

# Youth and Transitional Justice

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## INTRODUCTION

Youth are frequently among the primary foot-soldiers in conflict, the victims of violence and the instigators of efforts to advance justice and transformative structural change – whether as former child soldiers, recruits into armed groups, targets of security force abuses or through voluntary participation in protests and dissent that often provoke violent repression. While young people are consequently among the primary objects of transitional justice endeavours, they have nonetheless been strikingly absent from the practice, policy and scholarship of the transitional justice field. This means they have been effectively marginalized in the generation, design, implementation and evaluation of transitional justice programmes and approaches during conflict or in transitions from autocracy to democracy.<sup>1</sup> The concern here is not merely about the role or exclusion of youth as a focal point in these transitional justice processes, but the resultant loss of the unique contributions offered through the *meaningful* participation, creativity and agency of young women and men, in enhancing and potentially improving transitional justice processes, practices and outcomes.

It is arguable that some of the most creative evolutions in the field of transitional justice have been at the nexus with other fields of practice, such as in the intersection of transitional justice approaches and gender justice, peacebuilding, social and economic rights, forced migration, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) and climate justice. Although many of these intersections and points of growth in the transitional justice field disproportionately concern and impact young people, few of them have been contemplated through a generational lens. Even though transitional justice approaches on one hand, and youth engagements in peace and security on the other, have independently been recognized as critical to sustaining peace and reconciliation, the seemingly obvious benefits of working at the intersection of these fields of endeavor have not been adequately explored – or have at best been treated in both policy and practice as parallel but largely disconnected tracks of engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> In this article we use the terms 'youth' and 'young people' interchangeably.

This Special Issue draws attention to some of these deficits in the practice, policy and scholarly literature on youth and transitional justice. In so doing, it begins to fill an important gap, and makes a contribution to critical methodologies of transitional justice scholarship, including through acknowledging the knowledge production rooted in youth agency, leadership and lived experience – including from the Global South. Our original intention – at best imperfectly achieved – was to facilitate the inclusion of young authors in this Special Issue. This editorial acknowledges this limitation, while framing and promoting an agenda through which some of the important gaps identified here can be redressed – as well as identifying the importance of doing so in the interests of improving transitional justice as a field.

In soliciting submissions for this Special Issue, we aimed to reach a broad range of young contributors from around the world. We hosted an online learning and exchange session for young scholars and practitioners, to which we also invited older, more established academics – seeking to create opportunities for partnership, mentorship and collaboration between scholars of different generations. Additionally, we accepted two essays outside of the peer review process – one by a young scholar and lawyer of Bosnian descent, and another joint piece by a Yemeni artist interviewed by another young Yemeni peacebuilder and human rights advocate. Both of these contributions draw on the personal experiences of the authors in relation to conflict, and both engage with efforts to advance transitional justice through creative means – breaking the traditional mould for a journal article. In both instances, the editorial team mentored the authors to prepare the essays and worked with them to hone their ideas. Yet outside of these examples – and despite our efforts – this Special Issue did less than we would have liked to break through structural barriers that often exclude or limit the participation of young people in academic scholarship.

Despite this, many of the articles in this Special Issue demonstrate that youth in conflict and postconflict situations are not merely passive recipients (or ‘beneficiaries’) of transitional justice programmes, but active stakeholders who – through their agency – often precariously construct meanings and ideas of transitional justice through a variety of everyday creative tactics. The youth voices in the various articles featured in this Special Issue begin to offer up new ways of thinking about transitional justice, thereby further enriching the field.

The first way in which youth are rethinking the transitional justice agenda is by focusing on youth agency, leadership and their own role in innovative co-creation. Prevailing transitional justice processes are often top-down, government-led or in collaboration with international development partners – with the participation of youth at best largely confined to the implementation stage. Articles in this Special Issue go some way to demonstrating and illustrating how young women and men from diverse country contexts – through their embedded agency, coupled with their unique creativity – reached beyond more conventional transitional justice toolkits to cultivate their own visions of their future after conflict and to re-imagine what transitional justice processes and priorities might look like. Yet this kind of agency from below, and the potential it offers for the decolonization of some aspects of the transitional justice field, remains largely invisible and unrecognized by transitional justice policymakers.

The second way in which youth-centred transitional justice will enrich the field will be in harnessing the forward-looking potential and political imagination that young people bring to the field. The transitional justice field has a great deal to learn from the ways in which young people are reimagining and redefining its tools and applications. In particular, a youth-centred approach to transitional justice will have the potential to open up a key avenue for transitional justice to deal with present and future injustice – and not just the past. This should enable a creative engagement on the role that transitional justice can play (or perhaps its limitations) in dealing with future harm and future victims – whether in relation to climate justice, systemic racial injustice, socio-economic exclusion or the importance of grappling with the legacies of

long-term oppression, etc. Young people are indispensable to thinking about forward-looking prevention and the present and future transgenerational impacts of various forms of violence and violations.

Finally, the methodologies, platforms and tactics that young people use to express themselves provide tremendous value from which the transitional justice field can innovate, and begin to move towards legitimate, transformative and durable solutions to violent conflict.

## DEFINING YOUTH IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

There is no agreed upon age-based definition of youth in international law. Various countries, regional bodies and international organizations, such as the UN (including different UN entities) and the World Bank, use different chronological categories to define youth.<sup>2</sup> Instead of using age to categorize youth, the editors of this Special Issue recognize youth as a socially constructed concept or category – lived as a transitional experience rather than defined by a pre-selected cut-off age, or a simple biological or psychological developmental demographic assumption.<sup>3</sup> Along with Alcinda Honwana we therefore see youthhood as a time of passage from childhood on one hand, and into adulthood on the other, associated with rites of passage that are contingent on social, cultural and political context, and that are not pre-determined merely by a chronological passage of time. Furthermore, the diverse cultural, psychosocial, developmental, socio-economic or political milestones that signal the realization of adult status are changing, varied and often unpredictable. Whether associated with educational status, economic independence, marriage or child-bearing, political participation or religious rituals, the disruption of the ability to attain these markers of adulthood may stall transitions into adulthood, frustrating young people in what has been described as a prolonged period of ‘waithood,’ and giving the lie to simplistic age-based definitions of youth.

