

Local students, global minds

The daily lives and future plans of students at a secondary school in Rwanda



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Bachelorthesis

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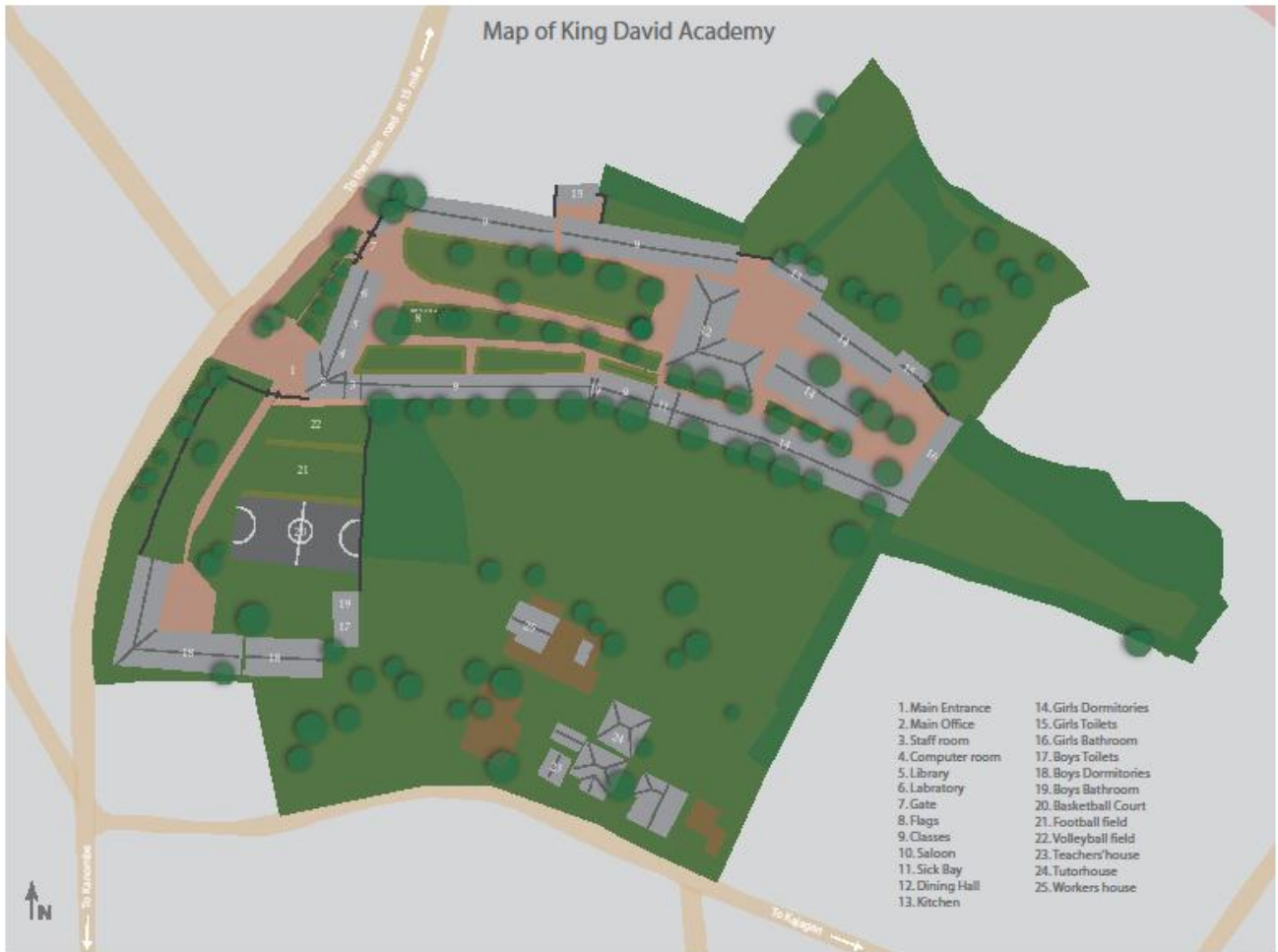
About the picture on the cover:

Two students are strolling down a path on the main terrain of the King David Academy. The sign in the tree on the left side says “English speaking Club”, which is the sign of the club at school that encourages students to speak English. Further down the path, two girls are sweeping the pathway as a punishment.

Picture made by author.

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Map 2 : The King David Academy
 Map is made by Mara van Welie, 2012.

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1. Introduction

I am talking to a student who is standing in front of a classroom. His name is Joshua¹, but he explains to me that some of his classmates call him Joshua B. or Joshua Bieber, because he likes Justin Bieber so much. On a later occasion, he tells me that he would like to be a singer. I ask him: "Like Justin Bieber?", but his answer is: "No, I'm too black for that".

Joshua is a student at King David Academy, a secondary school in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.² He has never traveled outside his country, but knows many things about American singers and music. Although his daily life is confined to one place, he is confronted with people, images and products from all over the world. It shows that he is part of a globalized world in which global flows of capital, people, images, ideas and goods spread across nations with increased speed. The world has become more interconnected and events or happenings on one side of the planet have consequences for people living in an entirely different part of the world. The experiences of youth provide a good lens through which we can examine these phenomena. The future of young people becomes more uncertain in this period of rapid social change, and they are seen as extra vulnerable. However, it is important to note that young people are not just passive victims or receivers of global processes, ideas and commodities, but that they are able to actively shape and change these phenomena (Bucholtz 2002, Hull et al. 2007, Honwana & de Boeck 2005, Hansen 2008).

Furthermore, attention should be paid to the fact that these 'global flows' do not spread across the world in an even or equal way. Globalization has led to an increased mobility of people and goods, but not everyone is able to move equally free across the world (Inda & Rosaldo 2008, Eriksen 2007). As a result of globalization, many young people in Africa are confronted with more ideas, images and products, but are at the same time aware that they have limited access to these (Bordonaro 2007, Roth-Gordon & Woronov 2009). In the anecdote about Joshua for example, it becomes clear that Joshua has a dream for the future but that he is also aware of his restricted possibilities to accomplish this dream. Besides being a singer, he dreams about going to the United States to finish his education. He is an orphan and in order to accomplish these dreams he is dependent on sponsors to support him in the pursuit of his ambitions. His remark, "I'm too black for that", is not necessarily about the color of his skin, but about the fact that he does not have the resources to become a singer like Justin Bieber and that he comes from a different place and social position than this singer.

¹ Throughout the thesis I only use the first names of my informants. I changed the names of my informants in order to ensure their privacy.

² Throughout the thesis I will use the abbreviations 'KDA' and 'King David' to refer to King David Academy.

It is therefore important to understand how young marginalized people in Africa make sense of their lives in a global era. We can study how global flows and processes take shape in a specific local context by looking at the everyday experiences of youth (Bucholtz 2002). When putting youth in the center of analysis, it becomes clear that the lives of young people today is full of contradictions and continuously switch between agency and dependency, restrictions and possibilities (Hansen 2007). One area of the lives of young people where this process is visible is that of schooling, the topic on which this research is focused. Schools influence and restrict the lives of students in important ways, while at the same time providing these young people with new possibilities and chances for the future (Roth-Gorden & Woronov 2009, Hull et al. 2009).

This thesis is based on three months of fieldwork, conducted from February to April 2013. Appendix 1 contains a description of the methods that were used during the research. In this thesis, I focus on the daily lives of students at the King David Academy, a secondary school in Kigali, Rwanda. I examine the future plans of the students and the activities that they pursue in order to accomplish their ambitions. Furthermore, I will show what role the school and sponsors have in this process, and how external forces provide possibilities as well as restrictions in the pursuit of the students' ambitions. The main research question is: *How do students at King David Academy express and pursue their future plans in the daily lives at school and which forces, actors and institutions present restrictions as well as possibilities in this?*

This thesis is structured as follows: I will start with an elaboration on anthropological theory about globalization, youth, marginalization and education. This theoretical framework can be found in chapter 2. The next chapter provides background information about the position of youth in Rwanda, its educational system and the King David Academy. The empirical data is presented in the next three chapters. Chapter 4 describes the daily activities of students at KDA and chapter 5 describes how they express and pursue their ambitions of the future. In the sixth chapter I will elaborate on a specific groups of students at KDA: those who come from an orphanage in Gisenyi. In the conclusion I will answer the main question by integrating the theory with the empirical data. In the appendixes I will elaborate on the methods that I used during my research, reflect on my role as researcher in the process of data collection and provide a summary of my thesis.

