

Call for Contributions

Victims & Transitional Justice

p a r t i c i p a t i o n

m o b i l i s a t i o n

r e s i s t a n c e

Justice
Visions

13-15 March 2024
Ghent University, Belgium

BACKGROUND

In the past two decades a concern with 'victim participation' has come to dominate transitional justice scholarship and practice. Participation, it has been argued, can be both a locus and driver of transformative change. Meaningful participation allegedly foregrounds lived experiences and reflexive understandings of rights that underpin various agendas for justice and redress.

In an ideal scenario, participation in formal transitional justice mechanisms may offer opportunities to people who have experienced violence to subvert injustices. Innovative participation schemes have therefore been developed in various countries and settings. And a rich body of literature has emerged that on the one hand addresses questions of participatory modalities, and on the other, formulates a rich critique of current participation discourse(s).

It has become widely accepted that, in order to understand what meaningful participation could look like, we need to look beyond the formal institutions of transitional justice. People who have experienced violence often engage in various informal spaces and processes that exist before, after and around these formal participation opportunities. This conference takes these *participation ecologies* as a starting point.

We focus on the trajectory of actions undertaken by victims in their struggle for accountability, truth, repair, non-recurrence, memorialization, redress, and disruption of a harmful status quo. These trajectories unfold across formal and informal spaces, involve multiple phases and forms of engagement, and necessitate a process-based and open-ended exploration of outcomes that emerge at various moments in these trajectories.

The conference will bring together scholars and practitioners working on topics related to these justice-seeking trajectories of conflict-affected individuals and groups, from the Global South and North, from a range of disciplines, and adopting a range of methods or practices in their work.

Together we will reflect on the most important evolutions in the field. We will build and expand on the extant (academic and practical) knowledge-base to theorize participation in formal and informal spaces as pathways of change. In doing so, we will re-imagine the future of 'victim participation'.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

We invite proposals speaking to one of four themes, which will be used as an organizing principle throughout the conference. We welcome both theoretical contributions and empirical work, but will give preference to proposals using empirical insights as a basis for theorizing (dimensions of) the following themes.

STREAM 1 • Institutional innovation and impact

While we propose an ecological approach, we also acknowledge that formal transitional justice mechanisms continue to have a decisive importance in many transitional justice processes and for many victims. We will therefore explore which innovations are happening on the side of institutional actors, and what the micro-, meso-, and macro effects thereof are. The following questions will guide our conversations:

- How have participatory rights and modalities evolved across formal TJ pillars?
- What are best practices and what can the different pillars learn from each other?
- How have formal TJ mechanisms sought to include women, youth, diaspora, differently-abled persons, elderly persons, LGBTQIA+ persons, or other groups that are often overlooked?
- How do these formal participation processes affect socio-legal beliefs and attitudes?

STREAM 2 • Participation as lived experience

People who step in and out of formal and informal participation spaces bring certain expectations, experiences, epistemologies and ambitions with them, which may alter or be altered by the spaces in which they participate. This thematic stream examines how these lived experiences and (non-)scripted spaces interact. We examine:

- How do survivors navigate, negotiate, reshape, contest or reject participation and its meanings?
- How do formal spaces shape what happens in informal spaces (victim support structures, grassroots organizations, artistic spaces) and vice versa? How do these spheres interact?
- What are the temporal dimensions of participation? How do trajectories unfold over time, and in relation to shifting justice interests and socio-political dynamics? How do people deal with these complexities?
- What relational dynamics shape participation? And what is the role of intermediaries, allies, representatives and victims' organizations?

STREAM 3 • Epistemic and methodological diversity

As transitional justice discourses and tools travelled to new contexts, and as the voice of critical transitional justice scholars became more prominent, some of the foundational principles of transitional justice have been called into question. This has resulted in a necessary deconstruction of taken-for-granted dimensions of transitional justice, from its ontological and epistemological

roots to its predominant (legal) approaches. It also raised new questions about how to reconstruct the practice of transitional justice on the basis of these new knowledge approaches.