The impact of these factors may vary across geographies, by gender, class, race, caste or the full spectrum of identities, cultures and circumstances that cut across and reflect the intersectionality of lived experience within the youth demographic.<sup>4</sup> Functional definitions of youth must incorporate this complex intersectionality, acknowledging the commonalities of youth experience within and across contexts but at the same time respecting the heterogeneous nature of youth populations as reflecting the highly context-specific microcosms of their wider societies.<sup>5</sup>

In this special issue, few of the articles and essays address these complex definitional issues of youth explicitly – perhaps making it more necessary to do so here. However, as a collection, they certainly engage with them implicitly. By placing analysis of youth experiences of police violence in San Diego, USA (Patrick Anderson, Caroline Collins and Christina Aushana), or of youth memorialization of the Bosnian conflict in the Netherlands diaspora (Fahira Hasic), alongside the documentation efforts by young artists in Yemen (Waleed Alhariri and Thiyazen Al-Alawi), youth agency through Zouglou music in Cote d’Ivoire (Lyn Kouadio), the reconceptualization of transitional justice in Chile to construct a feminist and queer transitional justice

<sup>2</sup> While some define youth between the ages of 15–24 (see ‘Secretary General’s Report to the General Assembly,’ UN Doc. A/36/215), other UN bodies, such as the Security Council, define youth as between the ages of 18–29 – while ‘noting the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels’ (UNSCR 2250). The African Union’s Youth Charter defines youth as 18–35 years old (AU Commission, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See Andy Furlong, Dan Woodman and Johanna Wyn, ‘Changing Times, Changing Perspectives: Reconciling “Transition” and “Cultural” Perspectives on Youth and Young Adulthood,’ *Journal of Sociology* 47(4) (2011): 355–370; Alcinda Honwana, *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, ‘Reflections on Youth: From the Past to the Postcolony,’ in *Makers & Breakers: Children & Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Alcinda Honwana and Filip De Boeck (Oxford: James Currey, 2006), 19–30.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Swartz et al. have also observed how resourceful young people improvise livelihoods and personal relations outside of dominant economic and familial frameworks, but also argue that it is important to acknowledge how differently young people in the Global South experience transitional challenges when compared to their compatriots in the Global North. See Sharlene Swartz, Adam Cooper, Clarence Batan and Laura Kropff Causa, *The Oxford Handbook of Global Youth Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

(Hillary Hiner, Manuela Badilla, Ana López, Alejandra Zúñiga-Fajuri and Fuad Hatibovic) or young former combatants in Colombia (Arpita Mitra), the diverse articles collectively reflect some important dimensions of both the commonality and diversity of young people's lived experiences across conflict-affected societies in the Global North and Global South.

Several of the articles also speak to complex and multi-faceted intersectional experiences, agency and identities of young people. Godfrey Maringira, Sandile Ndelu, Simbarashe Gukurume and Malose Langa grapple with the intersection of 'Blackness,' victimhood, economic or class-based exclusion and political identity, along with the generational dimensions of protesting South African students. Hasic observes the complex multi-faceted identities of youth in the diaspora, and Anderson et al. navigate the linkages between racial and generational identity in relation to police abuse of power in San Diego, USA.

Finally, to a varying degree, the articles do observe or speak to the heterogeneity of youth, thus guarding against simplistic or romanticized assumptions about young people's uniform experiences, objectives or inherently progressive credentials in conflict contexts or in transitional justice processes. The article by Maringira et al. points powerfully to the heterogeneity of youth as a microcosm of the fractured South African polity and society, and this is even acknowledged to some extent within the 'Fees Must Fall' protest movement that the authors analyse as well. Even more striking, however, is the clear distinction that this article draws between the different youth cohorts that ultimately negotiated the political settlement and the transitional justice 'compromises' in South Africa on one hand, as opposed to the next generation of 'born frees' – those born after the formal demise of Apartheid – who inherited many of its unresolved structural patterns of exclusion and inequality. While many of the articles remain less attentive to differences and distinctions in the experiences of young women or gender minorities, Hiner et al.'s article explores the distinct agency of young feminists and LGBTQI+ activists engaging with transitional justice and the lived experience of gender-based violence through provocative performance art from a feminist perspective.

None of these definitional issues detract from the authors' representation of the agency of young people to reclaim their power, assert alternative cultures and places of belonging and reshape alternative identities and sources of power from below. For example, Kouadio examines the agency of young people using Zouglou music to advance their political legitimacy in challenging dominant political groups, and to reshape the transitional justice agenda in postconflict Cote d'Ivoire. In their article rooted in the Chilean context, Hiner et al. similarly describe the agency of youth in constructing a feminist image of transitional justice.

## MISTRUST, STEREOTYPES AND STIGMA

Despite the fact that the chronological boundary lines distinguishing between childhood and youth or between youth and adulthood are both contested and inconsistent, they appear to have shaped the distinctive lack of attentiveness of transitional justice approaches to youth, as opposed to children. The attention deficit of the transitional justice field that is noted above when it comes to youth, is – for very significant reasons – not equally true of children.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the youth demographic, there has been significant attention within the transitional

<sup>6</sup> Not only have the violations of children in conflict situations garnered attention, but this has also demanded that specific consideration has been given to the importance of addressing these violations, and hence to the challenges of children's participation in transitional justice mechanisms themselves. See Sharanjeet Parmar, Mindy J. Roseman, Saudamini Siegrist and Theo Sowa, *Children and Transitional Justice: Truth-Telling, Accountability and Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Cécile Aptel and Virginie Ladisch, 'Through a New Lens: A Child Sensitive Approach to Transitional Justice,' International Center for Transitional Justice, August 2011, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2012736> (accessed 28 December 2021); Clara Ramirez-Barat, 'Engaging Children and Youth in Transitional Justice Processes: Guidance for Outreach Programs,' International Centre for Transitional Justice, November 2012, <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Report-Children-Youth-Outreach-2012.pdf> (accessed 28 December 2021).

justice field to the plight of children in conflict settings – largely driven by the strength of the protection orientation associated with the ‘Children in Armed Conflict’ agenda, and the near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. By contrast, youth tend to be stigmatized and viewed through the prism of prevailing stereotypes which associate armed young men with threats of extremist violence or as potential spoilers of fragile peace processes (which frequently serve to suspend the priority concern for protection that applies to children), and which consign young women – more often than not – to the status of passive victimhood.

It is consequently important to recognize and interrogate the widespread and prevailing mistrust of young people by their communities and governments. Across the geographic divides of the Global South and North, young women and men share experiences of exclusion that are experienced as structural violence.<sup>7</sup> Young people also express a reciprocal mistrust of their governments and the polities and economies from which they are marginalized. These fundamental deficits in ‘civic trust’ make young people’s inclusion and participation in transitional justice processes all the more important.<sup>8</sup> However, as noted above, young people have largely been marginalized from participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of transitional justice measures.