2. The study of young people in a global world

“Youth and children are in both subtle and obviously horrific ways vulnerable in our world, but (...) they are also active, inventive, creative beings, busy making what sense of it they can, drawing on the local and global cultural resources to which they have access” (Hull et al 2009:134).

While they make up a big part of its population, marginalized youth in Africa are often seen as a problem. It is stated that countries with a high proportion of youth, a so-called ‘youth bulge’, are more likely to experience an outbreak of violence or conflict. However, many scholars have argued against this ‘youth bulge and instability thesis’ and state that this theory does not take into account the experiences of the young people themselves (Sommers 2011, Frederiksen & Munive 2010). By putting youth themselves in the centre of analysis, attention is paid to their agency and the way they make their way through a life full of complexities. This is especially the case in an age of globalization, in which youth are faced with more ideologies, commodities, knowledge, opportunities, but are also more aware that they do not have access to these resources (Bordonaro 2009). Frederiksen and Munive state that: “Youth provide the lens through which we study the complexities of globalization and how global trends enter African localities and foster bright ideas, social movements and economic activities that in their turn influence global politics and development” (2010:251).

In this chapter I will first provide an overview of the anthropological study of globalization. Next, I will elaborate on the study of young people within anthropology and how to study this group in an era of globalization. Finally, I will focus on the role of education in the lives of young people. Throughout the chapter it becomes clear that the lives of young people today is full of contradictions and notions of dependency and agency are present at the same time when young people are finding out what it means to be young in this global world.

The anthropology of globalization

Inda and Rosaldo (2008) define globalization simply as the intensification of global interconnectedness, adding that it implies a fundamental reordering of time and space. The experience of time and space has changed due to economic and technological changes. Time has overcome the barriers of space as David Harvey (1989) captures in the term “time-space compression”. As a consequence it is now possible for people in the Netherlands to experience a certain media event at the same time with people in, say, New Zealand. Distances seem to diminish and the pace of life is speeding up. By the same token, Anthony Giddens (1990) describes how social life is stretched out over time and space. He distinguishes two kinds of interactions that make up social life. The first one is that of face-to-face contact, in which people engage directly with each

other in often bounded local spaces. The second form of interaction is enabled by transport and communications systems that make more remote forms of interactions across time and space possible. It is this form of social interaction that becomes more important in modern times. Social relations are disembedded from local contexts and social life is no longer confined to a specific local place (Giddens 1990).

However, some authors emphasize that the world has always been interconnected. People have always moved across the globe and have always interacted with people from other countries and cultures. Eriksen argues that the world did not fundamentally transform after the late 1980s, the only difference is that “the driving forces of both economic political and cultural dynamics are transnational – and that this is now widely acknowledged” (2007:4). Eriksen emphasizes this dual character of globalization; on the one hand an increased interconnectedness of the world and on the other hand an increased awareness of this interconnectedness.

Because of this increased interconnectedness, social, cultural, political and economic practices are stretched out across frontiers because. Therefore, decisions or happenings that take place in one area of the globe can have consequences for people in a very different, distant place (Inda & Rosaldo 2008). Furthermore, globalization implies the increased entanglement of the global and local. Even though people may live their local lives, these are influenced by global events, so that “their phenomenal worlds have to some extent become global” (Inda & Rosaldo 2008:11).

In the discussion of globalization, some scholars (e.g. Ritzer 1993) argue that this process leads to cultural imperialism or to the ‘McDonaldization’, Americanization, or homogenization of the world. Globalization seems to have homogenizing tendencies, because products become standardized and are the same everywhere. This is said to lead to the elimination of cultural differences. However, many scholars (Appadurai 1996, Inda & Rosaldo 2008) declare that one should study how the meaning of a ‘global’ product or idea is shaped in a very specific context. Inda and Rosaldo (2008) point out that people in the third world are not just passive consumers of products from the United States, but that ideas and cultural products are actively adjusted or even rejected in a local context. It is therefore important to study the daily experiences of people to see how these global processes take place in a specific local setting. Furthermore, global flows do not just move from ‘the West to the rest’, they also move the other way around and there are global flows that entirely circumvent the West. These should also be taken into account to paint the complete picture of globalization (Inda & Rosaldo 2008).

Globalization led to the redefinition of the notions of time and space (Eriksen 2007, Kearney 1995) and the classical models of center and periphery with clearly marked boundaries need to be redefined “to a multidimensional global space with unbounded, often discontinuous and interpenetrating sub-spaces” (Kearney 1995:549). Products, ideas, cultures and identities are not

confined to one particular space, they are deterritorialized. Gupta and Ferguson (1992) argue that scholars often assume a natural connection between culture and space, conceptualizing culture as a fixed thing that is uniform and belongs to a certain territory. However, Gupta and Ferguson claim that this is not the case, especially in the current era of globalization. They argue that “‘Cultures’ and ‘peoples’ however persistent they may be, cease to be plausibly identifiable as spots on the map” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:10). However, while the link between people and place is becoming less clear, the idea of people belonging to a certain territory becomes more salient. They show how imagined communities become attached to imagined places and homelands. It is therefore important to examine how people make and imagine space (Gupta & Ferguson 1992). This means that in anthropological research, we should not assume that the world exists of different cultures and therefore investigate the differences between people or cultures. Instead, we should see the world as a “difference-producing set of relations” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:16) and investigate how these differences are constructed.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) pays special attention to the role of imagination in the world of globalization and points out that in the globalized world, ordinary people have begun to deploy imagination in their daily lives. This means that an increasing number of people start to imagine their lives or the lives of their children in different places than where they are now, or in different ways. Imagination becomes a social practice and “central to all forms of agency” (Appadurai 1996:31). According to Madsen, this process leads to “the ability of an increasing number of people in ever more parts of the world to consider a wider range of lives” (2008:153). People themselves are able to construct an ‘imagined world’, and are not dependent on elites or other people to impose a worldview. These imagined worlds are transnational and are shaped by individual perspectives. Appadurai proposes the concept of different ‘scapes’ that form the building blocks of the imagined worlds. He points to the fact that the global era is characterized by fundamental disjunctures between economics, politics and culture. Scapes are fluid and perspectival constructs and are used to examine the relationship between global flows and these disjunctures. Appadurai distinguishes five scapes: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples. These scapes form the imaginary landscape that people construct, but are not necessarily coherent; global flows occur in and through the growing disjunctures among these scapes. Appadurai thus argues that “the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (...), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility” (Appadurai 1996: 31). Thus, while people may be constrained in their possibilities, they are still able to show agency and to imagine their own worlds.

People, cultures and identities are no longer bound to a certain place. This brings about more possibilities, but also more uncertainty and risks. Globalization led to the fact that identity is not as

self-evident as it seems and an increasing amount of anthropological research is focused on how identities are formed across borders (Kearney 1995). Appadurai (1996) shows how in a world of constant flux cultural reproduction becomes more difficult and it is harder for people to find points of reference and identity. He adds that “the pains of cultural reproduction in a disjunctive global world are, of course, not eased by the effects of mechanical art (or mass media), for these media afford powerful resources for counternodes of identity that youth can project against parental wishes or desires” (Appadurai 1996: 44). People are more dependent on what people in other places do and are less able to control this. This leads to an increased feeling of uncertainty and being at risk Eriksen (2007).

