand justice for a “decade” of crimes against humanity,¹⁵⁵ claiming 1990 as the beginning of the “tragedy which followed and continues until the present” (ibid). It sought unsuccessfully to win support from the judicial authorities in Belgium for a case against Rwandan President Paul Kagame (COSAR, 2000). Neither then, nor in subsequent demonstrations, was there any reference to the 1994 genocide – the victims to be remembered were those who died in war crimes and the perpetrators were the RPF.

COSAR claims that President Kagame was responsible for a “terrorist attack” on the plane in which the heads of state of Rwanda and Burundi were killed and that it was

engage with the debates about whether or not criminalising genocide denial is necessary (for a useful insight into the arguments against criminalisation, including Lipstadt’s, see Glasov 2007).

¹⁵³ This political and military group based in eastern DRC includes ex-FAR leaders and interahamwe as well as new Hutu recruits. It has been at war with Rwanda in the DRC on and off from 2000 to the present.

¹⁵⁴ COSAR presented itself as a civic youth organisation, representing Congolese as well as Rwandans, but associates of the Habyarimana regime and political opponents of the RPF figured prominently among its leaders and supporters.

¹⁵⁵ Referring to the launch of the RPF rebellion in 1990.

this action which caused the violence which followed: “this ignoble act which plunged Rwanda into an infernal carnage” (COSAR, 2002). In this account, the violence is represented as an indiscriminate response to the death of President Habyarimana and the RPF is accused of responsibility. COSAR obscures state plans to organise a systematic extermination of Tutsis, which predated the crash, and their implementation (see chapter three) implicitly denying the definition of genocide, and recalling instead “all the massacres which followed” after 6 April (ibid).

In 2006, COSAR was among the groups which organised a demonstration on 6 April to commemorate the “12th anniversary of the attack of 6 April”¹⁵⁶ (*La Libre Belgique*, 06/04/2006). Having been refused authorisation to demonstrate at the Palais de Justice de Bruxelles, MDHR protesters gathered at a monument to the victims of the genocide in Rwanda in Woluwe St Pierre, leaving flowers there for the Hutu victims of the RPF (*The New Times*, 09/04/2006) The protest involved around 150 people, among them the sons and daughter of former President Habyarimana (*The New Times*, 13/04/2006); members of current Rwandan opposition parties and a member of the former Hutu extremist party CDR. Some of the demonstrators wore shirts which were reminiscent of the “interahamwe uniform” (representative of Ibuka M&J, April 2006). The former commander of the Belgian UNAMIR paratroopers stationed in Kigali in April 1994, retired Colonel Luc Marchal¹⁵⁷ also took part and expressed his “solidarity” (*La Libre Belgique*, 07/04/2006). Although the protest was peaceful, its intentions and effects were inflammatory; one commentator observed:

[I]f their denunciation of the crimes of the current Rwandan government and of the former Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front rebellion is legitimate, their tendency to deny or ignore the genocide committed by Hutu extremists, whom certain still claim an association with, is, more than an assault on history, it is a new suffering inflicted on the families of the victims who commemorate... the genocide (*La Libre Belgique*, 07/04/2006).

Genocide survivors were distressed by the 6 April commemoration – an Ibuka representative described it as a “desecration” of the genocide monument, labelling the group as “mainly former supporters of Habyarimana’s regime” and the speeches as “revisionist” (April 2006). Although the demonstration was not the first attempt to

¹⁵⁶ The demonstration was coordinated by the Movement for the reestablishment of human dignity in Rwanda (MDHR) which included SOCIRWA, COSAR and other groups listed in footnote 68 (*La Libre Belgique*, 07/04/2006).

¹⁵⁷ Marchal’s role in the protest was widely criticised in Belgium including by the widow of one of the ten Belgian paratroopers killed on 7 April by the forces of the genocide (*La Libre Belgique*, 7/4/2006).

promote the “double genocide thesis” in Belgium, it was among the most blatant. The furore it caused within the Rwandan community in Belgium and the complaints from the Rwandan government¹⁵⁸ were such that the following year the Mayor of Woluwe St Pierre outlawed the demonstration and protesters were forced to cancel (COSAR, 6/4/07). However, on 6 April 2008, despite another ban, 60 members went ahead claiming that the protest was in the “memory of all the victims of the Rwandan genocide killed in Rwanda and in the DRC”; some of the protesters were arrested (*Hirondelle*, 08/04/2008).

On 22 April 2008, a further protest was mounted in Brussels; this time organised by the Rwandan Civil Society in Exile (SOCIRWA):¹⁵⁹ “in memory of all the innocent victims (Twas, Tutsis and Hutus) massacred by Rwandan criminals from October 1990 until today” (*Le Soir*, 22/4/2008). The protesters called for accountability for the RPF massacres of Hutus at Kibeho (see below), and accused the RPF of the deaths of thousands of others in the region. In response, a group of Rwandan exiles, La Communauté Rwandaise de Belgique (CRB), expressed outrage, calling for the demonstration to be banned and condemning it as a “false commemoration”, “minimising the Tutsi genocide” (*ibid*). The Mayor outlawed the protest on grounds of security, although some 30 people were ultimately allowed to gather in front of the Palais de Justice de Bruxelles.

The activities of COSAR in particular have led to a campaign in Belgium for legislation to outlaw denial of the Tutsi genocide.¹⁶⁰ The counter-commemorations have intensified existing fears among survivors (*Le Soir*, 05/04/2008). Although mostly the protests in Brussels have been peaceful, more recently, there is also concern about violence. In 2008, two Rwandan nationals armed with machetes were reported to have “forcibly entered a hall in Brussels where the anniversary of the 1994 genocide was being marked and attacked the guests, injuring several of them” (*Panapress*, 14/04/2008). This incident suggests that tensions over commemoration have intensified over time, a trend confirmed by experiences in Rwanda.

¹⁵⁸ This led to an apology from the Belgian Minister for Cooperation to the Rwandan Foreign Minister (*The New Times*, 13/04/2006).

¹⁵⁹ As well as SOCIRWA and COSAR, asbl, other active organisations include le Centre de Lutte contre l'Impunité et l'Injustice au Rwanda (CLIIR), SOS Rwanda Burundi Congo asbl, AVICA asbl, KOMERA asbl.

Challenges in Rwanda

Sentiments seem to be heightened at the time of commemoration in Rwanda. For some it can be a time of anxiety or repression. Criticism of the rituals is generally only voiced with caution and it is not possible to gauge its extent because of a risk of arrest and imprisonment.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless it is apparent that some people feel distressed, excluded or resent the rituals, seeing them as intended to “humiliate Hutus” (human rights researcher, July 2006) and that a few people use them to mobilise anti-Tutsi feeling. Survivors have been mocked, threatened, attacked and, in a few cases, killed. Fear, coloured by either anxiety or shame, affects some people’s attitudes towards commemoration. Others react to the ceremonies with hostility or feel a sense of injustice.

Because commemoration touches on the experiences of grief and trauma, its effects upon survivors are not predictable. Individuals respond differently to the rituals, even if they share a commitment to remembering. The rituals evoke memories very directly, through marches to massacre sites, vigils and testimonies, and sometimes they are the trigger for traumatic crises, as described earlier. By contrast, people often say they feel bound to remember and gain from their collective participation. Criticisms of commemoration, mainly those which arise out of concern about trauma, are sometimes levelled at its forms and intensity rather than its meaning. Some worry particularly about how the stark references to the genocide are affecting young people (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006b: 252). Other suggest that there is an urgent need to find a balance; to encourage greater space for personal needs, and to recognise that because their memories are so painful, some people want to keep their minds on the future.

Politics has its way, but do we know that this is good for everyone? During the commemoration period some people lose themselves during the ceremonies. On the macro scale it is important that there is a time to remember, but it must be organised so that we don’t distress people. Even within families there are no agreements about this. There are some people who say that is the past; we need to look to the future (NGO director, August 2006).

¹⁶⁰ Among the associations involved in this campaign are the Movement against racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, Ibuka, CCLJ, Ligue des droits de l’homme, UPJB, Associations des Arméniens and some parliamentarians (*Le Soir*, 05/04/2008).

¹⁶¹ See also chapter four, fn 34.

One reason why commemoration is such a painful time is that people are called upon to remember their own suffering and, with this, the crimes of genocide perpetrators. It can, in the words of one survivor “bring back to life hatreds” (Longman and Rutagengwa, 2006a: 251). Because of the high rates of popular participation and because a consciousness of ethnic identity simmers beneath the surface, this means that all Tutsis, not just survivors, can become very sensitive to the behaviour of other people they meet. They might avoid their normal meetings and look at people with new suspicion, as a Tutsi returnee explained:

Commemoration can develop a very negative attitude in the hearts of some people. During the month of April I don't give a lift to any Hutu. I was not there when the genocide started and I lost distant relatives. But when you know the evil of humanity and are reminded in pictures and testimonies of how human beings have been degraded to that level you'd rather not listen anymore. Among many people I know they develop a negative attitude, losing trust and confidence. When you remember something comes into your mind... isn't he going to kill me at one time? There is tension between people; some even take measures, deciding not to go out (August 2006).

Any indication that people do not share their concern for the victims is distressing for the bereaved. One survivor spoke of his anger at the comments of a neighbour who used to switch off her radio during the commemoration: “The woman told her husband (a survivor), I'm tired of hearing your memory songs, will you always be crying?” (August 2006). Another, giving testimony during a local commemoration, recalled an incident at the previous nights' vigil at which a neighbour had dismissed the commemoration, saying “it doesn't concern me.” He said her comment awakened “anguish” among survivors and that there were demands for the woman to be “pursued by the police”.

Insensitive or negative comments which come to the surface at the time of mourning can also give rise to fear among Hutus, since they sometimes lead to individual arrests or can be the spur for a more general repression. Yet the comments themselves display an undercurrent of resentment, rooted in the divisions of the genocide, but also connected with the overwhelming and compulsory nature of the commemorations. Alongside survivors' anguish, commemoration produces a different kind of concern among some other Rwandans.

A feeling of ‘humiliation’ lies behind the reluctance of some Hutus to participate. While in some places this is improving (see above), elsewhere a sharp divide

continues to be felt and many Hutus stay away: “They feel humiliated. Even if they didn’t participate in the genocide, it was their brothers who did so... They lack the will to come. Everyone knows the dates for commemoration but they aren’t interested.” (Ntarama guardian, August 2006). The pressure to participate can give rise to anger as a recent study found: “Some respondents expressed their anger that people had been forced to participate in the gathering at the stadium on 6 April (sic); ‘it was all orchestrated’.” Saturation coverage of the genocide, which includes footage of killings, corpses and of the commemorations, also arouses some resentment (Richters *et al*, 2005: 211).

Injustice

Aside from the general sense of unease which surrounds the memory of the genocide, there are specific reasons why people resent commemorations. Claudine Vidal (2001) finds that commemoration provokes anger and a sense of injustice, mainly focused on the failure of the government to acknowledge victims of RPF massacres, or revenge killings: the “July dead.” This view was expressed forcefully by a Hutu participant in a conference on reconciliation: “as long as one sector of the population of Rwanda is authorised to cry for its dead, to shout its distress, without the other part being able to mourn, reconciliation will have to wait” (Vidal, 2001: 46). When Longman and Rutagengwa carried out extensive research into attitudes towards reconciliation in Rwanda, they also uncovered opposition to memorialisation. In particular, they identified anger among those from Byumba,¹⁶² where memories are dominated by experience of war rather than genocide. The call from these victims was not so much against genocide commemoration, but rather for public acknowledgement of the suffering of Hutus (2006a: 251). Similar sentiments are expressed elsewhere in Rwanda.

Feelings of injustice are acute in Kibeho, the site of a massacre on 22 April 1995 (*Médicins Sans Frontières*, 1995). After the genocide, camps of internally displaced people (IDPs), men, women and children, had been set up in the south-western region under the control of ‘Operation Turquoise’, including at Kibeho. The camps were thought to be sheltering some genocide suspects, and the new government was determined to shut them down. The IDPs refused to leave the Kibeho camp, and RPA

¹⁶² The Byumba region was least affected by the genocide because it was the first to come under RPF control.

soldiers moved in to close it by force, surrounding the camp and firing on the civilians. The government cooperated with an independent investigation and brought the commanding officer responsible to trial but, by most accounts, its response was inadequate. More were killed than either the government or the investigators acknowledged – most estimates indicate more than 4000 lost their lives (see Prunier, 1998: 362), compared with the official figure of 338.¹⁶³ The massacre and the unresolved allegations have fuelled tensions in this region. Remarkably, when the annual commemoration was held in Kibeho in April 1999, no mention was made of the victims of the 1995 massacre, provoking further criticisms (Braumen *et al*, 2000).

Bereaved relatives in Kibeho have no opportunity to vent their feelings publicly. They perceive commemoration as marginalising their experiences, and express their sorrow and resentment among themselves, or in confidence to outsiders. Some also refuse to participate in the genocide commemorations. A survivor of the Kibeho massacre commented: “At the time of commemoration I shut off the radio and TV. If it’s an obligation I go to commemoration but I remain silent.” She described people in her community there as “furious to have a government who commemorates for only one side of the population even though they know that they committed crimes of vengeance”. Another resident of Kibeho agreed, arguing that “the others who died should also be remembered in the same way” (August, 2006).

The complaint of government bias against Hutu victims is a longstanding one. It can be difficult to fully disentangle this claim from a wider reluctance to recognise the extent of the atrocities in the genocide, and the role of ordinary people as perpetrators. Even confessed perpetrators who admit the facts sometimes show few signs of remorse.¹⁶⁴ Yet it is also clear that there have been other abuses and injustices in Rwanda and that in the absence of a public memory of these victims, the commemorations exacerbate a sense of injustice. The lack of justice also means that they have been taken up by political opponents of the government as a means to create confusion about the genocide and discourage participation in commemoration (see African Rights, 2007: 176). Furthermore, past injustices have also given sustenance to the views of those who continue to deny the genocide or are hostile towards Tutsis.

¹⁶³ See Prunier, 2009: 38-42 for details. Note that RPA Colonel Ibingira was found guilty of failing to prevent the killings and sentenced to 18 months.

¹⁶⁴ See for instance Hatzfeld, 2005a: 187-8.

More commonly, however, people avoid commemorations and occasionally try to disrupt them, out of a sense of guilt or hostility.

Guilt and Hostility

The memorials recall a past that most genocide perpetrators would surely prefer to forget and which they regard variously as a time of fear (Straus, 2006) or comradeship and rewarding labour (Hatzfeld, 2005a). There are strange stories of how perpetrators remember, or forget their participation. Some try to rationalise and provide clear explanations for their crimes, others cannot fully conceive of what they have done and expect to continue with life as before. Some perpetrators are haunted by their crimes.

Now, in the prison at Rilima, they apparently claim that they do not remember how they could have done these incredible things. But they remember everything, down to the smallest detail. I know of one instance of a killer who buried alive his Tutsi neighbour in a hole behind his house. Eight months later, he heard his victim call to him in a dream. He went into the garden, he removed the earth, he pulled up the corpse, and he was arrested. In prison ever since then, he walks day and night, carrying this fellow's skull in a plastic bag. He cannot let go of the bag even to eat. He is haunted in the extreme. Once you have burned children alive... organised hunts for old people in the woods and disembowelled babies from pregnant women in the marshes, you cannot pretend to have forgotten how you could have done this, nor that you were forced to do it" (Rwililiza cited in Hatzfeld, 2005a: 81).

For some former perpetrators participation in commemoration may be an expression of genuine remorse, for others it is resented as an imposition or undertaken as a necessary, but superficial, display. One survivor spoke of his work and growing bond with genocide prisoners, who commemorated in prison. It not easy to assess the attitudes of genocide perpetrators, or possible to generalise, though a curious lack of remorse seems to accompany many confessions and requests for forgiveness (seen in *gacaca* trials), suggesting some perpetrators think of themselves as past and present victims. What is evident is that commemoration is a testing time for perpetrators and their families and, perhaps related to this, it has become a focus for attacks upon survivors. Survivors report enduring harsh criticisms and threats around the time of commemoration. Indeed, "genocide ideology" is even said to increase at "towards and during the national mourning period" (*The New Times*, 10/07/2008). It may be that when the ceremony approaches, and people are confronted by memories of the genocide, resentment, hostility and denial rise to the surface. The survivors' activities of reburial and mourning are sometimes mocked openly, to deepen their anguish:

There is a school in Gikongoro where we were gathering the remains of genocide victims and they said you are in the middle of looking for stones... [In another case] during the period of mourning some children brought a dead snake to school and they called to the other pupils to come and bury the remains of the victims of the genocide in dignity. (Ibuka representative, August 2006)

The most well known example of mockery directed at survivors was in 2007, when a man dressed his dog, and that of his neighbour, in purple scarves, telling people he was in mourning, for the “dogs that ‘perished’ during the genocide” (*The New Times*, 11/04/2007).¹⁶⁵ This action provoked an outcry from survivors and a swift response from the authorities: the man was arrested and convicted of “belittling the genocide” (*ibid*).