A youth-inclusive or youth-centred transitional justice approach would, by contrast, directly engage with a demographic group that is disproportionately affected by violence (both as victims and as perpetrators), and with which transitional justice mechanisms and approaches should therefore be primarily concerned. However, based on global consultations with youth, the Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS): *The Missing Peace* (henceforth the Missing Peace) argues that these stereotypes which associate youth with violence underpin a kind of ‘policy panic’ which construes young people as a ‘problem to be solved’ and a ‘threat to be contained.’<sup>9</sup> This policy panic is reinforced by poorly evidenced or unfounded assumptions that youth population bulges (a high proportion of youth in the population of conflict affected societies), waves of youth-based forced migration and the proclivity and vulnerability of youth to being recruited into violent extremist organizations all present inherent threats of youth violence.

The prevailing policy responses, through hard-security- or counter-terrorism-based approaches to young people, are arguably incompatible – or at least substantially in tension – with prevailing transitional justice methods. These approaches produce counterproductive results by further exacerbating rather than addressing youth marginalization, exclusion and alienation, but also by fostering state-sponsored human rights violations in the name of counter-terrorism, while significantly ignoring and curtailing the positive, innovative and creative contributions of young people to building peace and reconciliation,<sup>10</sup> and shutting down the civic space conducive to this.<sup>11</sup> This overly securitized discourse about the agency of young people epitomizes broader trends where an ever-expanding security paradigm and institutions translate social, economic and political problems into security issues.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Graeme Simpson, ‘The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security,’ UN Doc. A/72/761—S/2018/86 (New York: United Nations, 2018), <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the notion of ‘civic trust’ in transitional justice, see Pablo de Greiff, ‘Theorizing Transitional Justice,’ in *Transitional Justice: Nomos LI*, ed. Melissa Williams, Rosemary Nagy and Jon Elster (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Simpson, *supra* n 7 at 17–19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–19.

<sup>11</sup> Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, ‘If I Disappear: Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Spaces’ (New York: United Nations, 2021), <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Global-Report-on-Protecting-Young-People-in-Civic-Space.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>12</sup> ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism,’ UN Doc. A/HRC/40/52 (1 March 2019); Ali Altiok and Jordan Street, ‘A Fourth Pillar of United Nations?’

The extent to which this ‘policy panic’ may afflict the transitional justice field – based on the tendency to see youth merely as the objects of the transitional justice enterprise, rather than featuring prominently as its subjects, or even as its architects or evaluators – is perhaps less well recognized. It is critical that the transitional justice discourse does not fall prey to the trap of stigmatizing, stereotyping and hence securitizing young people, but rather acknowledges and engages their lived experiences of exclusion and injustice – politically, economically, socio-culturally, educationally, on the basis of gender and from the perspective of their lack of human rights protections.

## YOUTH AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: THE GLOBAL POLICY CONTEXT

Within UN Security Council discussions on transitional justice, the role of young people is slowly receiving some limited attention. The UN Security Council hosted an open debate in February 2020 on transitional justice, and its role in sustaining peace, in which delegates from more than 10 countries spoke of the importance of youth involvement.<sup>13</sup> Despite this, in transitional justice policy discourse more generally, youth tend to be addressed as one within a generic list of vulnerable groups that should be included in participatory transitional justice processes, without specific attention to the needs of young people and the ways in which their experiences may differ from other groups.<sup>14</sup> For example, the African Union’s Transitional Justice Policy, adopted in February 2019, recognizes the necessity that: ‘TJ processes promote the participation and address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups such as women and girls, the elderly, disabled and youth.’<sup>15</sup> The policy directly refers to the need for youth participation and inclusion in decision-making around the creation of transitional justice processes, and refers to a range of specific areas where youth involvement is especially important, including in efforts at memorialization, education reform and political and institutional reforms.<sup>16</sup>

The UN Human Rights Council that commissioned a joint study on the contribution of transitional justice to the prevention of conflict only references the role of youth implicitly, noting the preventive potential of education in helping reaffirm people’s understanding of themselves as rights holders, while state institutions are called upon to promote a human rights-centred approach to education and to ‘embed critical thinking in youth education.’<sup>17</sup>

Practitioners such as Virginie Ladisch have recognized that young people are often overlooked in the design, implementation and evaluation of transitional justice processes that directly affect them. She notes that

transitional justice practitioners must shift their thinking as well, and develop a more deliberate approach to working with youth and consider them a central component of transitional justice, not a side topic or an afterthought.<sup>18</sup>

The Rise of Counter-Terrorism,’ *Saferworld*, 2020, <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1256-a-fourth-pillar-for-the-united-nations-the-rise-of-counter-terrorism> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Security Council 8723rd Meeting, ‘To Rebuild Lives, Suffering Must Be Acknowledged, “Justice Done”, Human Rights High Commissioner Says, as Security Council Takes Up Transitional Justice,’ UN Doc. SC/14109 (13 February 2020), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14109.doc.htm> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>14</sup> International Center for Transitional Justice, ‘On Solid Ground: Building Sustainable Peace and Development After Massive Human Rights Violations: Report of the Working Group on Transitional Justice and SDG16+,’ May 2019, 2–3, [https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ\\_Report\\_WG-TJ-SDG16±\\_2019\\_Web.pdf](https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ_Report_WG-TJ-SDG16±_2019_Web.pdf) (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>15</sup> African Union, ‘Transitional Justice Policy,’ February 2019, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36541-doc-au\\_tj\\_policy\\_eng\\_web.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36541-doc-au_tj_policy_eng_web.pdf) (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide,’ UN Doc. A/HRC/37/65 (6 June 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Virginie Ladisch, ‘A Catalyst for Change Engaging Youth in Transitional Justice,’ International Centre for Transitional Justice, April 2018, <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Briefing-Youth-TJ-2018.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022).

The Special Rapporteur for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence has similarly noted that while young people are often affected by violations, youth organizations ‘have not been frequent interlocutors in transitional justice discussions, despite the fact that they may have a lot to contribute to them.’<sup>19</sup>

Despite the relative invisibility of youth within transitional justice policy frameworks, the potential role of transitional justice is somewhat more implicitly acknowledged in the UN Security Council Resolutions that define the youth, peace and security (YPS) policy agenda. UN Security Council YPS Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) at least broadly recognize the role of young people in contributing to peace, justice and reconciliation in their societies. However, while these Resolutions are articulate about young people’s equal access to justice mechanisms, the emphasis is placed on conventional justice systems, and none of these YPS Resolutions makes direct reference to youth involvement in transitional justice processes themselves.

The issue of transitional justice did however receive some cursory but important attention in the global youth consultations underpinning the Missing Peace, mandated by UNSRC 2250.<sup>20</sup> Youth participation in truth commissions emerged from one or two specific country contexts, and there was one dedicated thematic submission on this topic.<sup>21</sup> Transitional justice receives significant attention in the Study, under the broader rubric of youth dealing with lived injustice, and as victims of human rights violations and human rights defenders. The Study also refers to youth as ‘... potential purveyors of both historical memory and residual trauma to the next generation.’<sup>22</sup> It also goes on to identify youth as

... among the most strategically important constituencies in the transitional justice exercises of truth-telling and truth-seeking, rebuilding civic trust associated with institutional reforms, and ensuring that past crimes cannot be repeated.<sup>23</sup>

However, while some attention has been given to the lack of youth participation in transitional justice processes and instruments, much less has been devoted to the recommendation of the Missing Peace on the vital role of youth in the design, implementation and assessment of all the pillars of transitional justice and programmes for dealing with the past.