Moreover, many authors emphasize that not everyone has access to the same possibilities, resources and mobility that the process of globalization makes possible. Inda and Rosaldo (2008) point to the fact that the circulation of capital, goods, ideas, images and peoples is not as unrestrained as it seems, but that it needs a certain infrastructure, for instance communication networks, airplanes routes and governmental strategies. These can serve not only to enable but also to constrain mobility. Global flows do not cover the world in an equal way. Inda and Rosaldo (2008) give the flow of capital as an example, showing how most flows of capital only go to a certain area and banks focus on a few key markets and exclude other areas. The same process becomes clear when looking at people’s mobility. Some people are able to move freely across the world, but others are stopped by immigration policies, trade agreements or poverty (Dolby & Rizvi 2008). Inda and Rosaldo (2008) conclude that part of global economic processes are practices of exclusion and that connection and disconnection seem to go hand in hand.

Anthropology and youth

Young people have always been present in anthropological studies, but they were often cast in a supporting role. Anthropologists focused on for example rites of passage and age groups, on the way youth fit in the structure of a society and the way in which the cultural category of youth is constructed (Durham 2000). Schwartzman (2001) shows how in anthropological research, children were used to facilitate the investigation of certain topics, for instance acculturation or social organization and kinship structures. However, their position was always marginal; children and youth were never the central topic of investigation, but were rather used in order to support a theory. Deborah Durham (2004) states that in the 1990s, anthropologists showed a renewed interest in the study of youth. Mary Bucholtz (2002) shows how in earlier work, the anthropological study of youth was mainly focused on how young people become an adult. The focus was on adolescence and young people were treated as “not-yet-finished human beings” (Bucholtz 2002:529). Instead, Bucholtz proposes another kind of anthropological study of youth, in which youth is seen as a cultural

category and where the focus is on the agency of young people and how they experience and change cultural practices. It is therefore not about the appropriation of culture by youth, but it highlights the ways in which youth actively shape and transform culture (Bucholtz 2002).

When studying youth, it is important to note that whether or not someone is considered as 'youth' varies across time and space. Although these categories are often taken for granted, childhood, youth and adulthood are socially constructed (Bucholtz 2002, Durham 2004, Frederiksen & Munive 2010). Therefore, Durham argues that "to call someone a youth is to position him or her in terms of a variety of social attributes, including not only age but also independence – dependence, authority, rights, abilities, knowledge, responsibilities, and so on" (2004:593). She states that by this name-giving the category of youth itself is changed and the attributes given to it are repositioned. It is therefore important to find out how this naming takes place and how these categories are constructed within a certain context.

Alicinda Honwana and Filip de Boeck (2005) argue that in the international law on children's rights, a specific view of children and youth became dominant. A specific definition of childhood was universalized due to the establishment of global standards for the protection of children. In this definition, children and youth are seen as vulnerable, dependent, pre-social, passive and in the need of protection. This view originates from Europe and North America, but is universalized to the extent that children and youth who are not following this path are seen as 'out of place' and at risk (Honwana & de Boeck 2005).

Many authors question the categorization of children in this way. For example, Kirrily Pells (2012) shows how the categorization of children as vulnerable clashes with discourses of participation and agency in the children's right-based approach of NGOs working with children in Rwanda. Young people should not be studied as adults-to-be, or passive victims, but as "beings-in-the-present and as social actors with an identity of their own" (Honwana & de Boeck 2005:4). By putting youth in the centre of analysis, attention is paid to their day-to-day experiences and the way they are influenced by and at the same time influence the larger social processes that take place in the world around them (Honwana & de Boeck 2005, Hansen 2008, Hull et al. 2009). Durham (2000) proposes to apply the concept of a 'shifter' to the category of youth. A 'shifter' is a term borrowed from linguistics and is a word or a concept that draws attention to the underlying relations within a structure and to the structure itself (Durham 2000). Bucholtz explains that "as a shifter (...) youth is a context-renewing and context-creating sign whereby social relations are both (and often simultaneously) reproduced and contested" (Bucholtz 2002:528). By using this term, the ability of youth to change the structures to which they are subject is highlighted.

Youth, globalization and marginality

As stated before, globalization leads to increased risks and Hull and colleagues (2009) argue that young people are the least capable of defending themselves against these risks, which makes them more vulnerable. The future of young people becomes more uncertain in the age of globalization and it is harder for them to follow the traditional patterns of work and family: "Youth today has become a less clearly demarcated stage than in the past in the institutionalization of the life course" (Hansen 2008:7). However, Bucholtz (2002:530) reminds us that we should keep in mind that young people are not solely experiencers and victims of cultural change, but often bring about and shape cultural change. Bucholtz and Skapoulli (2009) argue that the study of youth is very relevant in an era of globalization, in which identities become more fluid and less confined to a cultural context: "Young people may be particularly inclined to embrace and revise such cultural flows, due to their distinctive generational experiences as well as youth culture's demands for innovation and originality (Bucholtz & Skapoulli 2009: 1-2). It is important to note that young people are not just subject to the processes of globalization and modernization that take place, but that they are able to shape, change, or resist these processes.

As discussed previously, the notion of place has changed due to globalization and Dolby and Rizvi (2008: 4) point out that this has consequences for young people: "Youth, then, must move differently in the world today than they did in previous generations, as the sites in which they live are themselves transformed". Young people construct their identity within the context of increased mobility even if they are confined to one place. As explained before, even local places are changed and influenced by global processes. Young people do not necessarily move physically, but they do mentally, and imagination is crucial in this process. It is therefore important to study the daily experiences of youth and the specific local context in which these processes take place (Dolby & Rizvi 2008, Hansen 2008).

Bordonaro (2009) and Roth-Gordon and Woronov (2009) argue that because of the global flows of ideas and commodities, youth are confronted with additional possibilities but also with the fact that they have limited access to these things. Roth-Gordon and Woronov state that "the hypervisibility of this global subculture encourages youth to play out first-world/third-world distinctions on global, national and local levels, increasing their perception of their own disenfranchisement and exclusion even as the quality of their daily living conditions surpasses that of previous generations" (2009:132). Similarly, Honwana and de Boeck (2005) argue that globalization can serve as a new source of power for youth, but many young people in Africa do not have the possibility to participate in this. Bordonaro (2009) demonstrates how young men in Bijagó, Guinea-

Bissau, base their identity on 'modern' commodities and ideas, but at the same time have limited access to the wage economy and thus do not have the resources to access this modern reality.

Maira and Soep (2005) propose the concept of 'youthscapes' in order to understand the position of young people in a global world. This concept is adapted from Appadurai's idea of scapes and it emphasizes the fact that global flows do not cover the world in an equal or coherent way, but are characterized by break and disjuncture. This concept emphasizes that youth have an ambiguous place within local, national and global power structures. They are continuously struggling to find a place within these forces, while at the same time defining what it means to be young in a globalized world (Maia & Soep 2005, Hansen 2007).

Even though young people have limited options and are constrained by forces that they cannot control, they are still able to exert agency and creativity to position themselves within the global flows. Natascha Klocker (2007) puts forward the term 'thin agency', which means that even the options and circumstances are restricted, youth still make deliberate choices to carry out their daily lives. Klocker describes how children who are domestic workers are in a situation in which they have few choices. Still, these children emphasize that it was their own choice to become a domestic worker and they take responsibility for their decisions. This concept highlights the strengths and abilities of these children, instead of seeing them as objects and putting them into categories such as 'poor' or 'vulnerable'. It is therefore important to focus on the daily experiences of young people in order to highlight how they control their own lives.

An example of how to study the daily experiences of young people is the study of Lorenzo Bordonaro (2009). This author rejects the view of youth "as naïve, passive victims of the allures of modernity" (2009: 70) and argues that scholars have failed to see the way discourses are locally resisted or adjusted. He emphasizes the agency of local youth and focuses on the interplay between the concept of development and how it is used by youth in a local context. Bordonaro shows how a group of young boys, living in Bubaque in the Bijagó Islands in Guinea Bissau, employ a developmentalist discourse in order to reject traditional authorities and use it as an idiom to express aspirations, needs and rights. They use dichotomies such as traditional and modern, developed and backward to turn against the values and practices of their parents and to make sense of their marginal position in urban society. The modernist development discourse is therefore transformed into a very specific local set of meanings.