As well as mockery, survivors also occasionally experience threats during the time of mourning. In April 2006, when a caller phoned in to a local radio station, during a programme dedicated to remembering the genocide, and warned listeners: “we shall kill you again”. The caller’s mobile phone was traced and a 26-year-old resident of Kigali was prosecuted (*The New Times*, 19/04/2006). On 8 April 2004, there was an attempted attack on a village in the northwest of Rwanda by rebels based in the DRC that seemed to be “timed to coincide with commemorations marking the 10th anniversary of the genocide” (BBC News, 11/04/2004). On 22 March 2007, there was a grenade attack upon Cyimbogo Genocide Memorial Site in Nyakarenzo sector, in Western Province, where some 2000 genocide victims are buried, apparently by militia groups from the DRC seeking to cause “instability in the area especially during the 13th Genocide Memorial Week” (*The New Times*, 26/03/2007). On 10 April 2008, a grenade was thrown into the gatehouse at the Kigali Memorial Centre, killing one policeman and injuring another. That same day, a car rammed into a crowd of survivors who were walking together to the memorial site at Nyanza (*The New Times*, 12/04/2008). Although cases of violence are rare, attacks upon survivors intensified in the run up to and aftermath of the 2008 commemorative ceremonies, claiming twelve victims (*The Guardian*, 15/05/2008).¹⁶⁶

Conclusion

¹⁶⁵ Note that purple scarves are worn by survivors during the mourning period. Also note that his act was a reference to the fact that RPA soldiers shot dogs in 1994 because they were eating the flesh of the genocide victims (*The Nation*, 15/04/2007).

This chapter has brought to light some apparent contradictions. While there is evidence of rising participation in commemoration, there are also growing expressions of resentment or hostility during them. Commemorations involve the display, and sometimes the imposition, of state authority, but they are also a platform from which survivors are able to voice criticism and make public demands upon the state and the international community. Commemorations are, on one hand, central to survivors' mourning process and the meaning of their existence and, on the other, a trigger for traumatic crises. They express concern for the victims and a promise of justice and rights but, in their forms and practices, are also marked by, and reproductive of, familiar hierarchies and divisions.

My analysis suggests that the government does not have a monopoly over commemoration and that the practice is not solely driven by its interests. It does seek to manage memory and employs it to legitimize its conduct in the present and to forge a national identity for the future. It does offer a selective account; there are disturbing silences about the past in Rwanda. However, official commemorative ceremonies do not simply construct a shared "memory" of the genocide or even produce a consistent account of the past, since they are diverse products of various agencies, with different aims, and are met with resistance.

Commemoration, in this case, is less an instrument for imposing a particular vision of the past, or promoting social healing within a national arena than it is a reflection of struggles to define the meaning of past trauma for the present, pursued locally, nationally and internationally. Studying the rituals in detail and from various perspectives moves us away from the view that commemoration is a means of governing and towards seeing it as a site of contestation and negotiation (Miztal, 2003: 127) even where there are strict limits on what and who can be remembered publicly.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Trauma Sites

¹⁶⁶ The point here is not that such instances are a consequence of commemoration, but merely that they intensify around this time; for instance attacks on survivors are often aimed at preventing their testimony at *gacaca* trials.

There are hundreds of genocide memory sites in Rwanda, along roadsides, near churches, schools, stadiums and public buildings. Every district of the country has at least one site, and some have many (Rudacogora, 2005: 149). These memorials record the genocide on the landscape and in the national heritage and also serve a purpose as burial places. They vary in their origins, architecture, location and in their status, as either national, provincial or district level sites, classified by the government according to how many people died at or near them (ibid). The government has named six “national memorials”, which are the focus of this chapter. I examine the memorials as products of history and as places in which the genocide is remembered, exploring their individual and collective political significance.

The national sites are not a representative ‘sample’. They have been chosen for close study because they are the most prominent sites and because the government and international donors and survivors have all made substantial contributions to them, compared with the memorials created at the local level (see chapter five). They also share other features, including that all but one was the site of a large scale massacre during the genocide. Nevertheless, each site is different because, as with all the memorials, there is no model to conform to: “there is no fixed official form or standard plan for the development of the sites” (Rudacogora, 2005: 154).

I discuss two contrasting sites in detail. The Kigali Memorial Centre is situated at the heart of the capital, and purpose built as a museum and burial ground; the Murambi Genocide Prevention Centre is in the rural Southern Province, and developed upon the site of one of the largest massacres of the genocide. I examine the processes through which each of these memorials came into being, to find out which groups contributed to their manufacture, and how. I then look at the sites as symbols, unravelling the meanings that they generate. Finally I consider public engagement with and responses to the sites. My observations at the Kigali and Murambi sites are used to inform an analysis of the remaining four national sites, Nyarubuye, Ntarama, Nyamata and Bisesero, focusing on how the sites are shaped by politics, trauma and mourning; and looking at attitudes towards them.

I find that the ideas expressed by local national and international agencies, and discussed in previous chapters, have shaped the processes and the forms of the memorial sites. They are concrete examples of collaboration, and sometimes, of disagreements. They are also illustrations of how the legacies of the genocide affect

the character of public memory, telling their own traumatic story. Like the analysis of commemoration (in chapter seven) this chapter highlights how memorials become the focus for debates and disputes about the past. The meaning and use of the sites is still evolving, however there are already notable contrasts between them. While some have brought the local community together in an acknowledgement of the atrocities, others are at the centre of local tensions. On the whole, rather than constructing the legitimacy of a new regime or promoting agreement about the past, they raise difficult questions and reflect the challenges of politics after mass violence.

THE KIGALI MEMORIAL CENTRE

The Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre (KMC) is the most well known of the genocide sites. Since opening on the 10th anniversary of the genocide in 2004 it has been visited by droves of Rwandans, international dignitaries and tourists. “1,500 survivors” visited each day during the first week; in the first three months of its opening around 60,000 people came, over 7,000 of them “from the International Community” (KMC, n.d.). Built on the hillside in Gisozi, the KMC dominates the surrounding area. It is a “villa”¹⁶⁷ surrounded by a rose garden cemetery, gated and guarded, gleaming in contrast with modest or dilapidated neighbouring houses.¹⁶⁸ Because of its location in the capital, and because it has been invested in and publicised, this site has gained national and international recognition, informing perceptions of past and present politics in Rwanda.

The KMC is designed to educate Rwandans and international visitors about the genocide, with the aim of genocide prevention. The museum recounts a history of the genocide in Rwanda, and includes an exhibit on genocides elsewhere in the world. Significantly it is one of only two museums at which a narrative account of the genocide is currently displayed. Its educative function is incorporated into the structure and the everyday activities of the centre: there is a documentation centre, a schools programme and a conference facility and a website. The aim is to reach out to Rwandans, but at the same time to draw in and inform visitors to the country: to “engage and challenge an international visitor base” (Aegis Trust, n.d.)

¹⁶⁷ This was the description of one interviewee. Dina Temple-Raston’s labelling of it as a “southern California mansion” conveys the same point (NPR, 15/04/2004).

¹⁶⁸ The densely-packed earthen buildings with corrugated steel roofs which are typical of poorer districts in Kigali.

The site also serves as a burial ground designed to honour the victims of the genocide, indeed it was first conceived for this purpose. A recent estimate suggests that more than 250,000 victims¹⁶⁹ of the genocide are now buried at the KMC, in eight mass graves. The purpose of the centre is as a “permanent memorial to those who fell victim to the genocide and... a place for people to grieve for those they lost” (KMC, n.d). It is a space in which the victims are identified and honoured through photographs and testimonies. It is “a place of reflection” (ibid) with memorial gardens, a wall engraved with the names of the victims, and mass graves.

The dual purposes of education and mourning at the KMC reflect the aims of government, international agencies and survivors. The site responds to the needs of survivors and relatives for a burial ground and a place to mourn their loved ones. It institutionalises an account of the genocide which is broadly consistent with the official discourse, and provides the setting for national remembrances and state visits. At the same time it echoes the forms and sentiments which characterize some recent Holocaust memorials elsewhere (Caplan, 2007: 20), placing emphasis upon a memory of the genocide as a crime against humanity and upon the campaign for universal human rights.¹⁷⁰ It integrates these distinct perspectives into a memorial which has attracted attention and promoted awareness of the violations, to an extent and in a manner unprecedented in this region. However, the site also exemplifies inconsistencies in the government and its partners’ approach, including in the process through which it was created.

Constructing KMC

The KMC was established by Kigali City Council as a burial site for the corpses of thousands of victims unearthed from shallow graves around Kigali. The building at the site was constructed by the mayor of Kigali in 2000,¹⁷¹ but until 2003, it was only used to display some of the bones of the victims. The mayor sought the support of international donors to sponsor the development of the memorial early on, but initially received a negative response. A British NGO, Aegis Trust, became involved in developing the memorial in 2003, because of its role in creating the Beth Shalom Holocaust centre in England. This had led a meeting with a Rwandan survivor, a

¹⁶⁹ As with many other sites, the number of corpses is an estimate.

¹⁷⁰ Such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).

¹⁷¹ The idea is said to have come originally from his predecessor, an architect.

decision to develop a “travelling exhibition” on the genocide, *100 Days*, and eventually to a visit to Rwanda.

In 2003, the directors of Aegis Trust were invited to sit on the Rwanda Ten committee to prepare for the 10th anniversary. The committee, which also included representatives of the government, Ibuka, and a member of the IPEP panel (see chapter six) decided on the need to establish a memorial in Kigali. A year later, Aegis Trust, working in partnership with the mayor, had raised some \$2 million from The William Jefferson Clinton Foundation, The Government of Sweden and The Embassy of Belgium (KMC, n.d.)

By 2004 the KMC project employed 100 local staff, together with 15 others “flown in for various expert roles” (ibid). Aegis Trust created the structure of the three permanent exhibitions at the site – the genocide in Rwanda, the children’s memorial and genocides around the world. The organisation researched and created a series of panels which display an account of the genocide – the centre piece of the exhibition. The panels were all: “designed in the UK at the Aegis head office by their design team, and shipped to Rwanda to be installed” (KMC., n.d.) in time for the official opening in April 2004.

Rwandan officials had minimal input into the content or design in a process which was defined partly by a rush complete to meet the tight deadline of the tenth anniversary. The exhibition was produced in just four months (The Guardian, 21 November 2006). As Aegis’ director explained: “They left us to do the exhibition... They didn’t appreciate at all the impact potentially a memorial centre in Kigali could have” (January, 2005). The only changes made by the government were minor additions proposed by President Paul Kagame during a preview three days before the opening. He recommended that some documentary sources to illustrate the history of racial ideology in Rwanda could be added, and asked that the exhibition, which refers to the “role of the Belgians” in the history of the genocide, should also acknowledge their apology (January 2005).

The process at Gisozi was largely driven by Rwandan elites, and implemented by an external agency. Representatives of the national survivors’ association were involved in the official committee which resolved upon the need for a memorial in Kigali; the other key decision-makers were government officials and representatives of civil

society groups from Europe and the US. While the mayor of Kigali initiated the project, Aegis Trust led its completion, and the organisation continues to manage the project, in consultation with a board of Rwandans including an MP, a member of the city council, a representative of Ibuka, and a member of the NURC. The project has raised funds for its ongoing costs from Rwandan businesses as well as continuing to appeal to donors, but there are concerns about its “sustainability” in the long term (director, January 2005).

The nature of the memory-making process at Gisozi demonstrates how memorials have been influenced by external agencies and ideas, taking a cue from Holocaust memorials and experts, and depending on funding from development donors. The process also matters because it has had consequences for the forms and narratives which now define the site, shaping its representation of the genocide and the lessons it teaches for the future.

A History of Genocide

The permanent exhibition at the KMC recounts the history of the genocide in three sections: it describes the causes of the genocide, pointing to its colonial roots and to the ideology of Hutu power; it recounts the atrocities; it describes the role of *interahamwe*, the participation of ordinary civilians and the efforts of a few heroes to save lives. It also presents evidence of the failure of the international community to intervene. The final part of the exhibition considers the aftermath and the issue of justice. The text of all the exhibitions is in English, French and Kinyarwanda and produced on large colour panels with photographs,¹⁷² following an international format of museum display.¹⁷³

The narrative identifies key issues and events leading to the genocide. It depicts pre-colonial harmony in which Hutus and Tutsis “had lived in peace for many centuries” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 9). It demonstrates that a division between ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ was the result of bureaucratic interventions of the European colonists, leading to massacres of Tutsi in 1959. It argues that the “fascist” policies of “persecution and ethnic cleansing” of Tutsis, launched under Rwanda’s first President, Grégoire Kayibanda, continued from 1973 onwards under the regime of President Juvénal

¹⁷² This section is based on observations made during field research, and to a brochure of the exhibition produced by the Kigali Memorial Centre, used as the main source for referencing purposes.

¹⁷³ It was specifically modelled on Aegis Trust’s Beth Shalom Centre.

Habyarimana (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 11). It identifies successive massacres in the 1990s which were the precursors to genocide. It notes massive internal displacements resulted from the war, but generally presents the RPF as in pursuit of “equal rights and the rule of law” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 12).

This representation of Rwanda’s pre-colonial and post-independence history corrects myths and stereotypes which informed the perpetrators of the genocide, providing a counterweight to the “genocide ideology” spread through the education system and the media since colonial times (see chapter three). It constructs an image of a shared Rwandan identity prior to the arrival of the colonizers – broadly supporting the vision espoused by the official discourse, and ignoring pre-colonial disputes. It is consistent with perceptions of history promoted by the RPF and absorbed by the ‘international community’ (Pottier, 2002) and is silent on some of the complexities of the past. For instance, it does not include any reference to the history of atrocities in Burundi, ignoring events which directly contributed to the context in which genocide became possible, such as the assassination of President Melchoir Ndadaye in 1993.

Recounting the events of the genocide is an even greater challenge than that of summarizing the history which preceded it. The narrative at the KMC brings to the fore the organised and sustained nature of the violence. It confirms its status as a genocide, asserting: “it was genocide from the first day... no Tutsi was exempt” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 20). The horror of the relentless slaughter is made apparent, with particular attention to the torture and killings of women and children and the elderly. The statistics are converted into individuals: “the genocidaires did not kill a million people. They killed one, then another, then another... Every minute of the day, someone, somewhere was being murdered, screaming for mercy.” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 22).

The exhibition makes clear that the killers principally targeted Tutsis, with the exception of Hutus killed either as political opponents or because they refused to participate. Rwanda is described as a becoming “nation of brutal, sadistic merciless killers and of innocent victims, overnight” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 21). It is made clear that not all Hutus participated and that some risked their own lives to protect others – a section of the exhibition is devoted to those who resisted the genocide, both Tutsis who fought back and Hutus who hid their neighbours or friends at grave personal risk. Nonetheless, what emerges is a notion of identities in Rwanda

as fixed, rather than socially-constituted categories whose meaning was partly defined in the act of genocide. For instance, there is no attention to the roles of those of mixed origin in the genocide, mainly as victims, but also as perpetrators, or to the difficulties of establishing origin in a country where people have historically sought to redefine their identity to avoid discrimination. Although the brief narrative does not, and indeed cannot, reflect the diverse experiences of loss endured by Rwandans as a consequence of the genocide, it concludes that “we remember the victims of the past” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 40) as if all were represented here.

Moral Lessons

Through the account of the genocide in Rwanda and its exhibition on the history of genocides around the world, the Kigali Memorial Centre presents a liberal humanitarian perspective on the problem of genocide and on the possible solutions. As Steele observes, the KMC:

[E]mbodies and serves present international criminal law and dominant human rights discourse. In portraying the genocide, and other genocides, along side slogans like ‘never again’, the Centre accepts and proliferates the status of the crime as special and particularly grave. Indeed, the memorial directly mirrors, and in turn extends, the *Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide*, which states ‘Recognising that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity, and [b]eing convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international cooperation is required (2006: 7).

Recognition of the losses of the genocide is achieved through promoting identification with the victims. The focus of human rights discourse on the individual as the bearer of rights is reflected in the efforts throughout KMC to break down the mass of genocide victims into named individuals, killed “one after another” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 22). A memorial dedicated to the children victims of the genocide, attaches names and a list of likes and dislikes to the photographs of the dead, confirming their individual existence and the immeasurable tragedy of their loss: we learn that Francine Ingabire, killed with a machete at the age of 12, liked to drink milk, eat egg and chips, and enjoyed swimming. Victims are also remembered individually on a wall of names¹⁷⁴ and there are plans to enable people to dedicate roses in the cemetery garden to their loved ones. This is the personalisation of history;

¹⁷⁴ The process of engraving the names on the walls had begun but was not yet completed at the time of the research.

reminiscent of the approach in Holocaust memorial elsewhere (Young, 1993: 337) as a means to “rehumanize” the victims (Young, 1993: 342), encouraging us to recognise them as individuals who had a universal right to protection from genocide.

The KMC charts the specific features common to genocides around the world through the “Wasted Lives” exhibition which provides for a comparative analysis, setting out the course of the tragic events in genocides in Namibia, Armenia, Germany, Cambodia and the Balkans. By emphasising that genocide is an international problem, the exhibition makes clear that the international community has a responsibility to respond, in terms of prevention and protection.

