

Kazerne Dossin

Connecting Law & Memory

**WORKSHOP 14**

**Resisting the spiral of mass violence: when  
perpetrators share their experience**

Martien Schotsmans

RCN Justice & Democracy

**Mechelen - 22 September 2016**

# Overview

1. RCN Justice & Democracy
2. First activities in Europe
3. Developing transmission of memory activities in Europe
4. Expanding transmission of memory activities

# RCN Justice & Democracy – introduction

- Belgian NGO
- 1994 – Rwanda genocide
- Post-conflict and developing countries : “No society without justice”
- Proximity Justice -> sustainable development
- Transitional Justice -> sustainable peace
- Europe -> awareness raising for conflict prevention
- Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, S-Sudan, Haiti, Chad-Senegal

# First activities in Europe

- Rwanda trial in Brussels 2001 – universal jurisdiction
- Memory of trial : recording and transcribing (FR)
- <http://assisesrwanda2001.org/>



- Testimonies of citizens who attended trial and radio programs
- 2002 – 2004 : Rwandan Diaspora dialogue group « Icyubahiro » (« Mutual respect »)

# Developing memory transmission activities in Europe

- From 2006 onwards : preserve and disseminate the memory of contemporary international crimes
- 2 Series of audio-interviews: “If it is there, it is here” (by Pascaline Adamantidis for RCN J&D)



# Developing memory transmission activities in Europe

Underlying ideas :

- Individual testimonies of unknown persons are transformed into collective history
- History (re)connects us to ourselves and to the world
- Humanity as a whole has been shattered by these crimes
- Memory cannot be restrained by geographical or time boundaries
- Understanding mechanisms that lead to commission of or resistance to these crimes -> draw lessons from the past to think and act consciously on coexistence in the present -> to prevent reoccurrence in the future
- Watch clip on RCN J&D

# Series I and II

Slow journalism

Life experiences (20-50 min):

- In-depth interviews
- Conflict in all its complexities
- Provide understanding of :
  - Historical roots
  - Mechanism that lead to mass violence
  - Consequences for victims, perpetrators and societies
  - Positive experiences of resistance and resilience

# Series I

- 2006 – 2008 : interviews with victims and persons who refused to participate in international crimes
- Rwanda – Burundi – DRC – Bosnia – Cambodia
- FR – EN- NL – Kinyarwanda – Kirundi
- Development of educational materials
- **Listening to an extract (EN)**





# Workshops

From 2009 onwards : used in secondary schools, universities, public events, youth from Diaspora -> encourage reflection on universal ideas, such as justice, reconciliation, truth, resistance and translate to everyday life



## Series II

- Interviews with perpetrators of mass crimes
- Rwanda, Burundi, DRC
- Confessed - convicted
- Free – imprisoned
- Various roles – chain of responsibility
- In FR and NL
- Listening to an extract (NL)



# Series II

- Development of educational materials to:
  - Induce reflection on how ordinary citizens become perpetrators of mass violence
  - Reflect on the impact of their acts on victims and on their own families and on themselves
  - Reflect on post-conflict coexistence and reconstruction
  - Reflect on similarities with mechanism in present society, leading to exclusion, discrimination, lack of common identity, etc.



# Series II

## Presentation of education materials

- [http://rcn-ong.be/IMG/pdf/rcn-ong-trame-nl\\_bat.pdf](http://rcn-ong.be/IMG/pdf/rcn-ong-trame-nl_bat.pdf)
- [http://rcn-ong.be/IMG/pdf/rcn-ong-thematique responsabilite-nl\\_bat.pdf](http://rcn-ong.be/IMG/pdf/rcn-ong-thematique_responsabilite-nl_bat.pdf)

# Expanding transmission of memory activities

- “Transmission of memory label” – DOB
- Partnership and networking (BCH, Red Cross, Belvue..)
- 2014-2015: international workshops on “The issues and challenges faced by memory initiatives on contemporary international crimes”

[http://rcn-ong.be/IMG/pdf/Booklet\\_Memory\\_EN-3.pdf](http://rcn-ong.be/IMG/pdf/Booklet_Memory_EN-3.pdf)

- 2017 : Develop an offer towards professional actors of broader justice sector (judges, mediators, prison staff, etc.) and media with Kazerne Dossin
- 2017 : develop N-S exchanges between youth in Europe and the South

# **RCN** Justice & Démocratie

**Q &A**