Karen Tranberg Hansen (2008) emphasizes that the lives of young people are full of contradictions since the meanings of youth shift contextually. Therefore, young people do not either express dependence or agency, but both. The experiences of both freedom and constraints are not mutually exclusive but are both present at the same time. In the study of youth it is therefore important to focus on the forces to which they are subject and that they cannot control, while at the

same time looking at how they make their way through life within these power fields. This process also becomes clear when looking at the role of school and education in the lives of young people.

Youth, education and the future

Young people are influenced and restricted by many things, such as global flows, national policies, schools and parents (Roth-Gordon & Woronov 2009, Sommers 2011). Dolby and Rizvi (2008) focus on three sites that are critical to youth's present and future: work, technology and consumer culture. In this thesis the focus is on education, which is seen as very important in order to obtain a job in the future. School to work transitions have become less certain and that affects young people even when they are still in school (Dolby & Rizvi 2008). Education is often seen as a key means to achieve the development of a country and school is a place where young people spend an increasing amount of time and where they construct their identity (Bordonaro 2009, Madsen 2006). Education can serve as a tool in for example democratization processes or imagining a new future for the nation (Tabulawa 2003, Staeheli & Hammett 2013). Bordonaro (2009) shows how in Guinea-Buissau young men use school as a marker of a modern identity and as a way to resist the traditional identity of their village.

Education and schools are also influenced by processes of globalization and modernization and Madsen (2008:170) argues that "schooling (...) becomes one important site, and perhaps the most visible one, where local, state or national, and global forces intersect, and where increasingly reflective and interconnected actors respond to them". Furthermore, several authors (Dolby & Rizvi 2008, Hull et al. 2009) point to the fact that schools and other educational institutions are transformed due to the new context of globalization and are no longer the sole site where youth are educated and prepared for the future. Still, it is important to investigate how schools shape the everyday lives of young people. Hull and colleagues (2009:137) put forward that "schools and other educational settings deserve attention, via serious reconceptualizations, not merely as incidental sites for identity development via popular cultural means, but also as genuine venues for learning and for trajectories toward work, career and citizenship in a globalized world". Education is widely believed to benefit individuals, providing them with valuable skills and knowledge for the future, better health, economic prospects and greater control over their lives. However, critics argue that schooling serves the needs of capitalism, changing young people into a disciplined workforce and stimulating consumption and increasing inequality (Ansell 2005). Dolby and Rizvi (2008) question the purpose of schooling when there are fewer job opportunities for youth except the most privileged. Verhoeven and colleagues (2007) mention as well that education is not a guarantee for employment, but stress that without education, young people hardly have a chance of obtaining a good job. Demerath and Lynch (2008) investigate how young people see the future and equip themselves for

it. They point to out that young people have to make an enterprise of oneself due to the neoliberal system.

Roth-Gordon and Woronov (2009) pay attention to power relations in which youth are embedded and focus on how youth are regulated by the institution of school. They argue that school is disciplining the bodies of students, because this institution determines what they wear, how they behave, and what they read and write. In this process, conditions are set for what youth are allowed to be; "Schools thus shape how young people around the world become 'normal' people in their respective societies" (Roth-Gordon & Woronov 2009:138). Thus, school has a disciplining effect on young people's lives, but it is also a place where they learn new things and prepare themselves for the future. Madsen (2008) argues that schooling provides promises to young people. According to her, "school is an important imaginative space where young people participate in making sense out of possible worlds linked to the ideologies of democracy and individualization" (Madsen 2008:169). Following Appadurai's idea of scapes and the concept of youthscares she puts forward the concept of "eduscapes" to highlight the increased interconnectedness of young people and schools in an age of globalization. In her study of students in Brazil, Zambia and Vietnam, Madsen (2008: 170) concludes that "as actors in schooling, they [the students] are negotiating and resisting power and designing visions and dreams that transcend the realities of their lifeworlds". Again, imagination is important for young people, also within the context of school. The concept of eduscapes shows how students are not restricted by the power of the school, but are actively responding to the forces that they are subject to.

In conclusion, when focusing on schooling, it becomes clear that schools discipline and influence students in many ways and provide forces that students cannot control. On the other hand, schools are sites where they can imagine different lives, new futures and take control over their lives. In the next chapters I will describe the daily lives and future plans of students at the King David Academy, in order to show how these contradictions between dependency and agency, and restrictions and possibilities take shape in a local context.

3. Rwanda; a country with a vision for the future

Rwanda acquired international attention during the genocide in 1994, in which around 800.000 people were killed in three months' time. In this chapter, I will not go into detail about the causes of the genocide, because it is not in the scope of my research. I will rather focus on how the country recovered from these horrible events from the past and is focusing on the future. I will give an overview of the policies of the Rwandan government, with an explicit focus on what this means for young people living and studying in the country. Furthermore, I will provide background information about the King David Academy, the school where this research was conducted.

The genocide in 1994 had, and still has, an enormous impact on Rwanda. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), consisting of mainly Tutsis, eventually stopped the genocide and took power. They are still in power presently and the country has been led by Paul Kagame since 2000. The government is often praised by the international community for how it handled the aftermath of the conflict and the reconstruction of the country. Since 2003, the average economic growth per year is 7-8% (CIA World Factbook 2013). Rwanda is said to be a model of development and a 'donor darling', because it receives a lot of aid from other countries and organizations (Sommers 2011). While much attention is paid to overcoming the horrible events of the past and bringing justice and reconciliation in the country, the government is also strongly focused on the future. With the policy of "Vision 2020", the government is striving for Rwanda to become a middle-income country by 2020 (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 2000). In the long term, the government aims to become a service hub in Central Africa (Hayman 2005). This requires a sufficiently skilled population, and education is very important to achieve this, especially in the field of ICT and sciences (Ministry of Education 2003). Rwanda has entered the East African Community in 2007, which helps to promote the regional integration of the country. The countries within the East African Community are trying to harmonize their educational systems, but did accomplish this yet (Bahati 2013). Many people in Rwanda explained to me that the level of education in Rwanda is lower than that of the surrounding countries.

Young people between the age of 14 until 35 make up 39% of the population of Rwanda. For many young people in Rwanda it is hard to find a job. The unemployment rate for people between the age of 16 until 29 was 64% in 2012. This rate is higher for young people who did not finish primary or secondary school, but even those who did finish their education have difficulties finding work (Nsanzimana 2012). Nayebare & Mbonyinshuti (2013) note that the options for students who are not able to join university are limited. The government and other organizations are encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs, in order to solve the unemployment problem. The attitude of

students should change and they should become 'job makers' instead of 'job seekers' (Nsanzimana 2013). Therefore, entrepreneurship is a subject taught at school, which is compulsory for all students, from senior 1 up to senior 6.

The educational system of Rwanda is structured into pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. Besides that, there is vocational training provided by Youth Training centres. Pre-primary education consists of nursery schools that provide education for three years for children from the age of 3 up to 6. Primary education comprises six years and is for children between the ages of 7 and 12. Secondary education lasts six years as well and the official age of children in this level is between 12 and 18. Secondary school is divided into lower secondary (O 'level), and upper secondary (A 'level), which both take three years (Ministry of Education 2003). In 2009, the government introduced the nine years of basic education program, which means that the first nine years of basic education are free for everyone and compulsory. This program covers primary school and lower secondary education (Ministry of Education 2010). Primary education is mostly provided by public schools, while only 30% of the secondary schools are public schools (Hayman 2005). During the first three years of secondary school, the classes called senior 1, senior 2 and senior 3, students have to take many different subjects, such as mathematics, biology, chemistry, English, Kinyarwanda³, history and geography. In A'level, the classes senior 4 up to senior 6, students choose a combination of subjects that they take. For example HEG: History, Economics and Geography, or PEM: Physics, Economics and Mathematics. In senior 3 and senior 6 students have to take national exams. Based on the results of the senior 3 exams, they choose their combination in A'level. Students that pass their senior 6 exams graduate from secondary school. The government provides scholarships for university for students who performed well in these exams.