The failures of the ‘international community’ to intervene in 1994 are acknowledged. The narrative records how the UN was made aware of an alleged plan to exterminate Tutsis in January 1994, but failed to act: “Not one additional peacekeeper or armoured personnel carrier arrived in Rwanda before the RPF victory in July. The world withdrew... and watched as a million people were slaughtered.” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 28). This is set alongside the evidence of French support for the Habyarimana regime, including the financing of an arms deal and the training of government troops. The French military intervention, *Opération Turquoise*, is described as “providing a safe zone for genocidaires” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 29).

The conduct of the ‘international community’ in 1994 is condemned, but the site still upholds the promise of humanitarianism for the future. This is hinted at in the narrative. We are reminded that not all colonial interventions were negative: “schooling and medicine developed, as did the infrastructure. Useful export markets... opened up” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 9). We learn that external intervention was the means through which the genocide might have been halted: “as few as 5,000 troops with authority to enforce peace could stop the genocide” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 26). We find out that staff at the UN soon realised their error (ibid) and that, from the outset, international human rights workers were not “fooled” by the Habyarimana regime (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 14). The implication is that a strengthening of the regime of international humanitarian intervention is the valid response, consistent with the “Responsibility to Protect” approach (see chapter six).

The other response to the problem of genocide proposed in the KMC narrative is directed internally. The education of Rwandans will: “ensure that coming generations understand the mistakes of their forebears so that they are given the chance to think about their own values and actions.” In this view, what is needed is education to change popular attitudes and repair trust, alongside prosecutions of the perpetrators. In other words, the narrative supports the strategies for post conflict national reconstruction being pursued by the government of Rwanda, with aid from international donors. Rwanda, it states, “is determined to work towards reconciliation”. The people of Rwanda are called upon to learn from the past displayed at the KMC in order to prevent future atrocities. Crucially, the memorial, exemplifying the possibilities of positive international interventions, is presented as part of the solution.

The exhibition assumes a fundamental difference between the perpetrators and the visitors and between the past and the present. We are called upon to recognise the “evil” of the perpetrators (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 22) while our own opposition to genocide is assumed. The KMC shows the visitor that there are “choices to be made” (director, January 2005), highlighting the courage of individual rescuers who risked their lives to save others, but it presents an agenda for progress which upholds the notion of present security: “Rwanda is determined to work toward reconciliation... First we have to reckon with the past, to make reconciliation a possibility” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 41).

Silences

It is inevitable that in any summary of events there would be omissions, however, what is missing in the accounts of the history and causes of the genocide is perhaps less significant than the fact that the exhibition offers no acknowledgement of any constraints upon understanding. The story is presented authoritatively as a consensus about the past. Indeed, although produced in the UK at the Aegis Trust and written by the organisations’ directors, in places the exhibition narrates history in the first person, as if composed by a collective of Rwandans: “This has been our home for centuries. We are one people. We speak one language. We have one history... This is about our past and our future” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 8).

The brochure for the centre does acknowledge some of the sources on which the account is based at the end, but for the most part, the exhibition does not, and instead appears to convey generally accepted truths. It communicates the story of “the path to a Final Solution” (Kigali Memorial Centre, 2004: 12) effectively in a smooth narrative, but without acknowledging that in privileging certain events and ignoring others, it is a selective account of questions which are still under debate and revision in the historiography of Rwanda.

The content of the exhibition directs the visitor to be wary of political authority and alert to propaganda “encouraging them to question what you hear.” (director, January 2005). However, the presentation of a neat story identifying the causes and consequences tends to place the visitor outside of the problem and presents them with ready made answers, rather than requiring them to reflect more deeply upon their own attitudes and assumptions. The narrative is oriented towards offering a moral guide to the visitor, to “influence them in a predetermined way” (Edkins, 2003: 157). At the KMC history is recounted and solutions presented as if they were uncontested. This is typical of museums structured around a narrative but the risk of this approach is, as found elsewhere, that it “sets the past in concrete, silences the debate and concludes history” (Verbeek, 2007: 222). Rather than critical thinking, the effect may be to encourage complacency.

While the narrative at KMC explicitly condemns the extreme nationalism expressed in the genocide, it implicitly endorses the nation-building project of the current Rwandan government. The act of containing a memory of the genocide within a museum implies that the violence has ended – part of the reason why memorialisation is central to promoting political legitimacy (see chapter four). This is reinforced by the message of “never again” which directs us to the past and to the future without recognition of the pervasiveness of atrocities in the present. “Confrontation with a violent past, in accordance with the social-pedagogical function, calls for a *Nie Wieder* (never again). At the same time, the murdering continues all over the world” (Verbeek, 2007: 223).

This message serves the political interests of the state, but it also functions to support the idea of a moral international community. While, critical of colonial and post colonial international policy in Rwanda, the KMC is itself a product of international intervention, as is evident from the style of the exhibition with its glossy panels, air

conditioning, brochures, video screens and glass cases. In embodying a model of memorialisation developed in northern contexts, the KMC symbolically and practically sustains the prevailing relations of global liberal governance. In an account which places the origins of the problem within Rwanda, to be dealt with through educating ordinary Rwandans, the structural violence which contributed to making the genocide possible (Uvin, 1998), and a more general link between capitalist development and violence (Escobar, 1995), is placed beyond consideration.

The post-genocide government of Rwanda and its allies in the international community have been accused elsewhere of engaging in the promotion of “simplistic visions” of the past for instrumental purposes, echoing practices which informed the genocide (Pottier, 2002). One possible response is to advocate a shift towards a recognition of “multiple histories” in order to dismantle a “misplaced belief in the ‘objective’, absolute quality of history” and to raise awareness within Rwanda that history is “a product of interpretation (within limits set by the *chronicle of events*)” (Eltringham, 2004: 152). However, what works in an academic text is not easily applied in a memorialisation project where there are unique sensitivities to consider. Aegis Trust’s director emphasised that the priority at KMC was “acknowledgement” of the victims in order to create a space in which healing, and eventually debate, might become possible:

It’s true that we are depicting only part of what happened in Rwanda. We are influencing national identity in a way not reflective of real history but you can’t do everything. What we are aiming to do is to foster an environment in which people can talk about their experiences... The narrative about the past does change and will change in Rwanda. But it is where it is and we will work with it. The purpose is to help survivors with healing” (January 2005).

Symbols of Memory

The KMC is not just a product of external manufacture intended to educate; it was developed in the aftermath of genocide and in the context of trauma and mourning. Its fundamental role is to honour the victims of the genocide and this shapes aspects of the exhibition, and the frame through which the visitor perceives it. Furthermore, so many of the victims died near the centre and although these horrors are not imaginable from the exterior of the carefully maintained building and its gardens, they are evoked by remnants of the past contained within. At KMC the memory of the genocide is not just narrated, but also assembled and symbolised. There are a series of

sculptures depicting rape placed at the centre of the exhibition; there are two stained glass windows, promoting abstract reflection upon the genocide, its causes and consequences. There is also an accumulation of material artefacts in a variety of forms. Whatever the similarities to Holocaust memorials elsewhere, the KMC can never be what one critic labelled: “a rhetorical exercise in bearing witness to dehumanization and mass murder from a seemingly safe distance” (Gourevitch, 1995), because the events of the genocide are so much closer in time and space. Distance is impossible as the genocide is remembered where it occurred, so soon after the event.

The legacies of the genocide are present at the museum in the testimonies of survivors, the clothes of the victims, and their skulls and other bones neatly displayed in glass cases in the “burial chamber”. In the tour of the museum it is not the narrative, but rather these remains, together with the documents, photographs and audio-visual displays which make the strongest impression. Here, relics of the past communicate the enormity of the losses and raise profound questions about how and why genocide occurred, as others have found in Holocaust memorials (Edkins, 2003: 152)

At KMC the tour of the exhibition leads to a room containing clothes worn by victims when they died, calling them to memory in a direct way. More immediate still are the video testimonies playing on a loop, in which survivors recount their experiences and describe their impact. These unrelenting records of suffering are given weight by the images of the massacres witnessed in the tour of the exhibition. The individual testimonies are framed by the context of the narrative, but they exceed and complicate it, challenging the visitor and defying their understanding. Moreover, when survivors testify to their ongoing condition of suffering; we understand that the genocide and its effects are not a matter of the past, to be considered with a mind to the future, but rather a circumstance of the present, still unresolved.

The feeling of loss is intensified in another corner of the exhibition which houses a modest, almost haphazard, display of photographs of genocide victims. These photographs are not given any meaning; names are not included and nor is any information about how and where they died. The sometimes faded and worn images

of the victims of the genocide are intensely moving.¹⁷⁵ They have survived while the individuals featured in them could not. If we follow the order of the exhibition, we see the photos after countless images of the bodies of the dead strewn on the ground, in gruesome poses, barely recognisable. The photographs express dignity and happiness, contrasting starkly with the earlier images, and asserting the victims' humanity, seemingly in defiance of the abuses inflicted upon them.

Without accompanying text, the meaning of the photographs is made through the acts of preservation and display, and the regard of the viewers. There are images of families and couples or of individuals taken by loved ones, so that we see them responding to the gaze of the photographer. Even when, as is quite often the case, the photograph is formal, taken for some official purpose, the fact that it was kept and included in the exhibit declares that the victim is the subject of care, a person connected to other people. As such the photographs represent the intimacy and endurance of human relationships while their display, and our interest in them, assumes a commitment to and empathy with others. The photographs remind us that the site is a place of mourning and disrupt the vision of the past as a settled, distant 'history' to be put to educational use.

Responses

The meaning and impact of memorials partly depends upon the reactions of those who engage with them. The KMC is a space of interaction, which, like all memorials, changes over time (Young, 1993: 3). At the time of writing, the KMC exhibition has only been open for a few years but it is becoming part of how people from various backgrounds relate to Rwanda's past and is also being shaped by their engagements with it.

KMC was designed as a place of mourning and many survivors have embraced the opportunity to come and remember their loved ones. Some also contributed directly to the memorial. Survivors gave lengthy video testimonies which form part of the exhibition. The guides, researchers and other staff at the KMC include survivors.¹⁷⁶ On their own initiative, survivors brought photographs to contribute to the exhibition

¹⁷⁵ As well as my own reaction, I observed that other visitors were also affected by this.

¹⁷⁶ These points became clear in a number of interviews with staff from the site.

of the photographs of genocide victims.¹⁷⁷ When bodies of genocide victims are found elsewhere in the city, the relatives generally bring their dead to KMC for reburial in the cemetery there.¹⁷⁸ Some survivors have undoubtedly drawn strength from the centre, revisiting it as the burial place of their loved ones. Although occasionally survivors visiting the centre experience traumatic crises and a few are critical of its 'elite' form and style, for the most part survivors have welcomed the memorial. Survivors' responses suggest that the KMC may have helped to ease some pain.

The KMC is also increasingly engaging other Rwandans, as one member of staff commented: "people are finally realising it concerns all Rwandans" (KMC employee, July 2006). It now receives many visitors, from various backgrounds, for instance in 2006 more than 150,000 people visited the site (*The Guardian*, 21/11/2006). The centre hosts large crowds during the annual commemoration, and is a centre piece for official ceremonies. During the time of mourning, the Rwandan national flag which flies in its cemetery garden is lowered to half-mast. It is also the main plank of national genocide education. Rwandan officials regularly visit the centre and members of staff from government ministries or local government are brought there to learn about the genocide. Visiting the memorial has become a ritual of belonging in which schools, public institutions and even private companies have begun to participate, booking their staff on visits.¹⁷⁹ The Rwandan Prime Minister, Bernard Makuza, wrote in its visitors' book: "You are the stone on which we will build a Rwanda without conflict" (*The Guardian*, 21/11/ 2006). On 19 June 2008, the centre launched a genocide education programme, bringing together several thousand youths and elders to learn from Rwanda's past (Aegis Trust, 2008).

The site has also become part of the image Rwanda presents to the world. A visit to the KMC is on most international visitors' itineraries, including tourists. Foreigners and Rwandans have visited the KMC in greater numbers than they have any other memorial site, many recording positive views in the visitor book (*The Guardian*, 21/11/2006). For visiting politicians and diplomats a visit to the KMC has become a

¹⁷⁷ Initially the photos were collected by KMC researchers but later bereaved relatives brought their own contributions.

¹⁷⁸ According to one member of staff at KMC after all the 11 mass graves were filled up in 2004 people continued to bring bodies for burial and survivors are now "booking to bury their relatives" in the two mass graves built outside the fence in 2005 (August 2006). On 14 April 2007, 1447 victims were buried there as part of the commemoration ceremonies (*The New Times*, 16/4/07).

¹⁷⁹ For instance at the time of my visit in July 2006, the centre had recently hosted some 500 schoolchildren on an educational visit.

virtual necessity. For many this is a ritual of initiation into Rwanda's political society as well as a personal expression of regret,¹⁸⁰ but for some it is also a symbolic act to be used politically.¹⁸¹

Little is known about what the many Rwandans who do not visit think about the site. Peoples' views of the past divided to the extent that some believe memorial sites are only for Tutsi visitors (African Rights 2007: 178). There are few signs of antipathy towards KMC, with the notable exception of the grenade attack at the centre during the 2008 genocide commemoration (Aegis Trust, 11/4/08). But the idea that the memorial will serve to prevent conflict and build unity needs to be considered alongside the tensions over memory and the question of what it means for a memorial of a style and standard reminiscent of western museums to be situated amid poverty in a highly unequal society. Experiences elsewhere suggest that, in the short term at least, memorials can become a focus for tensions. This is exemplified at the Murambi Genocide Prevention Centre, in Gikongoro, another site developed with input from Aegis Trust and donors as well as the government and survivors.

MURAMBI GENOCIDE PREVENTION CENTRE

The memorial at Murambi in Nyamagabe district, Southern Province is located at the site of a massacre of some 50,000 people in April 1994. The site was first preserved as a memorial by survivors with the help of staff from the National Museum. Its redevelopment was taken on in partnership with the Aegis Trust, with the support of international donors, (alongside the KMC), and in conjunction with the local government and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture (MIJESPOC). In the period leading up to the 2004 commemoration it was decided that the site would serve as a Genocide Prevention Centre. However, because of its history as a massacre site and because of the way it has been developed as a memorial, it has been the focus of "controversy" (*The Guardian*, 13/11/2006). To understand the distinctive "set of challenges" (*The Guardian*, 21/11/2006) the memorial presents we must first bear in mind the history of violence in Murambi and the wider region, formerly known as the préfecture of Gikongoro.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Other recent VIPs to visit the centre have included Mark Malloch Brown, David Cameron, Bill Clinton, Thabo Mbeki, Laura Bush, Cherie Blair and Hilary Benn.

¹⁸¹ See for instance former US President George Bush's speech (The White House, 26/02/2008).

¹⁸² The name and boundaries of the region changed when the administrative map of Rwanda was redrawn around 2006.

Genocide in Gikongoro

Tutsis living in Gikongoro were severely affected in every episode of organised violence since independence,¹⁸³ including the genocide (African Rights, 1995: 290). The massacre at Murambi Technical School was carefully planned and extensive.¹⁸⁴ At around 3:00 am on 21 April, thousands of well-armed militiamen and gendarmes invaded the school and systematically massacred refugees who had fled there seeking protection from the authorities. The killers returned to loot their victims' belongings and then, with the help of bulldozers, threw their corpses into mass graves.¹⁸⁵

After the massacre, there was a half-hearted attempt to cover up the evidence. In late May 1994, officials took a small group of survivors from killings elsewhere in the region to the site, and forced them to clean the blood of the victims from the buildings (*African Rights*, 2007: 142-143). A month later, Gikongoro became part of the "safe zone" under *Opération Turquoise* and French troops set up a base at Murambi. Displaced Hutus, including soldiers and militiamen, fleeing the RPF or preparing for exile then took up residence at this makeshift camp.

Since the genocide, Gikongoro has become notorious as one of the most politically volatile regions in the country; it is perceived to be "the cradle of negationism and the genocide ideology" (academic, July 2006). Its newly appointed governor claimed, during the 2007 genocide commemoration, that: "Over 48 per cent of genocidaires are from the Southern Province and many of these have not faced justice yet" (*The New Times*, 08/04/2007). The region has been especially troubled by conflicts over justice, including attacks on survivors and witnesses who could testify in *gacaca* hearings (Ibuka representative, August 2006). There is also anger towards the government about the massacre in nearby Kibeho (see chapter seven). The idea of locating a genocide prevention initiative in Gikongoro is, therefore, both important and ambitious.

Preserving the Site

¹⁸³ See *African Rights*, 2007: 16 and Straus, 2006: 177-183 for accounts of massacres before 1994.

¹⁸⁴ Des Forges suggests a low figure of 5000 (1999: 16). However confessed perpetrators provide high estimates, see *African Rights*, 2007:134. More recently, the figure of 50,000 tends to be used; earlier official figures were 27,000 or 40,000.