Under the rubric of ‘political inclusion’ the Missing Peace recommends

... direct and gender-equitable participation of young people in all phases of formal peace and political transition processes ... including in ... transitional justice and other political processes ... paying particular attention to the inclusion of young women, refugee and displaced youth, and other marginalized youth.<sup>24</sup>

While formal recommendations on transitional justice are present, they have largely been interpreted in relation to youth participation in peace processes. This also remains a fairly narrow orientation around the traditional transitional justice ‘pillars,’ and with little or no detailed attention given to some ‘pillars’ such as reparation, memorialization or institutional reform – particularly in the criminal justice and security sectors – even where these aspects are addressed in other parts of the Missing Peace report.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Report by Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice, Reparation, Guarantees of Non-Recurrence,’ UN Doc. A/71/567 (25 October 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Simpson, *supra* n 7.

<sup>21</sup> Virginie Ladisch, *supra* n 18.

<sup>22</sup> Simpson, *supra* n 7 at 103.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

However, within the confines of the YPS policy realm, youth are nonetheless portrayed as potentially vital to ‘justice as prevention’ and as forward-looking guarantors of ‘non-recurrence.’ This is especially the case because of the obvious stake which young women and men have in the legitimacy and durability of the peace processes and political transitions of which these truth-seeking, reparations, institutional reform, disengagement and reintegration, reconciliation, etc. initiatives are key component parts.

The victim-centred approach to transitional justice has, however, sustained the focus on youth as either perpetrators or victims in conflict contexts, and this has tended to shape the orientation around youth protection, often associated with the provision of psychosocial and mental health support. To some extent, this has been at the expense of more detailed attention to other aspects of the YPS agenda that are simultaneously of great interest to young women and men, yet which are not explicitly engaged through a transitional justice lens. This includes the critical issue of ‘education for peace,’ processes of disengagement and reintegration of young fighters or gang members, the demands of young people to be involved in social and economic justice initiatives (including in broader development policy), the gender identity differentials and distinct experiences of young women, the broad processes of judicial and criminal justice reform and the particular needs and experiences of migrant and displaced youth. All of these aspects of the YPS policy agenda arguably beg more specific attention through a transitional justice lens – not least because these issues of economic justice, gender justice, forced migration, DDR and SSR, etc. all function at the interdisciplinary intersection of these arenas of youth engagement with transitional justice. Moreover, they are arenas of youth agency and leadership which cannot be reduced to the victim/perpetrator binary, and which therefore offer innovative potential for the transitional justice field when undertaken from a youth-centred approach.

This Special Issue makes an important contribution in identifying current gaps, as well as in setting a scholarly agenda for this work at the intersection of the YPS and transitional justice agendas. Perhaps more ambitiously, this editorial also suggests that a youth-centred approach promises significant added value to the transitional justice field, in particular through the diverse ways it helps to frame a forward-looking prevention approach.

### ADVANCING THE PREVENTION AGENDA THROUGH A YOUTH-CENTRED APPROACH: BEYOND GUARANTEES OF NON-RECURRENCE

The prevention of violent conflict is a central objective and claim of the transitional justice field – encapsulated in the international legal notion of providing ‘guarantees of non-recurrence.’ The ‘prevention pillar’ is also an overarching aspirational umbrella of the YPS policy agenda as framed by UNSCR 2250 (and discussed above). This suggests yet another important alignment across the youth and transitional justice nexus. However, as noted in the Missing Peace Study, a key innovative feature of youth-led peacebuilding is that it traverses both the different phases of the peace and conflict continuum,<sup>25</sup> as well as diverse typologies of conflict and violence.<sup>26</sup> This is of particular importance and can make a potentially vital contribution to the perspective of transitional justice on prevention, by challenging the slightly narrow conception of ‘recurrence’ or ‘repetition’ of conflict which risks the presumption that new or emerging patterns of violation will run along the same lines of social, economic or political fissure as in previous conflicts, as opposed to the less neat reality that patterns of violence and conflict evolve. A youth-centred

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–48.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–51.



approach can enrich the potential for transitional justice contributions to prevention by better anticipating and understanding the transmutation of patterns of violence and conflict across transitions from war to relative peace, or from autocracy to embryonic democracy.

Beyond the truism that transitional justice engagements through a youth-centred approach are – by their nature – engaging a population that has an obvious stake in the future, there are specific tangible ways in which the prevention agenda is served through such an approach. Three distinct approaches will be addressed below, and all are given considerable attention in the articles and essays published in this Special Issue. This includes the particular preventive contribution to ‘institutional reform’ processes aimed at building trustworthiness and civic trust in order to guarantee the non-recurrence of past violations at the hands of state and societal institutions that are primarily oriented around young men and women, such as criminal justice and educational institutions. A second way in which a youth-oriented approach may optimally contribute to prevention is through the vital role of transitional justice in the durability and legitimacy of (inclusive) peace processes, including but not limited to youth-based demobilization and reintegration programmes. And one further contribution is embedded in the prevention dividend associated with transgenerational impact, including in the transgenerational transmission of memory and associated issues of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in transitional justice processes specifically for young people. Each of these will be briefly addressed below.

### YOUTH, INSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND ‘CIVIC TRUST’

‘Institutional reform,’ premised on the accountability of state and societal institutions for facilitating and enabling structural and systematic violations of human rights, is widely regarded as the pillar of transitional justice that is most coherently framed around the objective of prevention of violent conflict and providing guarantees of non-recurrence. Beyond the use of vetting as a means to hold institutional personnel individually accountable,<sup>27</sup> a key objective is to build trustworthiness and civic trust in institutions that were complicit in past violations but are expected to serve as protectors of these rights or change agencies in a peaceful or democratic society. This takes on particular relevance where institutions are specifically organized or oriented around regulating the lives of young men and women, and in a context in which redressing the trust deficits between young people and their states is widely acknowledged as being at the heart of the global YPS agenda.<sup>28</sup> This is particularly true of criminal justice and security institutions, on one hand, and educational institutions on the other – both already noted as being among the most systematic points of contact between young people and their governments. Not only is the inclusion of youth indispensable in the transformation of these state institutions which are essentially organized around them, but it should be prioritized in the design, implementation and assessment of these processes.