In 2008 the Rwandan government decided to change the official language of instruction to English. Before this, the first three years of primary school were taught in Kinyarwanda. After that, students could choose between English and French. From 2008 on, it was no longer possible to choose French. One of the reasons of this shift was the entrance of Rwanda into the East African Community in 2007. The other countries of this union are Anglophone. It is important to be able to speak English to benefit from for instance trade or migration within the community. Furthermore, English is important for Rwanda because of the economic bonds of Rwanda with the US and the UK, and to access the economic world system (Samuelson & Freedman 2009). Finally, some people

³ Kinyarwanda is a Bantu language and is the official language in Rwanda, next to English and French. Steflja (2012) estimates that almost 100% of the Rwandan population speaks Kinyarwanda, while only 4% speaks English and 8% speaks French.

argued that with this shift, the government tried to move away from the colonial legacies of the country (Steflja 2012).⁴

King David Academy is a private secondary school, founded in 1999 by Annette Mutamuriza, the director of the school (Bronswijk 2011). It is situated in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda; it has around 900 students and is a boarding school. Students sleep in dormitories, together with around 40 to 50 students of the same class. They get up at 3:30 am to bathe and get ready for the day. At 5:00 am they have to be in class, for what is called 'morning preps', morning preparations. Students revise, read their notes and study. After that they go for breakfast and at 7:15 am the classes start. There is a break from 10:35 until 11:00, during students can go to the canteen to buy milk, tea, and food. The next break is from 12:40 until 14:00, in which lunch for the students is served in the main dining hall. The last class ends at 16:30. After that, the students have spare time, in which they bathe, relax or play sports. At 18:00 dinner is served in the main hall and at 19:00 the students have to be in class again for 'evening preps'. At 21:00 the preps are finished and the students are allowed to go to the dormitories. However, some students choose to stay in the classrooms to study some more, because it is more quiet at night.

The school has about thirty teachers and most of them come from Uganda. All classes are taught in English and therefore the school needs teachers who are proficient in this language. Many teachers from Rwanda are francophone, whereas English has been the official language in Uganda since it was colonized in 1894. For the Ugandan teachers it provides a good working opportunity, since it is difficult for them to find a job in their own country. Some teachers live in a building next to the school, others have their own house in different parts of the city. The school provides breakfast, lunch and dinner for them and many teachers are at school during the evenings and the weekends.

The school grounds consist of two rows of classrooms, with ten classrooms in every row and with pathways and grass in between. The main dining hall is in the middle of the terrain. Behind it are the girls' dormitories and on the opposite of the dining hall are the laboratory, the library and the computer room. These are next to the entrance, where the reception, some offices and the staff room are located. Behind the classrooms are the boys' dormitories with the sport grounds in front of them.

The library and the computer room were created with the support of a Dutch foundation, called "Stichting Rwanda Solidair". In 2007, 2008 and 2009, the foundation organised a project for high school students from the Netherlands who to go to Rwanda. Together with students from KDA, they played soccer, acted in a play, painted the classrooms and set up the library and the computer

⁴ Rwanda was colonized by Belgium and was therefore Francophone.

room. The foundation is still active at the school. They sponsor some Rwandese students and encourage Dutch students to come to Rwanda for a couple of months to do an internship or to volunteer at the school. Furthermore, they are planning to build a biogas installation at KDA. Consequently, there are often people from the Netherlands at the school who carry out different projects, such as giving creative lessons or performing a theatre play with the students.



Students sitting in the dining hall, which is decorated by paintings made by Dutch and Rwandan students in 2009. February 2013.

4. “We are doing a job from Monday up to Friday”. The daily activities of students at KDA

In the back of the classroom a boy is lying with his head on his arms on the table, sleeping. When the teacher finishes writing on the blackboard, he walks to the back of the class and touches the arm of the boy who is sleeping. The student slowly wakes up and rubs his eyes. “Come”, the teacher says and he orders the student to come to the front of the class and to explain what is written on the blackboard. The boy walks to the front very slowly. “Come, come”, the teacher says. When the student finally reaches the front of the class, he leans on a table, looks at the blackboard and remains silent. After some time, the teacher walks up to him. He looks at the boy and then into the class. “At what time did you wake up?” he asks the class. The students answer: “At three” after which the teacher exclaims: “That’s too late!”.

This fragment describes an incident on a regular day of students at the King David Academy. It highlights some important aspects of their day-to-day lives at the school; waking up early, sitting in class, listening to the teacher and sleeping on the table. In this chapter, I will describe the daily activities of students at the King David Academy and how they experience these. As explained in the previous chapters, it is important to understand the daily experiences of these young people at school, in order to understand how they make sense of their lives and the forces and institutions that they are subject to.

As explained in the previous chapter, students wake up early every day, at three o’ clock. Many students express that they do not like to wake up early in the morning. One of them explained: “When you are in class, you might not follow the teacher, you might not concentrate on what the teacher says. So you might sleep, you might lean on the desk. So waking up early in the morning can make you sleep”.⁵ During the week, students spend most of their time in the classrooms. Every class has its own classroom, in which they stay all day. Teachers move from one classroom to another. Classes take 50 minutes, but often a subject is scheduled for several hours in a row, so the teacher stays in the class for more hours. During class, teachers write notes on the blackboard and explain. Students write down these notes in their notebooks and sometimes a teacher asks a student to come to the front of the class to explain something or to answer questions. Some teachers make sheets with questions or summaries to help the students in their studies. Sometimes, teachers come to the classes during evening preps to give extra lessons. The students organize group discussions occasionally, in which one student explains something to the others. After class, I often encountered

⁵ Interview with Alex, April 2013.

groups of students sitting in classrooms listening to another student explaining the course material or writing on the blackboard. When the students have a free hour, they go to the dining hall to study, or stay in their classrooms to read, to chat or to sleep. The following anecdote is an example of what students do during a free hour.

Two teachers are standing in a classroom, chatting with each other and the students. "I'm just catching up with my students", explains one of the teachers to me. They talk to each other about the students, they joke that the students pretend to be studying hard now, but that they will fail in their exams. "This boy," the other teacher says "I saw him teaching economics this morning, but it was all wrong". Some students chat and joke along with the teachers and ask them when they will get their reports. In the front row, two boys are listening to another student who is explaining something to them. In the back of the classroom, students are lying with their heads on their arms, sleeping; others are focused on their notebooks.

Some teachers get along with the students very well, they joke, but they can be very strict and hard on their pupils as well. They also coach some students, give them extra lessons, keep an eye on them. The students think that a good teacher is someone who explains well, who makes you understand things. And it is also important that they get along with them well, that they can talk with them and joke. When talking about his favorite teachers, James explained: "Sometimes they relax. A teacher who doesn't relax, who doesn't allow a student to sleep on the table, is not a good teacher. But a good teacher is also someone who wakes the students up and continues the lesson. But a teacher who uses a warming-up is also good".⁶ Students agree that a bad teacher is someone who is not able to make you understand something, who does not explain well. A teacher who makes you fall asleep in class, whose lessons are boring, is also not a good teacher.

During their break students sit in their classrooms, in the dining hall or go outside to chat or to play. Those with pocket money can go to the canteen, where they buy tea or milk or something to eat. One of the students explained what you can do during the break: "If you have money, you go to the canteen, if not, you just lay down and relax. You go to the computer lab to play or you go to the library. You just joke around".⁷ In a focus group, the students also discussed what they do during break:

James: "Some students sleep in class. Some try to go to the kitchen, to listen to the radio, to the news from outside".

Sandra: "And some of them chat in class, they make stories and talk to each other".

⁶ Interview with James, April 2013.

⁷ Focus group, March 2013.

David: "And there is doggie, the dance".