¹⁸⁵ Several of the leaders were brought to trial at the ICTR, see for instance ICTR, 2005. See *African Rights*, 2007 for a detailed account of the massacre. Also see Des Forges, (1999, 242 and 248) and Cook, (2006, 289).

The memorial at the Murambi Technical School began as the site of a mass grave into which the bodies of the victims had been thrown after the massacre. Local officials had ordered residents to clear the site because of the public health risks posed by the decomposing corpses and when no one was willing, not even those involved in the massacre, they compelled prisoners to carry out the task with the aid of bulldozers, a process which took four days (*African Rights*, 2007: 117-118). The result was the hasty construction of mass graves filled to overflowing with the dead; so full that pools of blood repeatedly rose to the surface (*African Rights*, 2007: 148). The site was otherwise unmarked, but when French soldiers established their base in Murambi (see above) they are said to have covered the grave with more soil before making use of this flat, recently-cleared area as a basketball court (*African Rights*, 2007: 148).

The first effort to recover the remains of the dead was led by a group of survivors and returnees who came looking for the bodies of their relatives, victims of the massacre (museum director, August 2006). This was a “privately sponsored preservation effort” (Cook, 2006: 286). A small group of volunteers began a process of exhumation and preservation. People living in surrounding areas were persuaded to identify the graves and paid to dig the bodies. They found thousands of corpses; some were identified and reburied at the site, but others were laid out in the school rooms on display.

The display of the bones of the victims has become typical feature of Rwanda’s memorial sites, but has aroused special attention at Murambi: some of the corpses are complete skeletons which declare the horror of the genocide without need for explanation (see below). When these corpses were found intact, the National Museum director and a Chilean expert volunteer came to help preserve them.

We began to clean the bodies and put salt on them. We had a team of around a dozen survivors (and some who came back in 1995) and we worked with them. We got advice from the Germans... We hired people among the survivors. We had 28 in the beginning and in the end it was 12. The survivors worked for free. They were not paid. They wanted to conserve the site. That was their motivation (August 2006).

For several years, the white, lime-covered corpses of Murambi were the main exhibit at the site. They first came to public notice when they were exposed at the 1996 commemoration ceremony.¹⁸⁶ The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture (MIJESPOC) began to take more of interest around 1999, and gave the local préfet a supervisory

role. By 2001, it had funded the construction of new mass graves to bury many of the exhumed bodies. Visiting Murambi, a Rwandan and Canadian academic observed the reburial taking place. They found that this time it was not bulldozers but local women who struggled to transport the bodies on makeshift stretchers, tipping them one upon the other into a series of deep rectangular concrete graves. “Hundreds, even in a single pit... in every contorted position” (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 34). The women worked with only plastic bags to cover their hands, breathing in the “air of decimation”, paid a dollar a day for work that might cost them their physical and mental health (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 39). How and why the task was “exclusively” left to women, genocide widows among them, was one of many disturbing aspects of a process which exemplified the aftermath of social rupture and a “reversal of values” (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 30).¹⁸⁷ Yet, just a few years later, the Ministry declared that the site would be a centre for genocide prevention.

The government’s intervention can be understood in light of the rising international interest in genocide memorialisation and education internationally around this time (see chapter six). As the 10th anniversary of the genocide approached, the Ministry and other agencies described Murambi as one of the most “historically important sites in Rwanda” (Bayigamba, 2004: 2). The Minister saw the potential for this former school to house an education programme: “a training centre contributing to the field of genocide prevention at all levels of learning” (ibid). He also anticipated that the site, if well preserved, might be “considered for UNESCO world heritage site status” (ibid). By 2003, the Ministry had found a partner, Aegis Trust, already at work on the Kigali Memorial Centre. Together, they found donor support for the project¹⁸⁸ and by February 2004 work at the site had begun.

Although Aegis Trust was given “day to day responsibility” for the project the Ministry appointed the National Museum as its “designated partner for delivery” (ibid). In practice, Aegis and another international organisation, GTZ,¹⁸⁹ which had invested in the preservation of the Murambi site as part of a project on reconciliation

¹⁸⁶ See Des Forges, 1999, fn. 58: 271

¹⁸⁷ My translation.

¹⁸⁸ In total EU 350,000 was raised, EU 75,000 from the Ministry itself, EU 175,000 from the Dutch Government and EU 100,000 from Aegis Trust. Later DFID gave £130,960 and GTZ also made a contribution.

¹⁸⁹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) is principally funded by the German government.

had to participate in regular meetings led by representatives of the Ministry, the National Museum and the province to report on progress and ensure “consultation” (project manager July, 2006); Ibuka was included in meetings which concerned the commemoration. Much of the early activity at the site involved the renovation of the buildings and gardens; the creation of burial rooms and an education centre.

In April 2004, the site appeared to be near to completion; it was part of the official programme for the 2004 commemoration. My first visit to Murambi coincided with the week of the commemoration and at that time the site was a hive of activity with a stream of workers carrying, digging and laying paths. Inside the building, there were piles of boxes and panels: the exhibition, designed and produced in the UK (Aegis Trust, 2004b: 3) had been flown in and was ready for fitting. Yet, by the time of my next visit in 2006, the Murambi Genocide Prevention Centre had not opened as such.

Problems in the Process

As the project progressed, a series of minor difficulties arose. There were a few technical problems and delays: “subcontractors proved to be unreliable and quality of finish was sometimes poor” (Aegis Trust, 2004: 2). Names of some of the victims were collected as planned, but plans to engrave these upon the windows proved impossible because the glass was not strong enough. A leading Rwandan artist commissioned by Aegis Trust to convey a sense of grief, instead painted a disturbing image of slaughter, arguing for the need to “face the truth of the past” (director, July 2005). Meanwhile, a key part of the project involved an investigation into how to preserve and treat the mummified corpses in the long term, but when specialists from the National History Museum in the UK were brought in to advise, the costs proved prohibitive.¹⁹⁰

Some solutions were found: much of the construction work was eventually completed; the names of victims were projected onto a black wall in the burial chamber instead (Aegis Trust, 2004: 4); and the artist offered to paint an image of hope to hang at the end of the exhibition. Most importantly, an answer was found to the preservation issue. Citing the insistence of some survivors that the corpses should remain on display (see chapter four), Aegis Trust proposed a compromise in which 40 of the 800 corpses currently displayed should be given a dignified burial in underground

¹⁹⁰ See Moss, 2004, a visitor at the site at the time, critical of the experts.

chambers kept “in environmental conditions” while visible through glass tops, a suggestion they felt was well received by all stakeholders (director, July 2005).

However, underlying these “specific problems” (Aegis Trust, 2004: 2) more general troubles plagued the project. At the heart of the matter was the problem of negative attitudes towards the site among some people in Murambi. The issue came to light after African Rights, involved in researching the massacre at the site, circulated a paper to participants in the Murambi project detailing views about the memorial expressed by local residents.¹⁹¹ The paper revealed misunderstandings about the history of the site and about the meaning of genocide (African Rights, 2004). It suggested that although in principle people welcomed the idea of genocide education, they did not see the site as educative. One local resident had heard that the site was intended to “revive the hatred of Tutsis against the Hutus” and feared going there because of the “bones scattered around the place” (African Rights, 2004: 5). She and several others had in fact been there to work on “clearing the site” and to attend the commemoration under pressure from the local authorities. Yet even they had little or no sense of the purpose of their activities. One man stated: “a lot of Murambi residents don’t understand the importance of developing the site. They don’t even know what’s going to be done there” (African Rights, 2004: 10). Another resident wondered why there had not been efforts to engage people and encourage them to take part in the project voluntarily:

[W]hen it comes to the building of the sites, people are rarely involved. They aren’t informed about everything that’s going on. Everything is calculated in money, including the work of local people. I don’t want this money not to be used, but it could be useful in other sectors. There is work being done at Murambi that people are in a position to do without even holding back the activities which earn them their daily bread. (ibid).

Such views were of concern to those involved in the centre. Aegis Trust concluded from the findings that “it is widely believed that the memorial is being designed to stir up hatred against Hutus” (2004: 3). Aegis Trust acknowledged that little thought was given to the integration of local people in the construction phase of the project: “they were just recruited to do a job” and came to “earn a few 1000 francs”. Given the short time frame, “it was just a matter of getting the job done” – payment seemed the “best

¹⁹¹ This paper was not published, only circulated to the government and its partners (I was among its authors); some of its findings are published in African Rights 2007.

of all options” since the alternative would have been to use prisoners (director, July 2005).

The organisation’s main response to the problem was an initiative to find out about the rescuers, those who saved lives during the genocide in the Murambi region, in order to include them in the exhibition. The idea of publicising local genocide heroes originated with the préfet, but even this proved “problematic” (ibid). Often survivors owed their lives to a single act of kindness from a genocide perpetrator, so many cases of ‘heroism’ were not so clear (Aegis Trust, 2004: 3). Nonetheless, Aegis Trust managed to produce a short film on the rescuers to be screened in the exhibition and, by mid-2005, efforts were ongoing to find “ways in which the activities of young people could contribute to the memorial”, in order to “drive the matter forward,” amid fears that the project might be “too early, too raw” (director, July 2005).

A year later, the situation had not improved, but the debates had moved on. All the partners in the Murambi project were experiencing “frustration” (GTZ representative, July 2006) because despite most of the work having finished the site had been barred from opening. Aegis Trust’s exhibition had been completed and GTZ had also prepared the ground for its project at the site. The organisation had undertaken the development of the rooms above Aegis’ exhibition as a space in which to deliver youth education programmes and offer counselling. GTZ’s intention was to enable local people to become “actors at the site” getting them involved with small jobs such as gardening and perhaps to link the project with another the organisation was running on food security in the area (ibid). For the Ministry too, the delay was inevitably a problem since without opening there would be no opportunities to either implement genocide prevention projects or to gain donations from visitors (ibid).

In July 2006, those involved interpreted the delay in opening differently. An Aegis Trust staff member thought it had something to do with GTZ’s work; at GTZ it was seen to relate to the need for “corrections” to Aegis Trust’s translations. For the coordinator of Rwanda 10, working with the Ministry, the concern was one of “bad management” leading to “overcharging” and the intervention of the Ministry of Finance which complained that the project had “not been put out to tender” and therefore contravened its regulations (coordinator, August 2006). But there was more at stake. The coordinator recalled that a group of government ministers had gone to the site to view it before its opening and had not liked what they saw. By August

2006, the issues had become clearer. A series of complaints had been made about the way in which the site had been developed. A commission had been established by the Ministry to make recommendations on the way forward. The site would remain closed while its deliberations continued.

The work of the commission was not public, but one of its members, a Rwandan academic provided an insight into some of its criticisms:

There are images which aren't significant or have no commentary, you can't see the sense. There is a bad Kinyarwanda translation and a lot of empty space, not well used. The site doesn't have a clear objective. Memory of what? In the history of Rwanda, we don't see a direct line... If you say there was national unity, will the visitor understand this? There is a need for more images, references; a bibliography. We need a strategy to accompany it. That's got to be done at all levels including local administration; at Murambi there should be a history of the whole region (August 2007).

More specific issues were raised in the MIJESPOC commission's report sent by Minister Joseph Habineza¹⁹² to Aegis Trust together with a letter asking the organisation to remove the exhibition. In a response to this, Dr James Smith of Aegis defended the organisation's work and described the issues raised as "small in the overall scheme of things". Beyond the concerns about quality, translation, monotony and a lack of detail, there was a criticism of the labelling of the genocide:

Please let me know why we are criticised now for failing to emphasise 'Tutsi genocide'. If anything, I feared we would be criticised for referring to Tutsi/Hutu too much in the narrative. Has the government policy and language on this matter changed in the past two years or did I misunderstand the policy? (Smith, 2006).

As it turned out, the criticism did reflect a shift in political discourse about the genocide, one later made public in a constitutional amendment from Rwandan to Tutsi genocide in 2008. Meanwhile, disputes over the Genocide Prevention Centre at Murambi festered on. In 2007, when the site hosted the commemoration, the exhibition in the education centre was still there, but remained closed.

Inside Murambi

¹⁹² Habineza had by then replaced Minister Bayigamba at MIJESPOC.

During a visit to the site in August 2006, I found the education centre officially closed but viewed Aegis' exhibition and the rooms above it, managed by GTZ.¹⁹³ Upstairs, were three rooms: in one, GTZ had created a comfortable space in which to offer counselling; the second was a teaching room with desks and chairs and posters emphasising unity and reconciliation on the walls. In the third room was an exhibition of memory sites in Gikongoro entitled "against forgetfulness". It contained images of roadblocks, small memorial sites, houses destroyed, mass graves and pit latrines:¹⁹⁴ it showed, for example, the grave of six children, their names recorded on the headstone, at the SOS village in Gikongoro town and the site where a Tutsi's grandchildren had been thrown into his pit latrine.¹⁹⁵ The images were striking mainly because so often the sites were unmarked, identified only through testimonies.

In the exhibition downstairs, with the sounds of genocide propaganda on Radio RTLM playing in the background, there were panels "outlining the development of the genocidal ideology from pre-colonial and colonial times through to the post-colonial policies of division between groups" (Aegis Trust 2004: 3). There was a particular emphasis on the negative impact of *Opération Turquoise*, including telling images of French soldiers with the *interahamwe*. In a film, confessed genocide prisoners spoke of their crimes, and, in some cases, remorse; photographs of victims were reproduced on the walls of the room where the burial chambers lay empty. Without visitors and incomplete, the exhibition appeared like a smaller, less polished, version of the Kigali Memorial Centre. Perched on the hilltop in well-maintained gardens, the centre seemed a world apart from the rural communities it overlooks. However, the exhibition was not what visitors to the site usually see or remember after the event.

The buildings once destined to serve as classrooms, are now home to the bones of 800 massacre victims. The two regular guardians at the site, genocide survivors, generally lead visitors straight to these rooms, opening the doors to show them the corpses. Inside are rows of men, women and children, their skeletons laid out on benches in one classroom after another – the sight is unbearable, guaranteed to leave an indelible impression. The corpses express such suffering that their screams seem audible in the

¹⁹³ I was not able to take photographs or detailed notes during this tour because it was not officially open.

¹⁹⁴ This exhibition was associated with the GPS mapping project undertaken by Aegis Trust, the site coordinates are included on each of the images.

silence: “their arms stretched out towards the *interahamwe* in a last absurd plea. A forest of arms still murmuring with the cries of terror and despair” (Diop, 2000: 146). There are women clutching babies; couples embracing, bodies twisted in anguish. A journalist visiting the site in 2007 tried to find words to capture her feeling of shock: “an intensely physical sensation... prickly, and then just this heavy feeling of not being able to move”. What is most shocking, as she explained, is “the stories that are written on those remains... the wedding rings and the small fragments of hair or T-shirts” (PRI: 2007).¹⁹⁶ After this, rows of clothes hanging on lines across another large room, the only other exhibit, seem less shocking, though they too bring back the past “unadorned” (ibid). Following an encounter with the victims of the massacre, visitors feel haunted: “visited by the white and writhing ghosts of Murambi” (Moss, 2004). As Rwandan academic Aimable Gahutu described it: “the dead of Murambi took possession of our beings” it left “doubt in ourselves” and in whether “humanity” still means something faced with this raw horror” (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 33)

Visitors

Gahutu suggests that anyone who visits Murambi will leave “persuaded that it is time that the world changes”, a sentiment reflected in several other accounts. This response accords with the site’s aim of genocide prevention. Yet even if it were theoretically possible for the site to contribute to this aim, in practice its impact is certain to be limited since what is most noticeable about the visitors to Murambi is that there are generally so few of them. Murambi is situated in a fairly remote rural area which may deter some outsiders from visiting and, perhaps more importantly, local people are not likely to visit the site on their own initiative. A former project manager recalled that when there were visitors to Murambi, they were mostly international. Thabo Mbeki, former president of South Africa, Jerry Rawlings, former president of Ghana, and a former US Minister of Defence have been to the site, among other dignitaries. Murambi residents came to the site during some of these official visits, on the instructions of local authorities. Journalists, NGO workers, photographers and academics, Rwandan and foreign have also visited the site, often for professional reasons. Those who write about their visit often remark upon the lack of other visitors: “Why weren’t their (sic) any people here” (Moss, 2004).

¹⁹⁵ In this and some other images there are translation errors.

Local people do go to the site for the annual commemorations. During the national ceremonies held at the site in 2007, an especially large crowd was present. However, attendance at commemoration does not necessarily equate to participation in memorialisation. People living near Murambi have admitted many are “afraid to go there”; that they only go when the local councillor calls them to attend the visit of an important person or at the time of commemoration: “Except for one chosen day during the week of mourning, Murambi doesn’t exist in the eyes of the people of Gikongoro” (African Rights, 2004: 5). They have spoken with resentment of the commemoration and voiced suspicion of the decision to display the bones. A woman from Murambi commented:

I still haven’t been to where the bones are kept. I’m reluctant to go there, and so are the other people who live around here. We wonder why the remains of the victims haven’t been buried. I go to Murambi when there are Presidents coming there. Our councillor asks us to go and welcome them. We came back without seeing the bones (African Rights, 2007: 173-4).