As regards criminal justice and security sector agencies, young people are the primary objects of the activities of these institutions, and disproportionately the victims of their rights violations. They may be stigmatized as ‘potential’ suspects or recruits for criminal, political or terrorist forms of violence. They are often exposed to arbitrary arrest, detention, disproportionate use of force, torture and kidnapping and other violations.<sup>29</sup> But on the other hand, young people, particularly young men, also constitute the majority of the security personnel hired by the security and criminal justice apparatuses. This makes young people both primary victims

<sup>27</sup> See Pablo De Greiff, ‘Vetting and Transitional Justice,’ in *Justice As Prevention: Vetting Public Employees in Transitional Societies*, ed. Alexander Mayer-Rieckh and Pablo de Greiff (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2007), 522–544; Roger Duthie, ‘Introduction,’ in *Justice as Prevention: Vetting Public Employees in Transitional Societies*, ed. Alexander Mayer-Rieckh and Pablo de Greiff (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2007), 15–34.

<sup>28</sup> Simpson, *supra* n 7 at 63–64.

<sup>29</sup> Izsák-Ndiaye, *supra* n 11.

and perpetrators of the violence perpetrated by state security and law enforcement institutions. Understanding the unique stakes of young people and ensuring their meaningful inclusion in reforming or transforming these institutions should therefore be central to guarantees of non-recurrence.

In this Special Issue, this topic is addressed directly in relation to policing and the criminal justice system, in the article by Anderson et al. in the context of San Diego, USA. The article offers a rich analysis of the role of youth in the evolution of oversight mechanisms for holding policing institutions accountable. Through their focus on the youth-specific relationship between the police and community in San Diego, and the particularities of police violence that disproportionately targeted young black men, this article engages with the failures of reformist accountability measures and strategies aimed at the cooptation of these youth. Through the lens and experiences of the current cohort of young people of colour, this article crafts from below an unwritten history of policing in one US city. It cultivates the 'political imagination' of an alternative, meaningfully accountable criminal justice system at this key interface between young people and their government and at a time where this issue is front and centre of popular US politics around dealing with the legacies of police violence. In so doing, through a transitional justice lens, this article illustrates a universal youth experience in conflict-affected societies of the Global South and in the unresolved legacies of an established but increasingly fragile democracy facing real risks of reversal. Yet in so doing, the article also points to the imperative of a picture that is distinctively local and context specific.

The article by Maringira et al. focuses attention on the failures of prevention as a result of the absence of meaningful and structural transformation (and decolonization) of institutions in the wake of the South African political transition and its ostensibly iconic transitional justice processes. In this instance, the focus is on institutional reform within the education system – although this is also a proxy for a wider set of social, economic and political frustrations of young black South Africans 'born free' in the wake of the transition from Apartheid. This article places educational reform – and particularly the centrality of education to future generations – at the heart of the prevention agenda, with this successor youth cohort central as both as the object and subject of the process. The article presents a powerful image of disconsolate 'born-frees' as the embodiment of the unfinished business of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and transitional justice processes, articulated by the youth cohort that inherited this legacy and which re-enacts the resistance – including a resort to violence – that reflects their enduring distrust of the process and of the successor democratic administration and its institutions.

In contrast, although also navigating the challenges of education and educational institutional reform through a youth-centred approach to transitional justice, the essay by Hasic draws attention to the innovation and artistry of young women and men in the Bosnian diaspora in the Netherlands, compensating for the absence of educational attention by creatively cultivating 'non-formal education from below' through photography and youth narratives. Christian Cirhigiri interview-based article with Lucha (Congolese nonviolent youth movement) activists also demonstrates how youth outside of formal spaces innovate and build their own transitional justice approaches, using educational institutions as their space to mobilize popular engagement in national-level debates on social issues, and using civic education as a tool for guarantees of non-recurrence that is not controlled by the state.

These articles illustrate the value and power of youth-centred approaches to the design and implementation of institutional reform – both as a vehicle for injecting an innovative discourse into the prevention-based approach to transitional justice and as a means for scrutinizing and evaluating the character or limitations of institutional change – as well as the claims regarding prevention and the guarantees of non-recurrence.

## YOUTH AND LEGITIMATE AND DURABLE PEACE PROCESSES

As argued above, the inclusion of young people in peace processes is potentially vital to enhancing the legitimacy, durability and ownership of peace settlements, and thus to the effectiveness of implementation of peace agreements. As such, and in light of the centrality of transitional justice processes often embedded in peace settlements, this is an important dimension of the prevention aspiration or the provision of guarantees of non-recurrence. This is, at least in part, about the translation of a demographic dividend into a peace dividend<sup>30</sup> – young people under the age of 24 constitute at least 60–70 percent of the population in most countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen) where there are formally mediated peace processes. The youth lens therefore offers an important, but largely unexplored, opportunity for mediators to socialize peace agreements, and facilitates the participation and inclusion of youth in countries transitioning from war to peace.

This reaches well beyond just the participation of select young women and men in the negotiation of formal peace processes – even where the resulting agreements may make stipulations on vital issues such as transitional justice arrangements, or disengagement and reintegration of former fighters. Limiting youth inclusion to representation at the negotiation table can simply entrench risks of elitism, cooptation and manipulation of youth concerns in negotiated settlements. For youth inclusion to be meaningful, young people need to be engaged ‘in the room, around and outside the room’ through mechanisms that can support young people’s endeavours to keep political leaders accountable.<sup>31</sup> Youth involvement in not only the design but also the implementation and evaluation of peace agreements is a crucial but often under-utilized instrument for the prevention of the recurrence of violent conflict.

This places particular emphasis on the role of young people in transitional justice processes, and in the related DDR of former combatants. As youth constitute the majority of foot-soldiers in armed conflicts, their successful reinsertion into wider society and the prevention of their (re-)recruitment by armed groups is one of the main and obvious reasons why youth are crucial to transitional justice processes. Reintegration of young former combatants is never straightforward in war-to-peace transitions and is fraught with complexity related to amnesties, and demands for accountability, which often put young former combatants into a liminal space between the ‘healing approaches’ and punitive measures that often coexist or are simultaneously promoted in peace agreements.<sup>32</sup> This is at a critical point of interface with transitional justice approaches, but one that has seldom been addressed through a youth-centric lens.

In this context, Mitra’s article in this Special Issue, ‘Developing Transitional Justice for Youth: An Assessment of Youth Reintegration Programmes in Colombia,’ provides a detailed account of the linkages between DDR and guarantees of non-recurrence as seen through a youth inclusion lens. Drawing on interviews with former combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), community members and United Nations technical-level staff, Mitra evaluates the risks and opportunities associated with a youth-inclusive design and implementation of DDR programmes in Colombia, examining whether, and if so how, Integrated DDR Standards of the United Nations contribute to guarantees of non-recurrence. Despite the sophisticated aspirations of the Colombian peace settlement, Mitra’s research shows that the majority

<sup>30</sup> Simpson, *supra* n 7 at 115–116.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Altiok and Irena Grizelj, ‘We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth Inclusive Peace Processes,’ United Nations, April 2019, <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Global-Policy-Paper-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-Processes.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022).