James: "They beat the tables, they drum and they dance".

David: "When you have nothing to do, you dance".⁸

On Saturdays students do gymnastics and play sports. In the back of the school terrain, in front of the boys' dormitories, there is a sports area with a basketball field, a volleyball net and a field where football is played. There is a sports club, supervised by a teacher, which consists of some students who organize the gymnastics, volleyball, football and basketball. Besides, different clubs have activities on Saturday, such as the music and drama club or the worship team. During the afternoon, students rest, pray or play some more sports. On Sunday morning, the students go to church, this is compulsory. King David Academy is a Christian school, but people are also allowed to practice other religions. There are different Christian denominations at school, which all have their own church service. The Born Again Christians use the dining hall, the Seventh day Evangelists use the upper classrooms. In the lower row of classrooms, the Catholics and the Muslims are situated in different rooms. The Muslims have a meeting there on Sunday and pray together on Friday. During the rest of the weekend, students rest, wash their clothes, pray and study. Sometimes on Saturday and Sunday afternoon, a beamer is connected to a TV and students watch football, movies or music clips in the dining hall.

Students are happy that in the weekends they have a lot of free time and that they are able to decide for themselves what to do or how to spend their days. During the week, they have to follow a tight schedule, but in the weekends they are freer. During a focus group, one of the students explained what she likes to do in the weekends: "I relax and I take time to read what I need to read. I make a choice by myself in the weekends. Because of the way that we study here, you have to follow the time table, so you have to do this, after that you have to do that. But during the weekend you can do what you want. You relax, you wash your clothes".⁹ Another student expressed the same feelings: "These are working days, like a job; we are doing a job from Monday up to Friday. So during the weekends it is time to rest, to relax".¹⁰

The motto of the school is 'trust in God and toil', and it is clear that the school administration takes the 'toil' seriously. Students wake up early, have to work hard and do not have a lot of freedom or spare time. There are strict rules at school, discipline is valued very much and there are a lot of punishments. Some students compare the school to a prison. But they also admit that it is good to be

⁸ Focus group, March 2013.

⁹ Focus group, March 2013.

¹⁰ Focus group, March 2013.

in a boarding school and to be disciplined. In this way they do not get distracted by other things and are able to focus on their studies. King David is known to be a good school. That is why parents send their children there, or why students choose to go to this school by themselves. King David performs well in the national exams and many students who graduate from this school receive a scholarship from the government to study in university.

Godfrey for instance, is a student who comes from Uganda. He explained to me that his parents send him to go to school here, “because schools there [in Uganda] are spoiled”.¹¹ He stated that this school has strict rules, for example the uniform. The class uniform consists of a white blouse, a green tie and a green skirt for girls and green pants for boys, complemented by black shoes. There is also an after-class uniform, a sports uniform and a school jumper. Students are not allowed to wear any other clothes than these. At the beginning of term, the boxes and suitcases that students bring are checked for clothes that are not allowed. If the school staff finds them, they are taken by the school administration. Nevertheless, students do not follow the rules strictly; they wear their after-school shirts during classes, wear their own jumpers on top of their school uniforms when it is cold, or wear slippers instead of the prescribed black shoes. Some girls also wear pants instead of skirts and many students adjust their uniforms. Boys make their pants tighter and girls make their skirts shorter. The school staff often comments on their clothes, they tell them to ‘tug in’, to put on their tie or to wear different shoes. When they find out that the pants are adjusted or the skirts are too short, students have to hand them in and buy new ones. When Godfrey entered the school after the holidays, the staff checked his bags and took the clothes that were not allowed. He showed me that he adjusted the pants of his school uniform a bit by making them tighter. This shows that even though the rules of the school are strict, students occasionally break them, or try to adjust them slightly. Sometimes they are caught and punished, but in some instances they get away with it.

At school, students are not allowed to have phones and are not able to access the Internet. There is a computer lab, where the students are taught ICT, but the Internet connection does not work most of the time and students are not always allowed to access the room after classes or to access the Internet. During a group discussion, Joseph addressed this issue: “We don’t use the computer lab, we don’t have a connection in the computer lab (...) When you come here from home, you forget about your friends on Facebook”. Pascal agreed with him and added: “Sometimes you even forget your password, your email”.¹² Sometimes teachers help the students by lending them their phone or laptop. However, it is not easy for students to arrange this and they are dependent on the willingness of the teachers to help them. This means that during the school period, students hardly have any contact with the ‘outside world’, except when their parents come to visit them on

¹¹ Conversation with Godfrey, April 2013.

¹² Focus group, March 2013.

'Visiting day', which takes place once a month. Pascal talked about this: "We are like orphans here. When they give us a punishment, a bad punishment, you feel bad and you don't have anyone to turn to. So it's like you are alone, (...) you want a phone to talk to your mother. They [the teachers] tell you like: 'no, we don't have phones', or: 'we don't have money, we don't have enough credit'".¹³

This does not mean that students are unaware of what is going on in the world. When they are in holidays, they have phones and are active on Facebook. Students listen to music from for example Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria, but also to American and European songs. They are huge fans of European football: they watch matches of the English premier league and the Champions league and they immediately call out the name of Robin van Persie when I tell them that I am from the Netherlands. Whenever they have the opportunity, for instance during the sport activities on Saturday, students play music, even though dancing is not allowed at school. One day, I passed by a classroom where a couple of girls were standing in the door opening. It was during class time, but they told me that they had a spare hour. Inside, there were some students; one of them was a boy with a radio, on which he was playing music. They were just chatting, singing and dancing a bit. The girls at the door would warn the people inside if a teacher was approaching. Then the boy would switch off the radio and hide it. Students are not allowed to have radios or to play music at school, but this example shows that they still manage to do this on occasions.

In conclusion, the students live in a very small world when they are at school; their movements are restricted and the school determines for a great deal how they should behave and what they should do. Still, students show that they have agency and are able to make their own decisions, by consciously breaking the rules, adjusting their uniforms or playing music. Furthermore, the strict regulations cannot prevent that the imagination of the students reaches further than just the school grounds. By playing music or talking about sports, their world becomes larger than the King David Academy, Rwanda and Africa.

A clear example of how the school tries to impose a certain order on the students and how the students cope with this, is the English policy. When you enter the school terrain, there is a sign that says 'Now you're entering into the English zone'. This reflects the fact that at school, it is compulsory to speak English. This means not only that all classes are taught in English, but that students have to speak English outside of class as well, during their free time and in the dormitories. One of the English teachers is leading this campaign of promoting English at school. She started the 'English speaking club', in which some students are enrolled, who support her in promoting English and punishing students who speak 'vernacular', any language other than English. It is very hard to check

¹³ Focus group, March 2013.

whether students are speaking English all the time, and therefore the teacher has several methods of tracking and punishing students who speak vernacular. There is a disk, which is a piece of wood. It is given to someone who speaks vernacular. This person has to keep the disk, until he or she hears someone else speaking vernacular. Then he gives the disk to that person, who has to give it to someone else, and so on. The teacher makes a list of all the people who held the disk and those students will get a punishment, for example sweeping the school ground or mopping classes. Furthermore, there is the vest, which is a very bright yellow vest that students have to wear. On it is written: 'I speak vernacular, shame on me'. Furthermore, there is a blue overall that students also have to wear when they lost a disk or a vest. When they lose one of these items, they have to pay.