Survivors are the only local residents who come regularly come to the memorial. Its two guardians are among the few survivors from this area, and one or other of them is almost always present. Indeed, as one of the rare survivors of the massacre at Murambi, the guardian Emmanuel Murangira is as much a part of the memorial as the buildings and the corpses; most visitors learn about the massacre from his account of the events and see the proof of what he endured in the bullet hole which marks his forehead.¹⁹⁷ In answer to questions about why he remains at the site of this trauma, he describes a sense of duty to the dead and a need to be near the corpses: “Among these bodies, are those of my family and my friends. They are my dead and my place is with them.” (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 41). Similarly, the other guardian, François Rusanganwa, knows that the remains of his family are also somewhere among the bones at Murambi.¹⁹⁸ He feels committed to looking after the site, and finds in it a means of living with his enduring pain: “We’re always here, explaining things to people. We are always in pain, but we have no choice. We can’t ask somebody who didn’t lose someone here to work in such a place. So we stay. We explain what happened. And that gives us some relief” (cited in PRI, 2007).

¹⁹⁶ The journalist pointed out that the site is not like a museum; she did not mention the exhibition and only spoke of plans to develop one.

¹⁹⁷ See for instance Cook, 2006; Barsky and Gahutu, 2005; PRI, 2007.

¹⁹⁸ He was in Burundi in 1994.

Not all survivors experience relief from visiting Murambi. For some of those who lost family at the memorial it is too distressing to visit partly because no one is sure whether their relatives have been buried or whether they are among the corpses. One woman explained that she preferred not to go because: “when I see the bones of children, I tell myself that they are my children and I cry a lot.” Another commented: “Whenever I see bones, I always imagine that I am seeing those of my own relatives.” (African Rights, 2007: 163). Yet for Gikongoro survivors, an ongoing concern is how to attain justice in a context where denial persists (African Rights, 2007: 168-169). For some of them, as for survivors nationally, the memorial is significant as a site of unique evidence which “can’t be compared” and which is important for the education of future generations (Ibuka chairperson, 7 April 2007).

All the agencies working at Murambi emphasised the need to develop education programmes but so far there have been few results. GTZ brought a group of young people from Kigali to Murambi for a series of seminars as part of a project aimed at promoting unity and reconciliation: “It was open, encouraging reflection, going into the deep causes. We talked about the law, about conflict resolution, about the history of Rwanda and about ethnic conflict. The methodology was participative” (programme coordinator, July 2006). In 2006, Aegis Trust ran its first one-week field seminars in Rwanda for UK-based teachers or educators which included a trip to Murambi in the itinerary. But there were then still no educational initiatives aimed specifically at people in the local area, who have expressed a willingness to participate in “civic education” about the genocide (African Rights, 2004). It seems, the Murambi centre has yet to fulfil its promise to become “vital to local communities” and “strengthen democratisation” (DFID, n.d.: 2). If ways cannot be found to encourage their participation in the future, local residents may continue to view it as a place: “chosen to make Hutus feel guilty” (African Rights, 2004: 5).

SITES OF STRUGGLE

In my discussion of memory and meaning-making at Murambi and Kigali, I have detailed the participation of the government, survivors and international donors and NGOs, and observed negotiations, contradictions and tensions within and around the sites. The debates and disputes over memory here confirm the findings in chapter seven, and are consistent with the proposition that memorials are sites of contestation (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 126). Similarly, I find that trauma is a recurring theme,

manifest in the bones displayed at the sites and people's responses to them. I also find that these are places of mourning, mainly for survivors but also for other visitors who are called to empathize with the victims and feel their loss.

The Murambi and Kigali memorials have several political uses. By the nature of their existence they serve a purpose for the government, as a symbolic declaration that violence is in the past and Rwanda is a stable nation. But they are also vehicles for the presentation of a different kind of political narrative, legitimizing the idea of international intervention. They are a way to contain challenging reminders of the consequences of nationalism and the failure of internationalism, although they do not entirely neutralise them.

The sites reflect a concern for the victims of violence, but because of the nature of the crime of genocide they seen by some as divisive. Survivors have made important contributions to the development of these sites and they continue to guard their memories there. By contrast, many other Rwandans seem to feel that these are not places for them: the memorials are associated with a regime they remain suspicious of; they feel unjustly stigmatised as Hutus; or the sites evoke feelings of shame or guilt.

Like the memorials in Murambi and Kigali, the other national genocide memorials, Nyarubuye, Ntarama, Nyamata and Bisesero, are simultaneously burial grounds and "museums of the dead" (Wallace, 1995). Each is located at the site of a large scale massacre in 1994, where the remnants of the past are still present in bloodstains, in physical damage to buildings and in human remains. The national memorials are "places of torture and martyrdom" (Rudacogora, 2005: 149), defined by the genocide and then preserved and constructed through the "post-genocide human intervention" (Caplan, 2007: 22), by the government, survivors and international agencies. In each case, the precise details of the intervention and the role of the agencies differs, and so too do the outcomes, in terms of their forms and interactions with them. Yet, in their individual ways, I find that all the national genocide memorials are permeated with political contestation, trauma and mourning.

Nyarubuye Genocide Memorial

It is thought that some 25,000 people died at Nyarubuye around 15 April 1994.¹⁹⁹ The site was one of the first massacre sites to be discovered by the RPF and exposed to the international media. Reporters who reached the site in late May 1994 described it as “emotionally overpowering” (Belida, 2004: 47); the place where “the Dark Side was fully revealed” (Peterson, 2001: 306). They found: “wooden crucifixes on the floor and what is left of the body of a small baby” (Belida, 2004: 49) and “hundreds of bodies dissolved into hardening pools of fat” (Peterson, 2006: 306).

At first, the massacre site was kept intact as proof of the atrocities, to be shown to official visitors and journalists.²⁰⁰ But the remains were decaying and there was pressure to restore the church to its former use. A year after the killings, flowers grew over and inside the corpses, visitors stepped upon them and they were prey to scavengers (Gourevitch, 1998: 15).²⁰¹ Some locals wanted to keep the site in its original condition: ““We are going to pull the grass out with our hands to show what happened here,” said a local Tutsi leader who guards the site.” (Wallace, 1995). But by 1997, the site had been cleaned and the remains of the victims, “338 skulls, 2,338 human bones”, clothes and belongings, were moved to the former nunnery for preservation by the National Museum with the support of the Ministry (INMR, n.d.).

As the 10th anniversary approached, the government approached funders with a plan to create a more “meaningful and dignified” memorial (Bayigamba, 2004) at Nyarubuye. First, some support was received from Germany²⁰² (INMR n.d.), then DFID gave a more substantial donation and, as a result, in 2005, the site of the mass grave was transformed into a memorial garden, and a wall was built on which victims’ names will be listed (ibid).²⁰³ With the church now restored to its original use, the bones lie in orderly rows in the neighbouring convent, awaiting further funds to develop the interior of the memorial (ibid). The unfinished memorial at Nyarubuye

¹⁹⁹ See ICTR, 17/09/2004 for an account of the massacres at Nyarubuye between 15-17 April in which a “great number of Tutsis” were killed, although other sources suggest the massacre was on 14-15 April (INMR, n.d.).

²⁰⁰ UN secretary general, Boutros Boutros Ghali was taken there soon after the genocide and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda visited in 1995 (INMR, n.d.).

²⁰¹ There were mostly animals, however one interviewee spoke of finding a man near the Nyarubuye site cooking with the bones of the victims soon after the genocide (journalist, August 2006), another said that there were cases of cannibalism in Nyarubuye (Ibuka representative, August 2006).

²⁰² “The Rhénanie Palatinate Government has contributed to its rehabilitation with 10,000 DM” (INMR n.d.)

²⁰³ This work was sponsored and commissioned by DFID alongside its contribution to the Ntarama site (see below); “£695,000 to the landscaping of the Nyarubuye and Ntarama sites for planting trees,

brings into focus two distinct approaches to remembrance contained within Rwanda's memorial sites. On one hand there is the preservation of the remains as testimony to the atrocity; on the other a landscaped garden designed to create a space of healing. The former exposes the wounds of the past in the interests of justice and prevention, while the latter offers a suggestion of therapy and closure. There is as yet no written narrative here, although there are plans for panels to record the history of the site (Bayigamba, 2004: 6). The main exhibit is the bones inside, and the tribute is the well-tended garden outside.

At Nyarubuye, the trauma of the original site has been replaced by order: where flowers once grew untamed over the corpses, gravel paths now lead to neat flowerbeds in a formal graveyard. While in its former state, the site exemplified a demand for recognition of the crime and for justice, and was a means for the new regime to discredit and define itself in opposition to the old, the new site evokes the idea of stability and order, save for the display of the bones. The bones are the only stark reminder of the horror of the genocide, and the only material evidence of its intent, methods and consequences. They keep the trauma of the past present, an effect which is also palpable at other memorials.

Ntarama Genocide Memorial

Ntarama, Bugesera, is a former parish which became a massacre site in 1994: 5000 people were killed in this church on 15 April.²⁰⁴ The raw traces of the slaughter are exposed at this site. The church remains in the state discovered by RPA soldiers after the massacre – the most significant changes are the work of time. In 1994, the church was so full of bodies that it was impossible to enter: “every inch of the inside of the church was taken up by corpses, which were piled on top of each other... there were also bodies scattered outside the church” (African Rights, 1995: 262). Over the years, the bodies decomposed, but the interior of the church at Ntarama was virtually untouched. Bones of the victims lie scattered around the pews mingling with dirty remnants of possessions and fragments of clothing; more bones and clothes are piled up in heaps in an outhouse. It breaches every conventional treatment of human beings, living or dead.

shrubs, grass and other plant materials. The work was carried out by a construction company TRIAD in partnership with ROKO construction”(Butera, 2006).

²⁰⁴ See African Rights, 2005: 261-269 for testimonies from survivors of the massacre.

At this memorial, more than any other, it seems that official concerns largely prevailed. The government was determined to retain the church as a memorial, some say because the location of the site in Bugesera gave it special historical significance (see below). To achieve this, the government had to confront the Catholic Church, which wanted to clean and restore it to use, as they had done with other churches (Longman and Rutagengwa, 2006b: 138), including Nyarubuye. The belief that this and other churches should be kept as memorials to the victims was shared by survivors, including survivor clergy (priest, April 2007), but the Church authorities and many priests opposed this strongly. The government established a commission of Catholic Church and government authorities which decided that only the churches of Ntarama and Nyamata (see below) would be kept as memorials.²⁰⁵ Nonetheless, having secured its authority over the site and appointed a guardian to show visitors round, the Ministry paid little attention to Ntarama for some years.

There were some voluntary efforts to look after the memorial (Caplan, 2007: 21), but officials in the government and at the National Museum insisted that the site should be left in its original condition. Skulls were lifted from the floor and placed on rows in shelves inside the church; some clothes were hung in the outhouse, and dishes and water bottles were stacked with other personal belongings in another room behind the church. But otherwise, the memorial remained intentionally in “disorder,” as a group of survivors found when they went to the Ministry to ask it to look after the remains of the dead:

We wanted to check whether there were rats and insects. We thought about cleaning it for them... We thought about putting the bones in a nice tomb... [They said] every site has its own characteristics; [they] would like it to be like that so that people coming from outside would see what has happened” (ibid).

Eventually, there were some changes at the site. Worried about the need to protect the bones of the victims from decay and raids from dogs, the Ministry included Ntarama in its plans for the 10th anniversary commemoration. It asked DFID to contribute funds needed to preserve the human remains and to maintain the sites’ “historical integrity” (Bayigamba, 2004) and duly received some support. Not only did DFID make a substantial investment in the site, it also organised consultations with British experts on preservation, commissioned a design from UK-based architects, and hired

²⁰⁵ The other massacre sites were returned to the church, but the church in Kibeho was to be divided, with part retained as a memorial (academic, August 2006).

a Kenyan firm to carry out the construction. This work, which began in 2005, resulted in the construction of a barn-like shelter over the church building and the landscaping of the garden, with flowers and gravel paths. A wall of names and a fence around the site were also built.

The development of the site was consistent with the government's aims, but not necessarily those of local survivors. The planned changes were not discussed with the victims' families: "it was fixed on a national level... local people weren't contacted." (local resident, August 2006). The costly preservation has not served to give dignity to the dead. While supporting the need to "preserve bones as proof against deniers", one man who escaped from the Church in 1994, but lost thirty-two members of his family in the massacre, hoped there would soon be further work at the site. In his view, the emphasis should be upon dignified burials "I think we really need to do this quickly, perhaps with the idea of a see through coffin." (Ntarama survivor, July 2006). Meanwhile, some church members continue to voice criticism: "At Ntarama, millions [of Rwandan francs] were spent, but nothing was said to us... Who thinks of rehabilitating the church for the benefit of everyone, Hutus and survivors?" (August 2006).

Nyamata Genocide Memorial

The genocide memorial in Nyamata, Bugesera was founded by a group of local survivors who wanted to give testimony to the massacre and protect the remains of their loved ones; they wanted: "in spite of poverty, to restore some dignity worthy of the name to the forgotten victims" (survivor of Nyamata, cited in Hatzfeld, 2005a, 115). Work on the memorial began in response to a critical issue of how to cope with the remains of the dead. After the massacre in Nyamata church on 14 April 1994,²⁰⁶ which claimed the lives of an estimated 10,000, the killers had thrown their victims into this pit dug by bulldozers "like rubbish" (Hatzfeld, 2005a: 99). In 1995, when the first rains came and washed the soil away, the hastily-dug mass grave began to overflow. Initially, there were no public resources for reburial in this "devastated town", so local people began the task of exhuming the grave, and carrying the corpses into the church to store them out of the rain (Hatzfeld, 2005a: 115).

²⁰⁶ For testimonies from survivors of the massacre at Nyamata see African Rights 1995: 269-275.

It was partly the survivors' wish to retain this church building that forced the dispute with the Catholic Church over memorial sites (see above): "The tussle was between the survivors and the church" (Nyamata historian, April 2007); "we would not let them use the church in the normal way" (genocide researcher, August 2007); "the survivors of Nyamata fought very hard... even now the Church regard it as a defeat." (priest, April 2007). They felt they had a just claim to the church because the remains of their families were at the site and because of the ordeal they suffered there. The state supported the survivors in the cause, and when the Church gave up the site, the Ministry provided funding for the construction of a massive burial chamber behind the church, constructed in 1996-1997 (Nyamata guardian, August 2006). Teams of volunteers disinterred the bodies in the mass grave, cleaned them ready to place in a burial chamber underground behind the church, (ibid). Since then, thousands of other corpses found in surrounding areas have been brought to the site for reburial so that by 2006 there were an estimated 39,000.²⁰⁷

Nyamata is a place of burial and mourning but it is also a "museum of horror" (academic, August 2006). Although upon entering the church appears almost restored to normality, it is soon apparent that the swept floor is stained with the blood of the victims, and the walls are marked with the blood of the babies whose heads were smashed against them. The cloth at the altar is tinged with bloodstains. Fragments of light shine through the roof drawing the eye upwards to the holes made by the shrapnel of grenades.²⁰⁸ There are skulls in glass cases in the crypt. More bones are stacked in bags in a side room, some of them found recently by "people in the countryside after *gacaca* confessions" (Nyamata guardian, August 2006).

Most of the victims' remains at Nyamata lie behind the church, underground. Countless stacks of human bones are gathered together in a burial chamber which is opened for viewing. The bones have been carefully cleaned and sorted according to their type: skulls, femurs, tibias, sharing open coffins or laid out on shelves in the vast burial chambers. Mostly, the victims remain nameless, apart from a single tomb listing victims whose bodies were found in toilets in the local area and brought to the church. In the crypt, beneath the rows of skulls and other bones, is a single coffin of a

²⁰⁷ This estimate was used by officials at the time of the 2008 commemoration. The figure of 36,000 was given by the guardian at the memorial during my visit in 2006. The estimate given by Hatzfeld at the time of his visit in the late 1990s was 25,000.

woman whose identity is known by the guardian; the corpse used to be openly displayed but was found to be “too traumatic” (ibid) – Annonciata Mukandoli was raped with a baby on her back, then killed with a spear, left piercing the length of her body.

Most of the victims of the massacre at Nyamata are dismembered²⁰⁹ in towers of bones and rows of skulls, buried together in the underground shelter. All we learn about them is communicated by the memorial guardian, a genocide survivor who recounts personal experiences of the massacre and describes the losses and scars it left.²¹⁰ Like so many other “keepers of memory”, the guardian watches over the site where her loved ones were killed. Her job brings her pain and some risks – she is concerned that so much time spent with the bones of the dead will cause further physical and psychological harm. However, she tells the story of the massacre and takes visitors on tours of the evidence, because remembering is something she feels “condemned to do every day” (August 2006).

