

multiple modes of expression. Connective Memories works in collaboration with Mobile Arts for Arts to adapt arts-based methods to research.

One of the research questions for the project created by the co-researchers speaks to these concerns on listening to multiple forms of expression and asks ‘how do we respect the memories of others?’ In exploring this question, one emerging finding is the value and significance of proverbs both as a means of expressing one’s story and in listening to one another. In Rwanda, proverbs (imigani in Kinyarwanda) are “often used to express what a person has seen, heard and experienced at the level of emotions, feelings and states of mind, as well as to indicate to someone that they have been understood” (Bagilishya, 2000). As a Rwandan proverb states: “akari kumutima gasesekara ku munwa” meaning what you believe, think and feel has to be expressed externally by talking, actions, behaviours and attitudes. The Kinyarwanda word imigani therefore expresses the notion of a conversation or a dialogue, attempting to elicit “a mode of expression used to recognize, confirm and participate in what the other is living on an emotional level” (Bagilishya, 2000). In this sense, connectivity is at the heart of both isangizanyankuru and imigani so making the latter an interesting mode through which to explore the former. This approach really resonated with research participants. In an end of day reflective exercise where participants were asked which moment from the day they were going to take away with them, many repeated one of the proverbs that had been shared during the day and which had spoken to them.

Rwandan proverbs with their rich metaphorical language drawing on a rich repertoire of cultural symbolism therefore are an important mode of expression through which it is possible to express one’s own story or memories. During story circle, part of the Mobile Arts for Peace methodology, which the team drew upon for the Isangizanyankuru project, participants are asked to share a story which illustrated a conflict in the community which they would like to resolve. Participants’ memories and stories are often peppered with proverbs as a means of conveying multiple truths, such as “utaganiriye na se ntamenya icyosekuru yasize avuze” meaning when you do not talk with your father, you cannot know what your grandfather said before dying. This can be interpreted literally in the sense of regret at lack of family communication, but takes on particular significance in the Rwandan context and the often near absence of entire generations within families as a consequence of genocide. We have also used proverbs to help frame sessions focused on the sharing of memories and story. Proverbs such as “Ikinu kibi kibaho ni ukubwira utakumva” meaning something that is hurtful is to talk to someone who is not interested or “kubwira utakumva ni nko guta inyuma y’umusozo wa huye” meaning to speak to someone who is not interested is like the rain in Huye forest.

We have observed that proverbs facilitate a potentially transformatory encounter. Proverbs remind us that the person telling the story is the expert of their own life: “Ntiribara umukuru nk’umuto waribonye” (means that adults cannot explain better an event than the young person who has experienced it) is particularly pertinent for a project like Changing the Story, which aims to challenge adult-child power relations and foreground the stories of young people. The expression of a proverb after a story has been told, is a means of expressing an appropriate emotion, so honouring the person and the story – respecting the memories of others, to answer the question posed by the young people. This is important whether in the context of a research interview or therapeutic practice. As well as being an object of research therefore, we suggest that proverbs may be a way to research, as a mode of communication, as a way to build trust and empathy and as a means of exploring the multiple layers of experience: “Umugani Ugana Akariho” – the proverb reflects reality.

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**CHANGING
THE STORY**