Students think that is important to be able to speak English. One student explained that he likes to study English because it makes him fit in society. Furthermore, some students have sponsors from abroad, mostly the United States. They think it is important to learn English, so that they can communicate with their sponsors. Finally, it is important to be able to speak English when applying for jobs or when going abroad, something that many students want. Although students understand the importance of English, they have difficulties in using this language all the time. Some of them are new at the school and are not able to speak English very well yet. As a consequence, many students speak vernacular to each other; they told me that they just have to be careful when there are teachers around. In fact, on occasions even teachers speak vernacular to students. One of the students told me: "It is our mother language. You should speak Kinyarwanda sometimes. (...) Even me, I want to speak vernacular sometimes, I just want to communicate to some people in Kinyarwanda".¹⁴

This English policy has a considerable impact on the lives of the students. There are always teachers around and they have to think about the language that they use all the time. For example, even during the sports activities on Saturday, teachers sometimes punish students for speaking vernacular. Furthermore, even the church services on Sunday have to be given in English. Students have difficulties with this, especially when their English is not very good and they want to pray in Kinyarwanda. David explained: "You go somewhere where they can't see you. You hide yourself in order to pray to God. Because if you don't know English, you should pray in Kinyarwanda (...) If you are talking to God, there is nothing that can come and stop you to talk to God. Whether you are talking in Kinyarwanda or English, we know that God can understand all languages".¹⁵

The way that English is promoted at King David Academy is not how it is done in other schools in Rwanda. In many schools, they still teach in Kinyarwanda or they are not as strict with English as they are at KDA. English is seen as something very important to be able to speak. People

¹⁴ Focus group, March 2013.

¹⁵ Focus group, March 2013.

told me that it opens doors; it can help you to get a good job, to fit in society, to communicate. One student explained to me: “English is the most important language to help you in the future. You are able to communicate like this. You are coming from the Netherlands, and me I am Rwandan. The reason why we are communicating with each other is English. And it will also help you in any business”.¹⁶ The English policy is therefore one of the reasons why students like the school and why parents send their children to King David Academy.

The English policy shows on the one hand how students are subject to the rules of the school, because they have to speak English at all times. On the other hand, they dodge these rules, by talking Kinyarwanda on occasions. Furthermore, they are aware that it is important to learn English and some students make the conscious decision of entering the English speaking club and encouraging other students to speak English.



*This sign at the entrance of the school says: “Now you’re entering into the English zone”.
February 2013.*

¹⁶ Interview with Alex, April 2013.



Activities of the students on Saturday: playing basketball and washing clothes. February 2013.

5. “Study hard to brighten our future”. The future plans of students at KDA

“What I will do in the future, after school? Maybe I will be a doctor of the brain. And maybe if I won’t be a doctor, I will try to be a teacher. If I don’t get a good education, if I’m not lucky and don’t study, I will be a teacher, in the university or in secondary school”.¹⁷

This is a quote from James, a student in senior 2 at King David Academy. He explains what he wants to be in the future. In his explanation it becomes clear that according to him, education is very important in order to accomplish his dreams. In this chapter, I will elaborate on the future plans and ambitions of students in KDA and what activities they pursue in order to accomplish these ambitions. I want to emphasize that not all students have a clear vision of their future. For example Mary, who told me she wanted to be a lawyer one day, but when I asked her again a couple of weeks later, she told me that she wanted to be a business lady. However, there are some general trends in what students want to do in the future and especially how they want to accomplish this. This has much to do with the fact that it is hard to get a job in Rwanda and that students feel they have to struggle to accomplish something in the future.

The first concern of most students is to get a job and to earn money. It is hard to find a job in Rwanda and many students are worried about this. Esther for instance, who is in senior 6 and will look for a job when she finishes secondary school. When I asked her what kind of job she would want, she said “any job”. Many students express the desire to go into business. They explained that it is good to start your own business, to be an entrepreneur. This is better than working for someone else. Entrepreneurship is taught as a subject at school and the teachers also explained to me that it is important to create your own job instead of relying on someone else for your job. This is clearly in line with the government policy that encourages entrepreneurship. For example, Godfrey told me that even though the unemployment rate is high, there is always work if you make your own business. When I asked him about his future plans, he told me that he wants to go into business, but he did not know what kind of business. In fact, he would rather study to be a journalist, and therefore he takes the combination of HLG; History Literature and Geography. Thus, he expresses the wish to be in business because that will guarantee a job and an income, but it is not what he really dreams of. Another example is that of James for whom going into business is also a back-up plan, to ensure that he earns money when he is not able to fulfil his future dreams. He clearly thought about it and explained to me that he would like to have a business with chickens. He explained that this was easy, because many chickens fit on a small amount of land. You only need to hire one person to take

¹⁷ Interview with James, April 2013.

care of the animals. Every day they lay many eggs, which you can sell. This is an easy way to earn money and is a very simple business, according to him. These statements show that the students are already thinking consciously about their future and about finding ways to earn money.

Only when students have a job and earn money they can start thinking about having a family. Alex for example, wants to become an engineer. I asked him if he knew people who are engineers and he told me: “Yes, even here there are some people who became engineers. And now they have good jobs, and now they have a good income every month. So now they made good families”.¹⁸ James expressed the same feelings: “I could also get a family when I have a lot of money. First of all I need to have money and work very hard, then later I will have a family as well.”¹⁹. When I asked Claude about his future, he told me that he wants to have three children. Unless he has a lot of money, then he could have more children.

In order to achieve the things that they want to do or to be in the future, students focus on their studies now. Good results are important in order to obtain a job or a scholarship for university. One of the students was convinced that education is essential in order to be successful. He stated: “In life, everything is education. Life is better when you are educated”.²⁰ Many students stressed that it is good to be in a boarding school, where you have to study hard. One girl explained: “In a day school you move around, you don’t concentrate”.²¹ In a boarding school, students don’t get distracted by other things and are able to focus solely on their studies. Alex thought that it is good that they have to wake up early and work hard at KDA: “They wake them up early, that is good for students, they work hard. It will encourage a student to prepare himself or herself for the future”.²² Furthermore, it is important to speak English. Joshua explained to me that KDA is a good school, because they encourage you to speak English and this will help you to prepare for your future. Frank just finished his secondary school and would like to study in Uganda, because there they teach all classes in English. He explained that Rwanda is part of the East African community now and in all the other countries of this union English is spoken fluently. In job interviews for instance, it is important to be able to speak English.

Yet, studying hard, speaking English and getting good results are not the only things that will help students in their future. The following anecdote makes this clear.

Andrew and Godfrey are standing in the door opening of a classroom. It is Monday, the first week of the new term. The holidays just ended, but not all students arrived at

¹⁸ Interview with Alex, April 2013.

¹⁹ Interview with James, April 2013.

²⁰ Conversation with Jean, April 2013.

²¹ Conversation with Sylvia, April 2013.

²² Focus group, March 2013.

school yet. The boys are in senior 6 and they explain that they came to school early to study. Next week, the beginning-of-term exams will start. "We have to study hard to brighten our future" states Andrew. But they are worried, because they heard that the government might stop providing scholarships for university. "Life is hard" says Godfrey, especially when you don't have a lot of money. In his opinion, to brighten your future does not only depend on how hard you study, but also on what he calls your "ancestral history". He explains that if you have many family members and friends, they can help you to get a job. He gives an example: you apply for a job and you have the right papers and qualifications. But there is another candidate and his father knows the boss. In that case, this person will get the job. The boys agree that this is not necessarily a bad thing. For example in politics, in ministries, it is important to know the person that you hire, to be sure that he is capable of doing the job and that he is reliable. Therefore, it is important to have friends, "To study hard is plan B", says Godfrey. The boys explain that there is competition at school between the students. But when you are in a high rank, if you score well, "you shouldn't undermine people in a lower rank," says Andrew, "because things can change, you never know". Godfrey states that when you are looking for a job in the future, "when you suffer", a friend has to help you, he can't refuse. He explains: "Here at school, we are soldiers and we battle together for our future. You battled together, so he can't refuse".

In the conversation between Godfrey and Andrew, it becomes clear that they not only rely on their education in order to be successful in the future. Knowing people and having friends seems almost as important as having a good education.