<sup>32</sup> See for example Mohamed Gibril Sesay and Mohamed Suma, ‘Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of Sierra Leone,’ International Center for Transitional Justice, June 2009, <https://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-DDR-Sierra-Leone-CaseStudy-2009-English.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022); Eric A. Witte, ‘Beyond “Peace Versus Justice”: The Relationship Between DDR and the Prosecution of International Crimes,’ International Center for Transitional Justice, February 2010, <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-DDR-Prosecutions-ResearchBrief-2010-English.pdf> (accessed 29 January 2022).

of young combatants do not have access to DDR provisions, due to insufficient financial support, limited geographical coverage and operational silos among institutions responsible for the reintegration of former combatants.

It therefore remains important to retain a critical perspective on what a youth-inclusive or youth-centred approach might mean. DDR interventions such as this one often disproportionately allocate employment, education and other context-specific socio-economic opportunities that favour young men with guns, intending to prevent their potential roles as spoilers of fragile peace agreements. While this privileging of young men with guns may make sense from a stabilization or remedial violence prevention perspective, such short-term violence-prevention goals pursued through DDR interventions too often reinforce cultures of violence, and risk creating new grievances and injustices among young people (which then can lead to a recurrence/transmutation of conflict). Indeed, they may substitute for measures which address the underlying structural causes of conflicts which produced youth marginalization in the first instance – a critique levelled elsewhere at non-transformative transitional justice processes. For genuinely youth-inclusive DDR programmes to contribute effectively to guarantees of non-recurrence, the diverse needs and interests of highly heterogeneous youth populations need to be factored into the design, implementation and ownership of DDR programmes.

## TRANSGENERATIONAL MEMORIALIZATION AS PREVENTION

Memorialization is considered to be crucial to addressing past violations and promoting peace. The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence has noted the value of memory processes (in addition to enabling the commemoration and honouring of victims) to prevention of future violations, by ‘help[ing] to promote commitment to a democratic society, encourage debates on the representation of the past and allow the problems of the present to be addressed in a relevant manner.’<sup>33</sup> The Special Rapporteur notes that memory and memorialization cut across all four other pillars of transitional justice, but he pays particular attention to the link between memory and memorialization and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The Special Rapporteur implicitly refers to young people in his report by noting the importance of memory processes, particularly history education for new generations, the role of civil society in using the arts to teach successive generations about the past and the importance of education about the media. Yet, the report is not explicit in its reference to young people, nor does it specifically consider the role of young people in the design and implementation of memory projects. As the persons who hold and potentially transmit memory (and potentially trauma) to future generations – young people should be indispensable to all discussions of memory and memorialization, especially in the interests of durable peace. Inclusion of a youth perspective to memory and memorialization processes enables us to develop a nuanced, complex understanding of the ways in which memory is transmitted – both intergenerationally and across geographies.

A number of the articles and essays in this Special Issue deal with youth involvement in memory and memorialization, touching upon transgenerational transmission of memory. The essay by Hasic and the article by Maringira et al. offer rich and fascinating – yet very distinct – illustrations of the transgenerational impact of transitional justice. Both describe the impact on – and activism of – the next generation: of disadvantaged young Black South Africans who felt betrayed by prior transitional justice processes that failed to transform the structural exclusion

<sup>33</sup> ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence,’ UN Doc. A/HRC/45/45 (9 July 2020).

of Black youth; or the children Srebrenica's genocide survivors within the Bosnian diaspora in the Netherlands.

Hasic's essay is one of the few in the Special Issue that is written from a personal perspective: through the lens of a young woman of Bosnian descent who is the daughter of survivors of the Srebrenica genocide. As such, she too – like the youth described in the Maringira et al. article on South Africa – is, at least theoretically, 'born free.' Her reflections and those of youth like her who fled Srebrenica with their parents as babes in arms, or who were yet unborn, shaped the design of the photographic truth-telling and documentation of their next-generation experiences of this legacy, which her essay describes. In contrast to the protest and dissent described by Maringira et al., this essay draws attention to processes of memorialization, transgenerational trauma and the lapses in symbolic reparation, accountability and acknowledgement (including in the dearth of Dutch educational curricula on the subject) that continue to shape the lived experiences of this youth cohort who have grown up in the Bosnian diaspora in the Netherlands. The truth of this youth cohort, and the enduring impact of the past conflict on their lives, creates a 'next-generation' victim community that is distinctive, has different and less immediate needs, but is nonetheless shaped by the experience of their parents. This essay is more of a reflective exercise for someone whose lived experience is articulated by the photographic exhibition she reviews than it is a traditional academic article. It is the reflection of a young woman who is both subject and object of the exercise, and for this reason was considered a vital invited contribution to this Special Issue as distinct from the other articles that were subject to peer review.

The article by Maringira et al., in its engagement with the experience of Black youth in South Africa 25 years after the founding of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, points to the fungible and shifting character of not only truth-seeking, but transition and reconciliation itself. Through this transgenerational attentiveness, the article not only revisits South Africa's unfinished business of transitional justice, but implicitly cultivates an image of serialized truth-seeking, and shifting challenges across generations and youth cohorts to the limitations of South Africa's ostensibly iconic transitional justice process. In so doing, the article paints a picture of current youth discontent from the perspective of young people mostly born after the demise of formal Apartheid, pointing to the distance between transitional and transformative justice in South Africa, located in the failure to adequately address the structural underpinnings of conflict that is both race and class based, along with the implicit failure of adequate societal reparation and accountability.

Both articles offer enriching and challenging perspectives on the claims to transgenerational prevention through transitional justice measures. Maringira et al. speak to the indignation and spilling over of frustration and betrayal by South African 'born-free' students, organized around resistance within untransformed and allegedly colonized education systems, while Hasic notes the powerful residual impact of memory and memorialization through the artwork/photography of the next generation of survivors of Srebrenica. Neither of these articles directly address the importance of mental health in transitional justice processes. Young people often inherit collective intergenerational traumas and 'frequently articulate inherited traumas of which they have little understanding.'<sup>34</sup> This is a gap that needs to be addressed in programming and scholarship.

<sup>34</sup> Brandon Hamber et al. 'Youth, Peace, and Security: Psychosocial Support and Societal Transformation' *Interpeace*, (2022), <https://www.interpeace.org/outside-the-box-amplifying-youth-voices-and-views-on-ypps-policy-and-practice/> (accessed 20 March 2022).