- How do indigenous and subaltern epistemologies shape the mobilization of people who have experienced violence, and our understanding thereof?
- Which methodological innovations can be observed with regards to the study of participation and engagement of people who have experienced violence in transitional justice contexts?
- How do our ways of studying participation affect the types of outcomes observed?
- How do various modalities of participation shape expectations and experiences of justice?

STREAM 4 • Beyond participation

When approaching participation in an ecological manner and as a trajectory, the very concept potentially comes to mean something completely different from how it has typically been approached in academic and practitioner debates. This thematic stream looks beyond participation in formal and paradigmatic transitional justice mechanisms at other dynamics that have a potentially more radical, disruptive or innovative potential.

- How do artistic & cultural practices move participation beyond the legal and the verbal?
- What does the notion of 'victim participation' mean in paradigmatic cases of TJ?
- How are grassroots actors mobilizing the rhetoric and tools of transitional justice as an element in their repertoire of protest or resistance?

SUSTAINABILITY NOTICE

While we will organize the conference as a Ghent-based event, we are concerned about the climate emergency, and warmly invite proposals for online submissions. Also in person panels will be livestreamed to serve global audiences. For those attending the Ghent-based event in person, we strongly encourage you to use public transport for your travel whenever possible. We will ensure local, sustainable, and vegan/vegetarian catering throughout the event.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We invite proposals for panels, papers and other (creative) formats.

We encourage the submission of proposals for **online** participation, and will rank those submissions that propose creative ways of engaging online higher among equals, in order to ensure that also

online formats become inspiring and dynamic conversations. For technical reasons, we cannot, however, accept hybrid panels with some online and some offline presentations.

While we cannot guarantee simultaneous interpretation through the conference, we invite proposals in **English, Spanish, French or Arabic**, and will seek to organize a meaningful and substantial program also for those who are not comfortable in English.

All **panel or round table submissions** should include:

- Abstract (max. 250 words)
- Convener bio (max. 100 words) and contact details
- At least two contributions (max. 250 words + 100 words author information)
- The conference stream and whether this will be an online or in-person panel

All proposals for **paper submissions** or **other formats** should include:

- Abstract (max. 250 words)
- In case of 'other' format, a short description of the format and spatial and technical requirements (max. 250 words)
- Author bio (max. 100 words) and contact details
- The conference stream and whether you will present online or in-person

Only submissions received by **15 September 2023** via [this link](#) will be considered by the organizers. Please indicate in your submission whether you wish to apply for financial support. Please note that only limited funding is available, and that Global South participants will be prioritized.

TIMELINE

Sept. 15, 2023	Deadline for submission of abstracts
Oct. 27, 2023	Authors are informed about the outcome of the selection process
Nov. 10, 2023	Candidates for financial support informed of outcome selection process
Nov. 13, 2023	Registration for delegates opens
Jan. 10, 2023	Registration for delegates ends
Feb. 23, 2024	Deadline for submission of papers
March 13-15, 2024	Conference

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

[Justice Visions](#) is based at the [Human Rights Centre](#) of the [Faculty of Law and Criminology](#) of Ghent University. Academic sessions will take place in the beautiful and historical [Sint-Pieters Abbey](#) in the city center of Ghent. In addition to the academic program, there will also be a social and cultural program which will take place at various locations throughout the city center. More information about this will be shared with applicants in due course. If you have mobility or dietary restrictions, please inform us, and we will try to accommodate these throughout the entire program.

While the conference will be primarily in person, we seek to be as inclusive as possible, and commit to exploring virtual participation options as well as to livestreaming plenaries for global audiences.

There are no conference fees. Catering during the conference is provided free of charge, and participants are welcome to join the cultural program free of charge. We also foresee accommodation and travel stipends for a limited number of low-income participants. We can, however, not cover accommodation and travel costs for all participants. If you wish to apply for a travel grant, please fill out the relevant fields during the submission process.

You can share information and updates about this conference using #JusticeVisions.

For practical questions and further information, please email JusticeVisions@Ugent.be.



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