Survivors from Nyamata often come to the Church in memory of their families. One man whose family were killed in the Church spoke of his need to make a daily pilgrimage there (Nyamata resident, April 2004). A young survivor of the massacre in the Church, an orphan with no surviving family, said that he felt the need to come in on his way to school each day – though the sight of the skulls and bones disturbs him, he is compelled to wander “amongst all the dead” and it somehow eases his torment: “The sight and the smell of these bones causes me pain and, at the same time, soothes my thoughts though they trouble my head” (Hatzfeld, 2005a: 8).

Visiting the memorial is not therapeutic for all the relatives of the dead; some prefer not to come because “they can’t bear to see the bones” (Nyamata guardian, August 2004). But there are many reasons why survivors want to keep the memorial site, as a survivor priest from Bugesera explained:

For those of us who have lived it and those who weren’t involved we must preserve this memory. It is a struggle for our survival. Because it was people we loved; it is about our attachment to our people who died and to keep the

²⁰⁸ Aegis Trust paid some \$2000 for corrugated plastic to cover the roof and protect the church from the elements (director, August 2006).

²⁰⁹ The bodies were sometimes dismembered and stacked in separate piles by the killers (Prunier, 1998: 256)

²¹⁰ Because it relies on oral accounts; the ‘narrative’ at the site varies slightly depending on the identity of the guardian and the time of the visit.

flame alive in our hearts. The monument is a sign which reminds us and has a pedagogical aim which is for humanity. People might say that this was a myth; there might be people who try to change it. It is for history; for the future generations to know that they need to prevent genocide (April 2007).

Located at the centre of the district capital, the Nyamata memorial is also at the heart of the survivor community in this area; it has become a place where they can share the practical and emotional burdens of memory with each other and with those who choose to visit: “being able to bury members of their family in a place where everyone can be helped by others to maintain that place means that they get some kind of support, including worldwide” (Nyamata historian, April 2007). Memorial sites have become a source of strength for the survivors in Nyamata and elsewhere, including at the national memorial in Bisesero, Kibuye.

Bisesero Genocide Memorial

The monument in Bisesero was created through a unique local process reflective of the history of the area. The hills of Bisesero are the only place where survivors managed to mount a sustained resistance during the genocide: some 50,000 Tutsis from Kibuye fled to there in April and fought back against attacks from well-armed militiamen, gendarmes, local officials and civilians. By July only around 1000 were still alive.²¹¹ Most of the victims lay where they fell on the hillside, with the survivors incapable of burying them during the struggle or locating them in the aftermath. By May “all the hills of Bisesero were covered with bodies” left to the prey of crows and dogs or hastily buried as the battle continued (African Rights, 1997: 44-45). The survivors, mostly male, witnessed the deaths of relatives and friends then lived in sight of the decomposing corpses until they were become bones. As one of the remaining Basasero²¹² three years after the killings: “A dead body was something which was greatly respected before the genocide... Now we see the skulls of Tutsis everywhere we go” (African Rights, 1997: 69-70).

The Bisesero memorial was created to honour the dead and to answer the torment of people who fought hard to survive, then found in bereavement they had “lost all hope

²¹¹ A detailed account of their struggle, a list of perpetrators, and a partial census of the dead is in African Rights, 1997. The death toll is an estimate by survivors given in African Rights and used officially (see INMR, n.d.). Note that Ibuka has carried out a census of the Tutsis of Kibuye and Verwimp has undertaken a detailed analysis of the census and estimates that 13,000 died in Bisesero (2001: 22).

²¹² Tutsis from Bisesero region refer to themselves as Basasero.

in life” (African Rights, 1997: 80). It began as the vision of an architect, who had joined the RPA while a student in Congo in 1994 aiming to fight the extremists of the former regime, but when he returned to Bisesero found that 300 members of his extended family had been killed (Neville, 1999). His immediate wish was to find and bury the victims, but in 1995, the Basasero were still living in fear: “they thought that genocide continued and they had to fight the enemy” while their Hutu neighbours were “traumatised too and felt threatened” (architect, August 2006). Collecting the bones for burial was an important first step, taken in 1996 by survivors, with support from the survivors association Kibuye Solidarity (INMR, n.d.). In 1998, the architect proposed the construction of a monument, to be built by the survivors and perpetrators together.

I realised we needed to build something for our people. I said we are in conflict with the dead. They are on the mountain and their spirits are agitated. I think you can't be at peace... I had the monument in my head. They said: “it is painful, but how are we can we manage this, we are finished; we aren't capable.” I replied that: “What matters is the moral support. This is the importance of the memorial. You will build it along with those who killed you. Apart from our past we share a lot with these people. The first thing you share with them is poverty. Work with them and you will be the first to benefit. They are going to go home and you will stay here. Who gains more than the other? Cohabitation is necessary” (ibid).

In the same vein, “opinion leaders” among the Hutus living nearby were persuaded to work with survivors on the memorial, despite their fear of “touching the remains.” The initial meeting between the Hutus and the Basasero was marred by aggression,²¹³ mainly from the latter, but ultimately people on both sides of this divided community agreed to the construction of the memorial. A survivors' association from Kibuye gave a small donation and 40 million francs was raised from the government. A Hutu mason worked on its construction, prisoners were conscripted in to assist, some survivors were paid for their labour and local people participated: “according to their strength, women and men” (councillor, August 2006).

The monument in Bisesero was designed to console the living by honouring the relatives and friends they lost in the genocide. In contrast to the other memorial sites it

²¹³ As a former soldier the architect had authority; he was called upon to intervene by leaders of both groups: “I brought together the opinion leaders on both sides to ask them what to do together and they said beat them. I hit the troublemakers with a stick. I was a soldier. Indeed the Hutus said don't hit them, only if they do it again. But we were serious.” (architect, August 2006).

communicates the meaning of the genocide symbolically.²¹⁴ The monument consists of nine buildings covering one side of a steep hill on which many lost their lives. Rising from a plateau where some of the surviving Basasero have reconstructed their homes, it is at the centre of their rural life, remote in comparison to the densely-populated areas where many other memorials are located: “The beautiful mountain setting with breathtaking views of Lake Kivu is in sharp contrast to the horrifying violence that took place at this site” (INMR, n.d.). In turn, the memorial is visible from a distance as a striking feature on the mountainous landscape.

At the base of the ‘Resistance memorial’ is a tribute to those who fought for survival. There is a symbol of the hollow victory of the survivors, “an arc of triumph” (architect, April 2004) – but an inverted arc, reminiscent of the horns of cattle which are the economic mainstay of the Basasero. Nearby, we see the weapons with which the Tutsis of Kibuye defended themselves: a stone surrounded by spears. Further on, is an edifice which appears like a small tomb; it is a space from which to survey the hillside and decide whether to proceed. This decision matters because viewing the rest of the memorial involves participation in a metaphorical struggle for survival: “the only way through the genocide” (architect, August 2006).

The next part of the memorial is a series of steep steps up the hillside leading to one empty building after another, intended to represent the nine communes of Kibuye.²¹⁵ The visitor is called upon to climb the steps, surrounded by walls on each side to represent the “lack of liberty” (ibid). The walls are high at the beginning, symbolic of people’s lack of knowledge about the extent of the genocide, and they diminish on the journey, until the end when the truth becomes visible; along the way are obstacles and a choice of paths. The climb is a test of endurance which represents a “spiral of suffering, the physical grief” felt daily by the Tutsis of Kibuye in their months on the hillside. Around the memorial there is only grass and trees. No flowers were planted, but wild fruit grow near the path to reflect the sustenance provided by the environment, the sole source of aid for the people in Basasero in April-June 1994: “nature nourished and remained faithful to them, more than man” (ibid).

²¹⁴ In this respect it is distinct from most other genocide sites in Rwanda. Rudacogora points out that there is no tradition of building statues or monuments in Rwanda in honour of the dead and suggests that this is a cultural tendency but the costs of building materials is also part of the reason (2005: 154).

²¹⁵ Although these were empty at the time of my visits the intention was to place in them the bones which had been reserved for display rather than buried (see below).

At the summit of the hill is a vast concrete burial chamber, typical of the mass graves at other memorial sites. Nearby are trees, some a natural part of the hillside, which provided a shelter and allowed some Tutsis to escape during the genocide, others planted later, as symbolic reminders of the individuals who died.²¹⁶ The trees offer consolation on the “summit of hope”; a place to remember and mourn loved ones.

The memorial at Bisesero, like each of the other national sites, remains a work in progress. The aim is to seek further funding to create a small exhibition of panels telling the story of the resistance at Bisesero and explaining the journey through the memorial. There are plans to display photographs and testimonies of victims; documentation from the ICTR trials of leading perpetrators; and to memorialise the Hutus who saved lives. There is a hope that a permanent survivor guardian will soon be appointed and a belief that in time the site may help to generate a source of income for local survivors from Rwandan and foreign visitors (architect, August 2006). Most of all, there is a shared anxiety about what is to be done with the remains of the dead which were not buried. Close to 1000 skulls and 3600 other bones were kept out of the mass grave for display at the site, but still lie in a temporary shed at the base of the memorial site. The delay in placing them in the memorial buildings, as intended, has to do with a shortfall in funding and with concerns about how they will be protected from decay in this location (INMR, n.d.). In the meantime they remain on tables, skulls lined up in rows, bones stacked in piles – the familiar orderly conservation of the victims’ remains, and the same worry among survivors that they will only last a few decades and that they might see them turn to powder.²¹⁷

Bisesero genocide memorial is part of the community, created by local people and integrated into their daily lives. Visitors are rare, but survivors are often to be found walking around the site.²¹⁸ They are not official guides, but they know the history of this memorial intimately because it gives an account of their experiences and of the deaths of their relatives and friends. The memorial has a meaning and importance for the people who live closest to it, best explained by the local councillor who lost five

²¹⁶ In this, the memorial follows a tradition in Rwanda that trees symbolise the dead. That this custom is not generally reflected in memorial sites is noted by Gahutu (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 36).

²¹⁷ This is based upon a conversation with a group of Basasero men who showed me the bones in August 2006.

²¹⁸ This is based on three visits, April 2004, August 2006 and April 2007 and on conversations with people there.

children in the massacres at Bisesero, along with his mother, elder sister and other family members:

For this community, to remember is an obligation... The monument counts a lot because it gives value to people. When we used to bury people we put them in a hole and that was it. It matters for humanity to have built this monument, even if it is unfinished. The grandeur of the monument gives worth to human dignity.

For its architect, the memorial became a source of consolation. It is a place he comes to remember his family and brings his children to talk to them about the grandparents and aunts they will never meet. The memorial has helped him to live with his grief: "I was the first to be healed by this memorial. My way of seeing things changed. When I go there, I talk to my loved ones and to the perpetrators, and to survivors. I stay there and I gain strength." He believes that working together in the construction of the memorial also helped people on both sides of the community to come to terms with each other. The Basasero and their neighbours have increasingly forged economic and social relationships and some have married: "the social fabric of the Rwandans is healing, not because of the authorities but because they were like this before the genocide." Since the construction of the memorial there have been confessions from neighbours, and there have also been stories told about Hutus who hid Tutsis, helped them escape or refused to participate, like that of an old Hutu man who hung himself when he learned of his sons' participation in the massacres (architect, August 2006).

Not all of those who go to Bisesero find comfort. In one case, a party of schoolchildren taken to Bisesero on an educational visit by their teacher were severely traumatised when orphaned survivors discovered that the remains of their parents were there.²¹⁹ Nevertheless, the memorial is a "shelter" for the remains of the dead and a place where the losses of survivors are acknowledged, the importance of which can only be appreciated by bearing in mind that many survivors in Kibuye are isolated, poverty-stricken and live side by side with the families of the perpetrators.

The survivors have little alternative but to try to coexist with their neighbours, including convicted genocide perpetrators. As one woman in Mubuga explained, "We are living with them. We can't do anything else. If we had another choice we would take it" (April, 2007) In the circumstances of a community divided by genocide,

²¹⁹ The teacher was said to have been dismissed after this episode.

relations are tinged by suspicion and guilt; the sincerity of “friends” is in doubt and pain is continual. She thinks about the genocide daily but “to talk about it every day is a trauma”. Yet it “helps” that people go together to the memorial in Bisesero during the commemoration: “They call people with the drum. Hutu and Tutsi together walk to the summit. Even God says if someone confesses their sins then they are forgiven. We welcomed them” (ibid). A genocide perpetrator from Mubuga also takes part in the annual ritual of the journey to the summit. He killed his neighbour’s children, confessed, and was freed to return home. He has also taken the journey to the summit. “The memorial really touches me” he said: “We will participate in commemoration until the end of our days” (April, 2007).

The genocide memorial is part of how some people in Bisesero and the surrounding areas live with loss; it is associated with justice, forgiveness, and sorrow. But it also represents hope, having been created in the belief that, like the Tutsis who fought back in Bisesero and the Hutus who saved lives, the local community can be “the remedy against genocide” (architect, August 2006).

Collective Identities

All the national memorials are tangible and constant reminders of the genocide, but regardless of the intentions of those who established the sites, their relationship to identity alters as people interact with and interpret them in various ways, some of them visible. Flowers are laid on the graves by those in mourning with cards that convey messages to the dead: “Dearly beloved Emile, rest at the heart of eternity, we will never forget you” (Rudacogora, 2005: 158). Purple banners are draped across the entrance to memorial sites, often displaying injunctions in line with the government discourse: “Let us remember the genocide and massacres and support the efforts towards unity and reconciliation” (Rudacogora, 2005: 159). Visitors write words of sympathy, calls for “never again” or apologies in the condolence book alongside their signatures – as one US visitor wrote in the book at the Nyamata site: “I accept the guilt of my nation and pledge my heart to the survivors.” Many visitors also leave donations for the maintenance of the site. The dead are visited by survivors, by other

Rwandans and by visitors from all around the world;²²⁰ they are remembered as family members, Tutsis, Rwandans and as fellow human beings.

Those who visit the sites share the memory of a tragic loss for humanity. At Nyamata and Ntarama in particular they learn of a history of Tutsi persecution, suffering and survival since 1959, when Tutsis were first forced to move there; and of the massacre in Nyamata in 1992, a precursor to the 1994 genocide.²²¹ As the local mayor said, during the 2008 genocide commemoration: “Bugesera is the embodiment of history of the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda” (*Hirondelle*, 14/04/2008).²²² But the memory of the loss of Tutsis is also the memory of crimes committed in the name of Hutus.

The people of Bugesera are divided by history; although there is nothing at the memorial site which identifies the killers as Hutus, people remember them as such. Local residents perceive the Bugesera sites as primarily “designed to humiliate the Hutus”. They prefer not to go, visiting only under duress during commemoration. At such times, they feel unwelcome and nervous; their discomfort is visible. A woman whose brother died in prison – both her brothers, she said, were falsely arrested for genocide – warned that: “There will be complications if commemoration continues. I would prefer that this is stopped. People feel humiliated” (August, 2006). Another local resident commented: “When they build a memorial it isn’t to bring together the conscience of Rwandese people. They are there to divide them; built to the shame of the Hutus – if ever things turn around, these memory sites will be the first to be targeted”²²³ (August 2006). A man accused of genocide and released, pending a *gacaca* hearing, agreed:

I would prefer that the whole programme of memorialisation were stopped. There has been killing on both sides and vengeance. My father was killed by survivors with a machete in the presence of an RPF soldier. “I think it would

²²⁰ Among those listed in the condolence book at Nyamata were numerous people from Europe, Canada, the US, and South Africa.

²²¹ The memory of these events is shared by many Tutsis, and was told to me by survivors from this area and elsewhere. See African Rights 2008 for details based on survivor testimonies.

²²² A local historian pointed out however that there had been some Tutsis living there before the forced displacement of Tutsis in 1959 and that there had once been “strong ties” between them and local Hutus.

²²³ Most memorial sites are accessible, yet incidents of desecration are extremely “rare”, as Augustin Rudacogora finds (1995: 155). Instead, there are incidents which might be seen as “unconscious” (*ibid*) or perhaps as displays of indifference, or resentment: “The herdsman who takes his herd to graze in a cemetery in Ngoma doesn’t have the necessary education to be able to distinguish a pasture from a field reserved for the dead... or young children... [who thought] the tombs contained “ghosts” “djinnns” “spirits”” (Rudacogora, 2005: 155).

be better to abandon everything, to forget and then to begin a new life. This (memorialisation) is going to create a climate of suspicion.

These attitudes towards the memorials are the consequence of the nature of the genocide. But they are also encouraged by lingering grievances and suspicions. Though rarely voiced publicly, complaints and rumours about the sites spread, fuelled by the perception that Hutu losses go unrecognised. In this context, and inflamed by genocide revisionists, even the identities of victims buried or exposed at memorials are being placed in question.

The exhibits of bones at the memorials prevent outright denials, but there have still been attempts to discredit the evidence, such as a notorious claim that the remains were not human but animal bones.²²⁴ The Tutsi identity of the victims has also been challenged from several perspectives by critics, including exiled Hutu politicians, human rights activists and academics.²²⁵ Davenport and Stam argue that the “victims of the violence were fairly evenly distributed between Tutsi and Hutu” (n.d. 2); they do not dispute the responsibility of the former regime, but argue that many were Hutu victims of politicicide. Others suggest that victims of vengeance killings were placed alongside genocide victims at massacre sites: “some of them were rather ‘fresh’, Tutsi reprisals for what had happened here” (Barsky and Gahutu, 2005: 36). The most extreme allegation is that the bones are those of Hutu victims of the RPF, taken there for display to the international media.