## YOUTH-CENTRED TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: OPENING THE DOOR TO INNOVATION

Taking a youth-centred approach allows the field not only to innovate upon the ‘what’ of transitional justice, but also to expand the ‘how,’ and thereby contribute new and creative methodologies. Centring young people in the design, implementation and assessment of transitional justice processes will enable the field to benefit from the ways in which young people respond to violations, and seek to deal with past, present and future injustices. While as noted above, it is crucial to avoid romanticizing young people, or assuming that all are inherently progressive, nonetheless many young people do engage in participatory approaches to transitional justice, providing ‘bottom-up’ perspectives to the field. In taking a youth-centred approach, many of the articles in this Special Issue, including those authored by young people themselves, break with more traditional forms and modes of transitional justice approaches, and seek to employ and/or analyse creative ways of engaging with transitional justice – including using art, photography, theatre, music, digital activism as well as diverse and novel platforms, such as street art, gaming and social media. Many but not all of these forms are distinctly ‘youthful.’

Young people also bring creative leadership styles and diverse methodologies for inclusive and participatory decision-making – frequently honed and practised in the course of conflicts – that offer innovations of potentially great value to traditional transitional justice approaches. A significant value of the inclusion of youth perspectives and a youth-led approach to transitional justice is the ability to bring in advocacy, policy and reform ‘from below’ – and to democratize, decentralize and decolonize the transitional justice field. While there has been significant literature on the importance and value of transitional justice from below, there is a need to consider the ways in which young people animate and often push forward those initiatives, in the process bringing forward voices that are not conventionally included.

In this Special Issue, Virginie Ladisch and Nadia Jmal explore youth activism in addressing the legacies of structural injustices, such as the histories of slavery, colonialism and subjugation, drawing on ‘youth voices that have continued to challenge hegemonies of power, adapting and innovating in the face of new forms of repression and restrictions.’ In particular, the authors highlight the ways in which young people use new platforms through which to conduct advocacy. They explore the challenge that transitional justice has faced in understanding the ‘connections between past and present structural violence,’ and the need to understand long-term continuums of harm, and the ways these are manifested in present and ongoing discrimination, exclusion and violence. Their article argues that despite young people’s crucial role in pushing for major changes, transitional justice institutions tend to exclude youth perspectives and voices. As a result, young people are continually reinventing their approaches, and finding creative ways to resist repression and impunity – turning to new platforms and tactics which are often non-hierarchical and decentralized. Young people use music, gaming and other online platforms which are not controlled by the state, art and other creative forms of expression of dissent.

Alhariri and Al-Alawi photo essay and interview provide a first-hand view of the ongoing conflict in Yemen, and the ways in which Al-Alawi, as a 25-year-old artist living in Sana’a, documents the conflict-related violence through street art. The Special Issue includes devastating and moving images of public street art painted by Al-Alawi: of a young ballerina standing atop a landmine with one leg and arm blown off; of tally marks counting the killed on the walls of bombed-out buildings; of proxy wars and a chess game between international states for Yemen. Through his own work Al-Alawi upends the view of young people as simply a ‘problem’ or security concern, demonstrating powerfully how, quite literally, as the bombs are going off, young people are painting. Yet, he explains to Alhariri that he does not want to be viewed by the international community as a potential recruit to armed groups or as a victim painting his plight, but

as a young person using art to document the conflict, influence peacebuilding and inspire other young artists.

Through the creative art of photography, Hasic illustrates how this form of documentation and acknowledgment speaks to the legacy of how this conflict continues to shape the identity of the next generation. By contrast, if Hasic's essay speaks to the next generation (across both time and space) through photography as art and memorialization, then Alhariri and Al-Alawi essay invokes the art of a current youth generation to document and record these experiences from the perspective of young people in the heart and heat of an ongoing conflict.

The review essay by Harry Redwood for this Special Issue also examines the ways in which another popular youth medium – comic books – is being used as a form through which 'to tell stories that capture the complexity of youth experiences of TJ.' The essay reviews three graphic novels that touch upon interrelated themes of youth agency and trauma. Redwood highlights the ways in which in all of the comic books (which are primarily directed at youth audiences and are either told from their perspective or are about young people) portray the complex responses that young people have to conflict and violence, and the ways in which they often bring fresh, discerning perspectives and leadership when challenging accepted norms. Additionally, through the comic book medium the authors of each story are able to portray the experience of trauma (and the ways in which the past and present can become blurred, or in which time is not perceived as linear) through strategic placement and sequencing of the comic frames. Redwood distinguishes the comic books from those used by various truth commissions and warns against an inherent assumption that the comic book form will automatically appeal to youth, but instead highlights how – when effectively employed – comics can 'inspire inquisition, learning and dialogue,' especially about youth experiences.

Finally, two articles deal with the ways in which drama and music can be used by young men, women and gender minorities to engage creatively with transitional justice. Hiner et al. explore the role of young feminist women and LGBTQ+ persons in using performative art and drama to both call out and highlight sexual violence and express their claims for reparations in Chile. Using the case study of a performance art piece called *A Rapist in Your Path* and other feminist and queer efforts to discuss injustices, the article examines the generational differences between different youth cohorts, and the ways in which traditional transitional justice efforts in Chile have failed to account for the demands and injustices against young women and LGBTQ+ persons. The performance art provides an opportunity for discussion and reflection about the impact of previous transitional justice efforts in Chile, and creates an opening for everyday Chileans to examine these processes from a feminist perspective. Hiner et al. argue for greater leadership and inclusion of a feminist and queer lens in transitional justice processes and point to the influence that young persons can have in Chile's ongoing Constitutional Convention process.

Similarly, Kouadio describes the use of Zouglou music by Cote D'Ivoire youth to influence transitional justice processes and 'shap[e] the ways that politicians acquire legitimacy.' Zouglou music has been employed by Cote d'Ivoire youth to gain legitimacy using the politics of affect embodied by the Nouchi language. The article demonstrates how young people in Cote D'Ivoire are shaping transitional justice processes using Zouglou by forcing politicians to engage with trying to gain popular legitimacy through Zouglou, and the link between the creative arts and youth. The article focuses on how marginalized urban youth affected by political conflicts use music to legitimize themselves, but also to address issues of truth, to end impunity and to achieve other transitional justice goals at an everyday level.

All of the articles in this Special Issue signal the power that youth creativity and innovation will add to the transitional justice field. In the conclusion to this editorial, we will now address some of the barriers, limitations and opportunities that have presented themselves in the compilation

of this collection, and which have wider implications for the field of youth-centred transitional justice.

## DEALING WITH THE FUTURE: AGENDA-SETTING FOR YOUTH-CENTRED TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

In reflecting upon the process of creating this Special Issue, we have grappled with important questions about the space and scope for young people's contributions to academic scholarship on transitional justice and the future of youth and transitional justice. It is significant that our editorial team traverses the divides of generation, race, nationality, gender and geography of the Global North and South. In editing this Special Issue, we were mindful how our identities and positionalities as guest editors bring with them differential access and privilege, and that this contributes to how we understand youth exclusion from knowledge production and informs our commitment to attempt, in a modest way, to address some of the structural barriers which impair the access of young women and men to knowledge creation in academia.

This Special Issue of the *IJTJ* sought to identify some gaps and opportunities and remedy some of the deficiencies in existing scholarship on youth and transitional justice, as well as to contribute to setting a forward-looking research, policy and practice agenda for a more youth-centred approach to transitional justice. We sought to do so in a way that includes youth expertise and perspectives on their own lived experiences. The hurdles in seeking to achieve this have not been insubstantial. Not only are youth and generational divides largely invisible in the transitional justice lexicon, but the barriers to youth scholarship and the prevailing protocols and requirements of the traditional format of an academic journal also inhibit youth voice, agency and leadership in this sphere.

This represents a dual marginalization – in which young women and men face enormous challenges in participating in transitional justice processes or more ambitiously engaging in the design, implementation and evaluation of the full range of transitional justice processes and mechanisms on one hand, but are also easily shut out of transitional justice scholarship on the other. So, this Special Issue has sought – with limited success – to overcome some of these barriers. But in wrestling with the limitations discussed below, the Special Issue serves also to shape and set an important agenda going forward.

First, there was little coverage in the essays in this Special Issue on the question of criminal accountability from a youth-specific perspective, despite the centrality of this as a foundational component of the transitional justice lexicon. Yet there is also an important opportunity and a creative canvas on which to paint from a restorative justice perspective – that in many respects found its creative genesis and evolution as a field in the realm of juvenile justice systems, non-punitive approaches to diversion, etc. Furthermore, as one of the primary points of interface through which youth – and young men in particular – meet their governments, the role of the criminal justice and security systems, particularly policing, judicial and penal and carceral institutions, desperately needs further scrutiny and reflection from a youth-centric point of view.

Second, while many of the articles in this Special Issue do not engage with the direct participation and role that young people could occupy in designing and participating in formal commissions and truth-seeking processes, they nonetheless did explore and open up other creative ways in which young people use their direct lived experience to document and engage in truth-telling processes by less conventional means – and often from below. There are of course important references to truth-seeking from the youth perspective in the contributions by Maringira et al. and Anderson et al., and in the essays by Hasic, Alhariri and Al-Alawi, as well as Kouadio, although this is not the primary focus of these articles. Elsewhere, there



has been some important work undertaken on the importance of youth participation and testimony in truth-seeking approaches,<sup>35</sup> as well as on the value of truth commission reports, youth-oriented educational curricula based on truth commissions' findings, etc., to future youth generations as critical audiences. However, this remains a particularly rich field to be mined from a youth-centred perspective.

Third, by the same token, although there was little youth-centred attention paid to the transitional justice 'pillar' of reparations, there has been implicit engagement with symbolic reparation and acknowledgement of youth victimization and trauma in those essays which deal with memory and memorialization through a youth lens, and some discussion of the need for broader reparations – for example, in the article by Hiner et al. These articles however help to suggest great creative potential in this arena, and highlight the need for reviewing and learning from past initiatives – such as in the design of reparations programmes in places like Chile,<sup>36</sup> Canada<sup>37</sup> and elsewhere – which have specifically focused on reparative measures to provide health care, educational benefits, preferential housing or developmental programmes for youth populations or for young indigenous men and women, or successor generations to victims of torture, extrajudicial executions and disappearances, etc.

Fourth, none of the articles in this Special Issue directly address questions of the importance of mental health and psychosocial support in transitional justice processes for young people. This is another core theme that requires greater attention, which is prompted by several of the articles in this collection. Young people often inherit collective intergenerational traumas and 'frequently articulate inherited traumas of which they have little understanding.'<sup>38</sup> Therefore, memory and memorialization processes need to account for the link between trauma and memory for young people, and include trauma-informed and psychosocial processes to ensure that these efforts are effective and durable.

Finally, there is a significant overlap between the aims of the YPS agenda and the goals of transitional justice. A youth-centred approach to transitional justice that owns and integrates large parts of the YPS agenda will ensure reciprocal benefits to both fields.<sup>39</sup> In particular, the five pillars of the inaugural UNSCR 2250 that underpin the YPS agenda (participation, protection, partnerships, disengagement and reintegration, and prevention) all lend themselves to a strong symbiotic relationship with transitional justice approaches and goals. Much of the overlap between both fields, especially focused on prevention, was elicited in the various articles in the Special Issue. In all these respects, the importance and value of a youth-centred approach to transitional justice remains vital and dynamic, not only because it is attentive to youth who are otherwise marginalized, but because of the unique value that youth add to transitional justice processes.

Ultimately, young people are both critical actors in the present and key guardians of the future. This means that a key contribution of youth-centred transitional justice approaches resides in the promise that it not only deals with the past but offers the potential to 'deal with the future.' This is embedded in young peoples' reimagining and redefining of the forward-looking value of transitional justice interventions. But it is also about their leadership roles in the definition of

<sup>35</sup> There is some literature analysing the ways in which young people engage in truth commissions, although it remains limited. See, e.g., Caitlin Mollica, 'The Diversity of Identity: Youth Participation at the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission,' *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71(4) (2017): 371–388; Ladisch, *supra* n 18.

<sup>36</sup> Elisabeth Lira, 'The Reparations Policy for Human Rights Violations in Chile,' in *The Handbook of Reparations*, ed. Pablo de Greiff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 55–101. See also Christian Correa, Shuichi Furuya and Clara Sandoval, *Reparations for Victims of Armed Conflict* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Megan Hough, 'Taking Responsibility for Intergenerational Harms: Indian Residential Schools Reparations in Canada,' *Northern Review* 50 (2020): 137–170.

<sup>38</sup> Hamber et al., *supra* n 34.

<sup>39</sup> Anjli Parrin, 'Policy Brief: Advancing Peace Through a Youth-Centered Approach to Transitional Justice,' *Interpeace*, 2022, <https://www.interpeace.org/outside-the-box-amplifying-youth-voices-and-views-on-yps-policy-and-practice/advancing-peace-through-a-youth-centered-approach-to-transitional-justice/> (accessed 29 January 2022).

the key arenas and social movements that define the social justice priorities of the present and which lie ahead – whether this is about global and systemic racial justice, socio-economic justice, decolonization or the burning existential concern over climate justice.