In 1996, Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, convicted of genocide at the ICTR in December 2008, claimed that the bodies must be those of Hutu victims because Tutsis respect their own dead and would not “dare to expose them in public”. He described the memorial sites as consonant with “ancient rituals” of Tutsi displaying the skulls of “vanquished Hutus” and aimed at manufacturing the “collective guilt” of the Hutus (cited in *Africa International*, 1996). Similarly, a group of exiled Hutu politicians claimed that the corpses at Nyarubuye were RPF victims “dug up” in Byumba and “transported to Nyarubuye in Kibungo where they are exhibited to visitors as evidence of Tutsi massacred by Hutu militia” (RDR, 1996). More recently, another Rwandan exile stated that when the RPF reached Kibungo they first executed

²²⁴ This claim was reported by several survivors.

²²⁵ Snow and Erlinder are the two main academic critics of the Kagame regime who argue that the RPF was given “immunity” by the US regime and that there is a conspiracy to cover up Kagame’s crimes.

interahamwe at the Catholic Church then brought the bodies of victims of their attacks on civilians there: “to show the world what had happened in Rwanda, the RPF dug up bodies and placed them on stilts outside of churches. But all the people killed by the RPF were blamed on Hutus” (Professor Jean-Marie Vianney Higiroy cited in Snow, 2008).

Although such claims are unsubstantiated, they continue to circulate and some may find an audience in Rwanda – not least because of existing doubts based on personal experiences of vengeance killings. One man concluded that it will never be possible to accurately establish the identity of the victims: “all these lies going round are impossible to correct now” (August, 2006). His remark was intended to undermine the evidence that the human remains at memorial sites are all those of Tutsi genocide victims,²²⁶ but it also identifies the assumption that gives rise to denials.

These ongoing tensions over memory stem from ethnic identities marked out through the genocide, which remain salient (Buckley-Zistel, 2006: 138); but there are also examples of growing understanding and solidarity – identities are complex and open to change. Even those who feel they have suffered injustices interpret the meaning of memorials variously, some believing they implicitly recognise all the victims, “we commemorate the suffering that everyone suffered” (Longman and Rutagengwa, 2006a: 252). The memorial sites are reminders of the genocide which people weave into their own complicated memories and identities. They ensure that the genocide is not forgotten, but they do not dictate how it is remembered. They are not repositories of a single account of the past; they mirror the conflicts, trauma and mourning of a broken society and intersect with them in complicated ways.

Conclusion

In the months and years after the genocide, opposing interests led to the creation of memorial sites. First, there was a practical and emotional need to lay the remains of the dead to rest; second there was a determination to preserve the sites as material evidence, to counter denial and in the interests of justice. A slogan posted on billboards and t-shirts summed up the problem, exhorting people to “bury the dead,

Erlinder was also a former lead defence counsel for the ICTR who claims, in revisionist terms, that the genocide was “war time violence” sparked by Kagame’s aggression. See Erlinder (2008).

²²⁶ In a review of the scholarly literature Lemarchand lists as a basic fact that “Tutsi civilians were the prime target of the *génocidaires*” while “a substantial number of Hutu affiliated to opposition parties were massacred” (2007: 2).

not the truth.” As this chapter has shown, the national memorials are compromises between these imperatives, which imply a fear that, for the time being, it was not possible to do both.

As I have shown, each memorial site has its own history – the agencies involved and the nature of the processes change. As national memorials, some became the focus of development initiatives by government officials and international experts in Holocaust memorialisation. Others were more clearly influenced by local initiatives. But in each case, survivors and bereaved relatives mourned their loved ones, cleaning and treating their remains.

The genocide memorials are trauma sites where: “a violent past haunts the present” as observed at former Holocaust concentration camps (Koonz, 1994: 259). They exemplify the difficulties and dilemmas involved in conserving the past, and the constraints upon it, confirming that “one of the fundamental limits of every work of memory: [is that] the realities inherited from the genocide are what they are.” (Rosoux, 2001: 42). The realities of post genocide Rwanda include not only the material legacies but the also the social consequences. With the genocide and other atrocities still in living memory, the memorials are associated with trauma, mourning and struggles for justice as well as bids for political legitimacy. They are regarded as either a source of comfort or shame, and meet with recognition and denial alternately. The sites reflect the original violence and its resulting condition of social rupture.

CONCLUSION

The genocide memorials in Rwanda are emblematic of a recent transformation in how memories of violence are treated at national and international levels. Previously, in Rwanda and other post-colonial African states, the masses of victims of political violence received little public recognition or were remembered in a nationalist frame (Werbner (ed), 1998). Now there is public recognition of suffering and loss on an unprecedented scale. My study illustrates the extent to which public recognition of victims of human rights abuses has come to be seen as a political duty, and offers insight into why, uncovering both instrumental purposes and intrinsic concerns. My conclusion is a review of my key findings and a reflection on their implications for the future.

The Contradictions in Memory Work

Through historical and ethnographic analysis, my study brings into question a view that the ruling party, the RPF, is the principal agency driving the memorialisation and that genocide remembrance directly serves its political goals. Previous studies suggested that the memorials are used to impose a narrow account of the past and to close down debate, while deflecting attention from human rights abuses (Cameron, 2003: 5, Loir, 2005; Vidal, 2001). However, I find that this is too narrow an account which envisages consistent, rational strategic action where, in my view, there are pressures, interactions and contradictions.

The Rwandan government does endeavour to use the memorialisation to counteract criticisms of its poor human rights record. But it is also concerned with constructing the moral and political legitimacy to govern and is influenced by the conventions and ideals of Holocaust remembrance. The main justification which the government provides for its interventions, the call for 'never again', lends support to the observation that, in contemporary times, state discourse on the past is generated "from interaction within transnational arenas (Ashplant *et al*, 2004: 53). It is an indication that while the government is generally concerned to promote a national political community, on this issue it places greater emphasis on the universal significance of the crime and on a desire to shape international opinion.

Looking at the memory-making process, it is clear that development donors and NGOs have had an important practical input. Their involvement can be traced to the

definition of genocide which, as a crime against humanity, dictated the need for an international response; first to the crime and later to its memory. Their interventions were guided by existing set of conventions and institutions which had influenced memorialisation elsewhere (Hughes, 2003, 181; Naidu, 2004: 17); the Holocaust paradigm gives “self-perpetuating momentum” (Novick, 2001: 6) to international practices of remembrance. But this does also indicate an important shift away from an emphasis on the uniqueness of the Holocaust; and it seems to be driven by more than just institutional practices. International remembrances in general acknowledge the moral failure of the international abandonment of the victims in 1994. In particular, recent initiatives by students and other civic groups to remember the genocide suggest “a commitment to human values” (Kaldor, 2001: 76) and illustrate how “solidarities and mutual responsibilities transcend territorial boundaries” (Levy and Sznajder, 2006: 2), reflecting and contributing to a “globalization of memories” (Bell: 2006, 19). With this denationalisation of memory, however, come new political imperatives and opportunities: the expressions of remembrance and regret for the genocide in Rwanda offer symbolic constructions of a moral ‘international community’, an idea which the events of the genocide discredited, and which continues to be undermined by successive flawed or failed international interventions.

International engagement in memorialisation signifies some elements of change but also suggests continuities with the past. Belgium had both historical and national reasons for sponsoring memorials, as the former colonial power, and because of the murder of Belgian citizens during the genocide. Moreover, external interventions reach into most corners of political life in this postcolonial donor-dependent state, and memorialisation is in tune with current thinking about how to promote human security and transitional justice in post-conflict societies.

For the government and some international sponsors of the memorials, remembering the victims of genocide serves “to construct as great a distance as possible between the new age and the old” (Gillis, 1994: 8). Furthermore, whether intentionally or reflexively, it offers a mechanism to push the past “out of mind” (Chozinski, 2007: 16) diverting attention from present accusations of RPF human rights abuses or criticisms of international leaders; presenting apologies in place of accountability. As such, the memorials have some utility in international politics, yet they are not a vehicle for the state, foreign governments or international institutions to impose a

dominant vision and to sustain existing power relations. Memorials invariably meet with various forms of resistance, as I discuss below. Moreover, within the state and among international actors are individuals who have personal reasons to express grief or to regret. Most importantly, genocide survivors are involved in all aspects of memorialisation and their concerns bring moral questions to the fore.

Survivors' associations have undertaken innumerable memory projects and have worked closely with the government and international agencies, encouraging them to commit funds. They have placed memory at the centre of their work, and see it as intimately linked to the possibilities for justice – their other main goal. They have their own practical reasons for promoting the memory of the genocide. Remembrance is integral to their struggles for compensation and political recognition. In general, however, survivors are involved not for strategic reasons but because the preservation of memory is essentially felt as a duty of care for the dead.

Survivors do not all agree on how the dead should be remembered and some find the existing memorials provoke traumatic crises. But many have been directly involved in creating memorials and overwhelmingly they participate in public remembrance as an expression of grief. After the genocide when “the dead were on display” and “the air you breathed was thick with death” (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 123), the bereaved felt a pressing need to restore dignity to the memory of the victims through reburials and the construction of memorial sites. Remembrance had to be a collective affair; it is a consequence of genocide that often there were few or no family members left to remember the dead (Edkins, 2003: 2). Survivors were not always able to make decisions about how to memorialise, but they became involved out of commitment and necessity and have sought to make their views heard.

Genocide remembrance in Rwanda and internationally is rooted in the will of survivors. From their perspective, it is primarily an intrinsic response to the atrocity; part of the meaning of existence after genocide. This resonates with my understanding that the impulse for memorialisation originates beyond the state, in a sense of a moral duty towards the dead. This mourning process arises out of a commitment to others which extends past death. Yet through public remembrance, survivors also issue a political demand for recognition of the genocide, which seeks to secure protection against further abuses, for themselves and their descendents. They “make grief itself into a resource for politics” calling for protection from violence for themselves and

others (Butler, 2004: 30). Survivors who channel their efforts into memorialisation often see it as aligned to a struggle for change in the order of national and international politics – animated by an “apprehension of a common human vulnerability” (ibid); they express concern not only for Tutsi lives, but for the integrity and dignity of humanity.

Memorials and Identity in Rwanda

Mass bereavement has produced a “community of mourners” (Damousi, 1999: 5) defined by their shared “reverence for the dead” (Bodnar, 1992: 13). Alliances and relationships among survivors and the bereaved, and between them and others who support their work, cement through interactions in memory work. Tutsi returnees have increasingly joined survivors to remember the victims of the genocide, and supported them in this work, blurring some of the differences between these two groups. In this regard, the memorials are associated with a Tutsi identity, although not exclusively so, because in their forms and rituals they promote other imaginings of community.

Beyond sustaining an existing Tutsi mnemonic community, it is impossible to be certain about how the memorials might impact upon identity in the present, or for the future. Since the genocide, amid political and social upheaval, there have been a series of other interventions aimed at directly or indirectly shaping the way that people view each other, mainly justice and reconciliation policies. My study is only a fleeting glance at processes which are complex and evolving; it captures and analyses specific representations at particular places at times. Nevertheless, it seems apparent that the memorials reflect more than one understanding of identity and moral belonging, and this in itself seems to undermine the possibility that they represent and might fuel an exclusive ethnic nationalism, a concern seemingly implicit in some of the criticism or unease expressed in previous accounts (eg Vidal, 2001).

As I have shown, there are efforts to propagate a collective Rwandan memory of the genocide through commemoration. It has been a national practice in Rwanda for over a decade, and one in which people are expected, and sometimes forced, to participate. Analysis of the discourses, in commemorative speeches and museums, indicates that they do not label Hutus as collectively responsible for the genocide, even if their existence is felt by some to represent such an accusation, and although the victims are now identified as Tutsis. The government, survivors and international actors all

express ideas about the genocide, identity and morality through commemoration. Aside from an imposed official limit on the discussion of past abuses by RPF soldiers, commemoration is a forum in which various participants give accounts of its meaning and its significance in the present.

There is little to demonstrate that the memorials are contributing to forging a national identity. Although the national and international discourse of reconciliation might pretend otherwise, this can hardly be unexpected at present. The genocide tore to shreds the idea of Rwandan identity, forging ethnic identities, in the bloodshed of “hill-by-hill” and “home-by-home” killings (Prunier, 2009: 1). As a result, some people would prefer to try to forget the genocide, in order to manage living alongside each other again (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). Nonetheless, my study suggests that, for others, the memorials help to sustain the daily forgetting necessary for co-existence, allowing them to keep faith with the dead while containing memory in discrete times and places. Moreover, when Hutus willingly join survivors to remember the genocide, as in some areas they do, both can feel benefits as local communities come together.

Alongside the local and national, there is a strong emphasis on the universal significance of the genocide, in the genocide memorials created in Rwanda and in the commemorative ceremonies which now take place elsewhere in the world. This does not in itself imply a measurable shift towards more cosmopolitan thinking; we cannot assume an “*actually existing* cosmopolitanism, a reality of (re) attachment, multiple belongings, or belonging at-a-distance” (Beck, 2003: 454) from genocide commemoration. It is premature, as Duncan Bell argues, to speak with conviction about the depth or implications of ‘cosmopolitan memory’ because of its “multifarious” forms and effects (2006: 19). However, it may contribute to fostering solidarity across borders over time.

My study offers no concrete answers to how the memorials contribute to the making of collective identities, identifying plural imaginings embodied in their various forms and practices. It does however suggest that much depends on the process. Identities are shaped through participation in the making of memorials as well as through the narratives and rituals they generate; they are “wrought in social struggles and the sustained practices of everyday life” (Comaroff, 1991: 671). The process matters as much to the possibilities for memorials to contribute to political transformation, as the discourses and symbols it creates.

While the memorials do not yield a coherent narrative of identity, they open a window onto the condition of Rwanda's society in transition. The rituals and sites of remembrance are variously marked by trauma and mourning, fear and hope. The memorials issue a denunciation of the genocide, but rather than presenting a lucid explanation of the past, they are disturbing and provocative. They contain traces of the past, which provoke distress and resist comprehension, "encircling" the original trauma of the violence (Edkins, 2003). They expose stark inequalities and hierarchies on one hand, and the desire for political transformation on the other. They are also the focus for political and emotional struggles, in which questions of accountability and rights surface repeatedly.

Sites of Contestation

My study gives weight to the view that memorialisation is generally characterised by: "conflict, contest and controversy" (Misztal, 2003: 73). As I have shown, the genocide cannot be easily written into a tidy national narrative because the violence was so extreme, intimate and recent. There are disputes about the meaning of the past and ongoing negotiations over how the victims should be remembered.

Many people in Rwanda have reason to want to forget the genocide, as a memory of guilt or shame, and they resent the constant reminders. But the memorials also bring to the surface memories of RPF abuses during or after the civil war. People want recognition of other experiences of suffering endured in Rwanda, or as refugees in the DRC. It is important to be wary of these competing claims to victimhood where they refuse to acknowledge the overwhelming atrocities committed against Tutsis from April-July 1994 or try to minimize this crime, for instance by claiming there has been a 'double genocide' in Rwanda. But only investigations, including justice initiatives and critical historical accounts, and public recognition, can settle such claims. There may be no opportunity to voice them publicly yet, but memories of the victims of violence will not fade.

War crimes, vengeance crimes and post genocide abuses are 'forgotten' in the narratives of the genocide. The silences about other victims in Rwanda, and in the region, are disturbing. The possibilities for memorials to be contribute to the making of a better society and to avert future genocide, require a more open approach:

The task is to help the society – and the watching world – not merely to recall but also to re-member, that it is to reconstitute a community of humanity... within which victims and survivors can be reclaimed as worthy members... the task is to help avoid the castigation and exclusion of whole groups of people... from the sphere of common concern (Minow, 1999: 430).

But even without direct acknowledgement of all the victims, it is notable that the consequences of violence in general, are evoked in the displays of trauma at commemorations and in memorial sites. The memorials do not, as such, close down claims to past injustice. In condemning the atrocities of the genocide, they might even help to secure grounds for the recognition of other abuses.

Negotiating the Future

My study was informed by a view of the workings of memory as ‘dynamic’ and of memorialisation arising out of an ethical practice, which political agents seek to manage. In this sense, it contrasted with previous accounts of commemoration in Rwanda which focus on the presentist ‘uses’ of memory and show how the RPF exploits commemoration in its political interests (eg Vidal, 2001; Cameron, 2003). My findings did support a criticism which is central to these previous analyses, concerning the silences about some past abuses. There are clear imposed limits on what can be remembered publicly in Rwanda, although the existence of the memorials does not serve to silence these accusations in the way that a more general moratorium on past abuses might.

In thinking about the political implications of memorials, it is important to emphasise that criticisms of the existing approach are not confined to academics or politicians. Participants in the process reflect upon its problems and have ideas on how to effect change. Some perceived a dissonance between memory and national unity policy; others identified the issue of trauma and the display of human remains. Some also offered ideas on how to move forward towards a more inclusive approach. Several spoke of the need to acknowledge the suffering of other victims publicly, usually suggesting that this should be dealt with separately from genocide remembrance. These views may have little sway over official policy in the present, but spoken by participants who believe there are possibilities for change within the existing official framework, they call into question whether the present approach is in fact “antithetical” to a more plural, or “critical memory” (Lemarchand, 2009: 108), or whether it might instead open the way to this possibility.

A man who survived the massacre at the church in Ntarama on 15 April, in which his family were killed, spoke of his concern that, regardless of the “authorities in place” people must find ways to live together “in peace”. He observed the reluctance of his neighbours to participate in commemorations and the tendency towards partial confessions at *gacaca*: “If they keep silent is because ethnicity is still in the hearts of people even if it is no longer mentioned on paper.” Yet at the same time, he was conscious of the need to address their sense of exclusion and their experiences: “I know the misfortune that they have suffered.” He suggested that ceremonies of the testimonies of refugees returned from the Congo might be included in commemorations: “For me this would be a way towards healing. Their suffering included deplorable conditions of health. It was like a punishment. They experienced crimes like in Rwanda (August, 2006).

Similarly, a returnee who lost family in the genocide expressed his view that there should be greater attention within the commemorations to the range of losses and suffering caused by the genocide. He pointed out that the genocide “touched everyone”, leading to “misery... on all sides”; “refugees also suffered. They are also traumatised.” He expressed this view openly and sought to communicate it to Rwanda’s leaders, believing that this approach would help to clear up false allegations and would be the foundation for mutual understanding and coexistence.

We need to teach the children that participation in genocide leads to suffering. We need to tell the whole history, not just one part; to bring out everything that has happened. All this society is sick, shocked, traumatised. This would help to heal them; it is a means of coming together. The country is not the government of the day; it’s the people. We need to think of the Rwandese of tomorrow (July, 2006).

A human rights researcher called for efforts to develop “a policy linked to commemoration where all the ethnic groups feel united” (July, 2006). A Rwandan academic, who has advised the government on memory policy, has given a paper on the “tension between memory, forgetting and civic peace” (Rutayisire, 2006: 1). He points out that government has not yet found a way to bring together divided memories and to forge the foundations of a collective identity and must work towards: “an official memory structured according to objectives harnessed to the reconstruction of Rwandese society” (Rutayisire, 2006: 2). He suggests that a way can be found for memory to contribute to reconciliation but some elements of forgetting may also be

necessary for “the survival of the community” (ibid). Importantly, he argues that there is a need for history to address the gaps in memory, through analysis of the past and the search for the truth.

The idea that in time the many truths about the past may be brought to light through remembrance was raised from different perspectives by individuals involved in commemoration. Some of the dilemmas facing those conscious of the limitations of the present approach to memorialisation, and the hopes they have for the future, were eloquently conveyed by a returnee working for an NGO:

The past must help us to open our minds to humane values today. The work of memory can help us to question the present. It is a labour of the mind... Do we, through commemoration, place ourselves in the past? Might we risk closing ourselves within the past and attributing our present to our past? If I see my present life as determined by my past, I can't move beyond it. And if I can't do so, I risk creating resentment. This is very dangerous. The contrary must happen. I must leave myself to join others—this is a psychological task. We must look at the suffering which has passed in order to combat the suffering which is going on today... We must allow people to express themselves... Perhaps one day there will be a memory of the people.

Views expressed by those who must ‘live with the consequences’ of memory policy, remind us that Rwandans, rural and urban, are closely informed about the complexities of the genocide and offer critical perspectives on the past.

Memory and Justice

My study has emphasised the agency of victims and their engagement in a politics of grief which integrates remembrance into a struggle to secure human rights and genocide prevention. It has built on a conception of genocide memorials as instruments of the state (eg Vidal, 2001) with an investigation of the aims of the state and a study of responses, including resistance. It has also highlighted the international dimensions of this practice, and its relation to a contemporary understanding that memorials can be part of the package of international interventions aimed at promoting transitional justice after conflict. Taking together, these key findings should encourage us to move beyond questioning of the role of the state, to consider the implications of victim politics (as above) and, with this in mind, to think further about the meaning and value of the international approach.

As I have explained, international agencies have not had a free hand in shaping ideas about transitional justice, but they have offered substantial financial support for

justice and reconciliation policies, and support for memorials fits with this general approach, both an educational tool and a means to “bolster national attempts to “re-establish society” of the victims (Hamber, 2004: 1). Even if donors are not certain that memorialisation will “have a healing and restorative dimension” (ibid), this is certainly their hope. However, without contesting the need for external support, my analysis indicates a need to consider how international initiatives in transitional justice are conditioned by a set of entrenched assumptions and practices associated with development, and some of the contradictions this gives rise to.

In obvious ways, the practices of international donors and NGOs engaged in the work of memory intersect with those more generally involved in the ‘aid business.’ Uvin argues that development aid can reinforce problems it aims to address, and that it became “symbiotic to the processes of exclusion and structural violence” in Rwanda before the genocide (Uvin, 1998: 141). He indicates the dangers of projects whose positive impacts reach only a few while they have indirect consequences for “local society” (ibid: 146), leading to a sense of “inequality and humiliation” (ibid: 143) among intended beneficiaries. Since Uvin’s analysis, there has been a crucial shift away from a focus solely on material goals and towards social ones, seemingly in line with his recommendations (ibid: 147). Yet some of the indirect effects he identifies relate more to the processes through which aid projects are delivered rather than to their substance, and these remain relevant (see Uvin, 2001b).

Thinking about ‘structural violence’ gives pause for thought about negative perceptions of the newly constructed ‘international’ memorials, including criticisms of “elitism” or “exclusion.” It reminds us that donor support for social goals, in the case of memorials for education and ‘symbolic reparation’, may have benefits but they also entail risks. Elsewhere it has been argued that there should be efforts to produce material benefits from memory projects: “to improve the daily socio-economic conditions of victims and their communities” (Naidu 2004). This is not straightforward, and there are ways in which memorials might deliver economic benefits in local communities without this being a direct aim, but what is clear is that there is a tension between transitional justice and persistent problems of social inequality and poverty in communities affected by violence which needs to be confronted by those seeking to improve its “effectiveness and fairness” (Call 2004: 110).

Central to this problem are the historical failings of development, and its recent merger with concerns about security. Pupavac has drawn attention to how this “demoralised development agenda” produces a mode of “therapeutic” governance, aimed at encouraging people at the global social margins to “cope with risk and insecurity” (2005a: 161). She suggests that these interventions operate in the domain of symbolic politics to enable “the international community to feel a sense of moral purpose” (2005a: 177). Most importantly in this instance, she exposes some of the assumptions and effects of this therapeutic approach arguing that it: “pathologizes war-affected populations as psychologically dysfunctional and lacking the capacity for self-government without extensive external empowerment” (2004: 377). This is consistent, she argues, with a broader treatment of victims of human rights abuses, which has led to the ‘traumatised’ being problematised and depoliticised: “the human rights subject... is by definition a subject who lacks capacity” (2005b: 2). This analysis casts light upon the assumptions underpinning international policy in post-conflict societies and helps to explain contradictions in contributions to the memorials between compassion for victims of human rights abuses, support for the reconstruction of the state, and the reinforcement of patterns of global liberal governance.

Like other funds for reconciliation in Rwanda, support for memorials tends to be directed towards the state. This should not be construed as equivalent to strengthening sovereignty, for it is channelled through foreign NGOs and consultants – called in to build the capacity of the state, yet effective in tightening the reins of global liberal governance, producing “qualified” sovereignty (Duffield, 2001: 13). Survivors’ associations have received support from international donors, but not on a similar scale. They are perceived as among the main beneficiaries of the memorials, and individual survivors often have key roles in state and NGO projects. However, donors have yet to take sufficient account of the initiative and transformative vision of survivors. Rather than placing survivors at the centre of decision-making, international interventions tend to align themselves with state policy and to focus on the overall goal of social transformation, at the expense of methods by which this might be achieved. Even when there are shared aims, the approach may be guided by utilitarian thinking at odds with the intrinsic concerns of survivors, but consonant with the development paradigm. By focusing on outcomes rather than process in the

construction of memorials, “a critical opportunity for civic engagement” may be lost (Bickford, 2005).

More fundamentally, it seems that matters of transitional justice in these circumstances cannot be disentangled from matters of global social injustice – not only is there an overlap between international support for transitional justice and development, as I have explained, but development inhibits the realisation of justice in complicated ways. Development has been found to be implicated in the construction and maintenance of western superiority, and thus of global inequalities (Escobar, 1995). Aid is seen to be linked to a “will to govern” (Duffield, 2002: 1051) serving as “part of an emerging and essentially liberal system of global governance (ibid: 1050). This affects the broader context in which the genocide memorialisation takes place and its specific forms and practices.

In particular, it seems that aid in Rwanda, partly through the importation of ideas and practices associated with Holocaust remembrance, has served to affirm the legitimacy of international interventions and create a new set of institutions and practices to entrench this mode of power. In this we can see parallels with colonial practices which involved the “exportation of an infrastructure of knowledge” and the installation of “forms of expertise” (Larner and Walters, 2004: 6) in the art of ‘governmentality.’ Yet this is only part of the picture. Development aid has another political function, masking the close historical relationship between north and south, establishing difference where there is mixing and hybridity: “veiling and separating” so that “similarities and responsibilities that we may share are concealed and pushed from view” (Duffield, 2002: 1052). The association between the genocide in Rwanda and the Holocaust disturbs this illusion of difference.

In identifying parallels between the Tutsi genocide and the Holocaust, Rwandans refute the idea that the genocide “was the outcome of primordial tribalism” (Eltringham, 2004: 68). They challenge the claim that “in such countries, genocide is not too important” (President François Mitterand, cited in Gourevitch, 1998: 325) and demand an end to the discrimination that left Africans outside of the ‘international community’ in 1994. The memorials reflect a merging of ideas. Rwandans interact with others in transnational society and both are changed in the process (Keck and Sikkink 1999: 100): the 1994 genocide exposed the limits of human rights discourse and led to calls for change.

As long as it is remembered, the memory of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda will remain profoundly disturbing. Its memorials are reflective of and implicated in the 'political' in the widest sense: integral to the pursuit of rights and justice, central to the meaning of community; and defined by contestation. In offering no predictions and no final account of the association between memorialisation and power here, my intention is to reflect the complexity of the post genocide context, uncertainties about the future and the contestation inherent in memorialisation.

My thesis shows that in Rwanda, several agencies have engaged in memorialisation, with a shared aim of genocide prevention. The benefits of these initiatives are in question as memorials become the focus for resistance and resentment, and some survivors are persecuted or traumatised. The tensions surrounding memorialisation are principally a consequence of past atrocities, but are also related to government efforts to employ the memory of the genocide to construct political legitimacy, while failing to deliver justice for the victims of 'vengeance killings'. Commemoration has become a focus for revisionist claims which feed off a general silence about the 1990-94 war in Rwanda, and failure to respond to present atrocities in the DRC. My findings suggest that while violence is ongoing, and the effects of genocide remain salient, commemoration cannot easily be used to realise a particular aim, whether that of national unity, genocide prevention or social healing. Nevertheless, by looking beyond the instrumental uses of memorialisation, I suggest that it is possible to acknowledge both its political contradictions and its intrinsic value. For bereaved relatives and genocide survivors, memorialisation is part of an ongoing struggle to live with loss and trauma in a divided society; remembering is an assertion of and a call for humanity. In this sense, my study echoes a sentiment expressed more powerfully in the words of a genocide survivor:

[T]he departed of the Rwandan genocide have formed part of the collective memory of the World and this fact must be re-emphasised again and again and again. [Survivors] are willing to bleed all day, every day, in the hope that every bleed is a contribution to the saving of humanity and all that is human in us (Jabiro, 2005).

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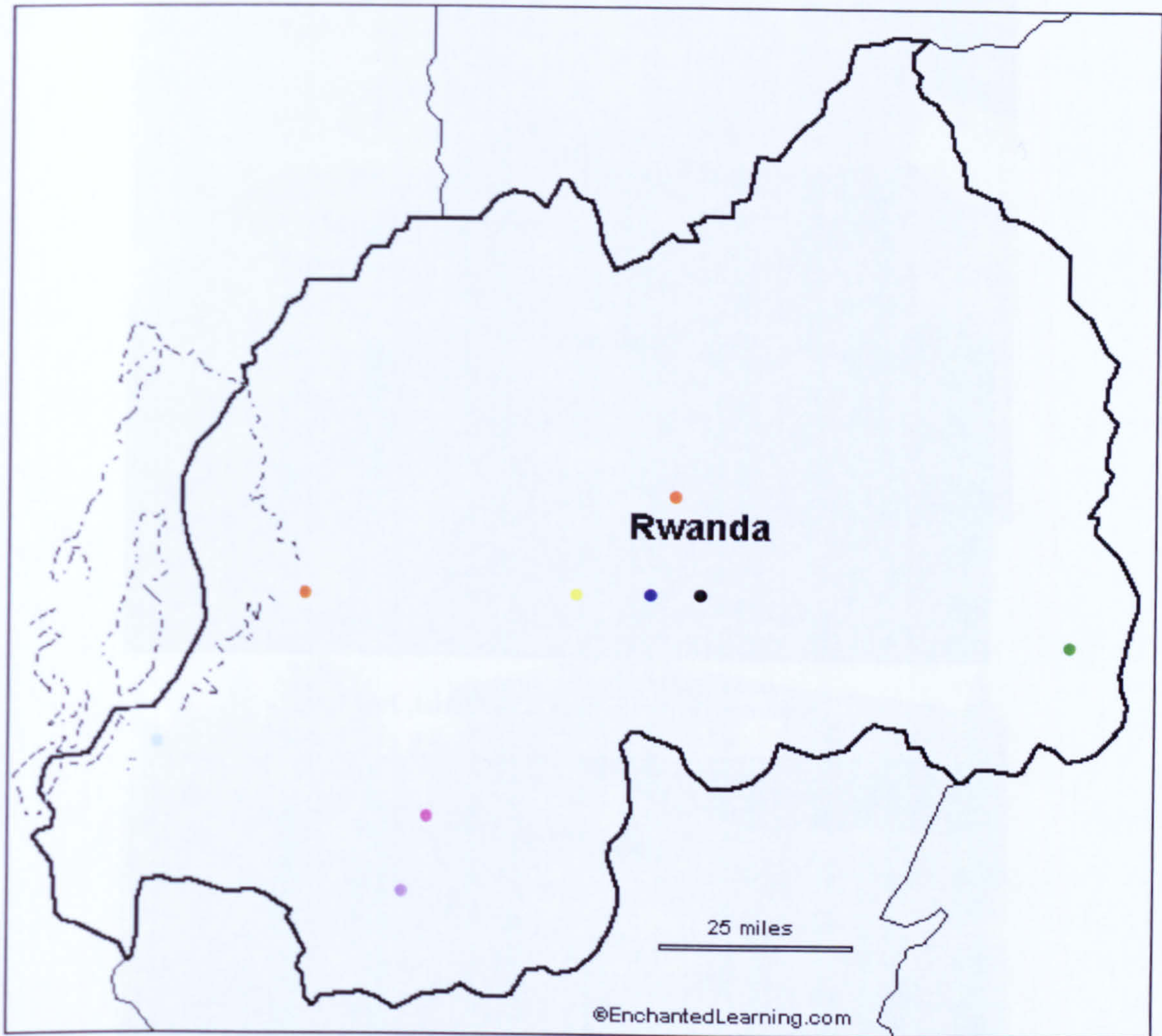
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Appendix 1: Map of Rwanda



Map shows the approximate location of key memorial sites

- Bisesero
- Kibeho
- Kigali Memorial Centre
- Mugina
- Murambi
- Ntarama
- Nyamata
- Nyamasheke
- Nyarubuye

Appendix 2: Photographs of Memorial Sites



Kamonyi district genocide memorial, July 2006



Flowers at Kamonyi district genocide memorial, July 2006



Mugina genocide memorial: existing burial ground, August, 2006



Mugina: new genocide memorial site under construction, August 2006



Mugina: new genocide memorial site under construction, August 2006



The Belgian memorial at Camp Kigali, August 2006



The Belgian memorial at Camp Kigali, August 2006



Kibeho: building near the church where the remains of victims of the genocide are kept, August 2006



Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre: Photo exhibit, August 2006



Murambi genocide memorial: skeletons of genocide victims, August, 2006



Ntarama genocide memorial: new roof, August 2006



Ntarama genocide memorial: inside the church, August 2006



Ntarama genocide memorial: inside the church, August 2006



Ntarama genocide memorial garden, August 2006



Nyamata genocide memorial: inside the church, August 2006



Nyamata genocide memorial: the burial chamber, August 2006



Nyamata genocide memorial: inside the burial chamber, August 2006



Bisesero genocide memorial, August 2006



Genocide survivors at the Bisesero memorial, April 2004



Bisesero genocide memorial, August 2006