As mentioned previously, many students have the ambition of studying or living abroad. This could be in one of the neighboring country such a Uganda or Kenia, but many of them want to study in countries that are further away, for instance in Europe or the United States. Some students expressed that the level of education in Rwanda is low in comparison to the neighboring countries. Therefore, they want to study in another country. James for example, wants to go to New Zealand to study: "they have a very great standard of living and teaching. So if I study to be a doctor there in New Zealand, it will be easy for me. I will study very well, better than in Rwanda. (...) It is better to study there. You know, in Rwanda schools are so low".²³ Other reasons that students gave for studying abroad were that other countries are more developed and that they wanted to improve

²³ Interview with James, April 2013.

their English. Students are well aware of the difficulties of obtaining a job in Rwanda and are therefore pursuing a career in other countries. Most of all, studying abroad is seen as a good opportunity, because it will be easier to get a job in Rwanda after studying abroad. Some students dream of going to another country and staying there, others just want to go there to study and to come back to Rwanda. For instance, Rose is a student in senior 6 who wants to study international relations. Since it is not possible to do that in Rwanda, she wants to go abroad. This will allow her to obtain international jobs that pay well. Her dream is to become “a very important lady”²⁴ and to work for international organizations. She wants to live abroad and only come back to visit family and to make investments in her country. Other students however, expressed that this is their country and this is where they want to live. Esther for instance, has family that lives in the United Kingdom. She would like to visit them, but assured me that she would not want to live abroad. Sam wants to study abroad in order to get a good job in Rwanda, but in the future he wants to return to the village where he grew up. Paul even stated that he did not want to go to the United States, because it is too dangerous. He explained that there were many robbers and murderers there and they can just kill you when you are walking down the street. In Rwanda, you would go to prison for years, but over there it is different, according to him. This shows that not all students have the same ideas about other countries; some see it as a dangerous place while others see it as a place full of opportunities.

For some students it is easier to accomplish their dreams than others. Ray for example whose parents are from Rwanda, but live in Canada. He went to Canada to visit them during the holidays. He wants to go to secondary school in Rwanda, because this is his country, but he wants to study in Canada and to find a wife there after finishing secondary school. After that he might come back to Rwanda. Because his parents are already living in Canada, he is likely to achieve these goals. Another example is that of Sylvia, a girl who is in senior 5, who comes from a rich family and wants to study in the UK or India. When I asked her if it is hard to get there, she says no, her father promised to arrange it.

The following vignette describes a person for whom it is more difficult to achieve his ambitions.

In one of the first weeks of fieldwork I am standing outside the dining hall at King David Academy. I am talking to Sam, a student of senior 4. He asks me if it would be possible for us to be friends. He wants to practice his English and being friends with me would provide him with a good opportunity to improve his skills. He needs this, because he wants to be a tourist guide in the future and therefore it is important to be able to speak English very well. He comes from a village in the northern province of Rwanda, in an area where many tourists come. His family had problems with paying

²⁴ Interview with Rose, April 2013.

his school fees, but he was able to study the first three years of secondary school with the help of the nine years of basic education program of the government. He studied in a day school close by his village, to which he walked every day. But because he had to walk there every day and also had to help his parents, he did not have much time to study at home. They do not have electricity in the house, so he was not able to study at night.

Sam has a friend called Innocent who lives in a village close by, a place where many tourists come. Because of this he got to know a man from the United States, he found a sponsor who helped him by paying his school fees. Innocent helped Sam by using these connections to find a sponsor for him as well. That is why he is able to study at King David since the beginning of this year, which is a better school. Innocent studies at another school, which is an Islamic school. He takes a tourism combination and he explains me that this means that he takes five different languages. Innocent wants to work in the tourism industry, just like his friend. Sam's sponsor allowed him to choose to which school he wanted to go, but he was not allowed to go to the same school as Innocent, because it is an Islamic school. He chose KDA, because other people told him that he could do a tourism combination there. However, when Sam came to King David, he found out that the school does not offer this combination. Now he wants to study tourism in university.

Sam tells me that he would like to study in Europe or the United States, because it will be easier to get a job here in Rwanda with a diploma from there. But it depends on his sponsor whether he will be able to go there or not. There is an organization that provides scholarships, but it is hard to get those. You have to do a test, but it is very difficult. "But I have to try", says Sam. In the future, he wants to go back to his village to work and live there. Innocent just wants to live in a place where tourists come, which could be anywhere. He explained to me that he wants to live in a place with lakes, or sea, like in South Africa, or volcanoes, like the area where their village is located. These are places where many tourists come and where you can find jobs.

Students who do not come from a rich family, for whom it will be harder to accomplish their future plans, seem to be more concerned with getting to know people, making friends, in order to achieve their goals. Sam is an example of this. He asked me to be his friend, so that he could improve his English. He also got a sponsor with the help of a friend. Going to a good school like King David provides him with many opportunities that he would not have had if he stayed in his village. Thus,

connections seem to be important in order to get a sponsorship or a job. One of the students who comes from an orphanage explained why it is important to have these connections: “When you finished your studies, if he [a friend] is a (...) minister, he can help you to get job in the future. Because you are coming from a village, you cannot get a good job. A person like your friend [...] can help you to get a job”.²⁵ However, another boy described the downside of this. He did not like to be in a boarding school, because he felt lonely sometimes: “You have friends, but some people might be friends today and tomorrow they ignore you. (...)They will only be your friend because of your money”.²⁶

Furthermore, students who do not have the means of studying abroad are dependent on others to facilitate this. This brings restrictions and the students have to adjust to this. For example Sam was not allowed to go to the same school as his friend, because that was an Islamic school. Sam wants to go to university, but will only be able to do this if his sponsor, or someone else, is willing to support him. Another example is that of Benjamin, who wants to study in the United States. He found a sponsorship, but he will only be able to apply for this sponsorship if finishes his secondary school next year. He is in senior 5 now and he is trying to finish senior 5 and 6 in one year in order to get the scholarship.

Students are sometimes constrained and restricted by forces and institutions that they cannot control in the pursuit of their future plans. For example, the fact that it is hard to get a job in Rwanda or difficulties in entering university or going abroad, restrain the possibilities of students to accomplish their dreams. However, this does not stop students from having a clear vision of the future and pursuing activities to accomplish this. For example, many of them dream of going abroad. In order to accomplish this, they study hard at school, try to improve their English and make connections with people that might help them. Students who come from an orphanage provide a clear case that proves this point. That is why the next chapter is focused on this group of students.

²⁵ Interview with Alex, March 2013.

²⁶ Interview with Peter, March 2013.



Students in a classroom are making an exam, April 2013.

6. “Here in Rwanda I don’t have a family, I just live in an orphanage”.

Students from the orphanage in Gisenyi

David is using Facebook on my computer. He shows me a picture of a white man and woman. “These are my parents”, he tells me. His parents live in the USA and come to visit Rwanda very often. Joshua lives in an orphanage in Gisenyi, together with 600 other children. Joshua shows me more pictures of people from the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium and other countries. These are his friends, he got to know them in the orphanage. His dream is to go to the USA and to finish his secondary school there. He hopes that his father will help him with this. Sometimes he sends his parents a message on Facebook, but it is hard to stay in touch.

David comes from an orphanage in Gisenyi, a town in the northwest of Rwanda. The couple that he calls his parents are part of an American organization that sponsors him and other children from this orphanage. Since the beginning of this year, a group of about 120 students from this orphanage in Gisenyi are studying at King David Academy. In previous years, these students were in different other schools in Rwanda. Many of them are not able to speak English very well. That is why a separate class was started, the “special English class”. The only subject that these students take is English, so that they will learn this language very fast and will be at the same level as the other students. This should take one or two terms and after that the students can join the normal classes. Some of the students from Gisenyi already started in the normal classes. One student explained how it worked: “They gave us an interview. So after doing that interview there were some people who passed and some who failed. So for those who failed, they gave two options to follow: to go back home (...) or to join the special English class. So for me, I saw that turning back home was not good because I also want to improve my English. That’s the reason why I remained here”.²⁷ In his explanation, the student makes it very clear that he made his own choice about the school. He expressed the same feelings when I asked him if the orphanage determined to which school he should go: “No one, I am the one who decided. And I said that King David is a good school, because other people were talking about King David and I heard that it is a good school. So that is the reason why I chose King David”.²⁸

Around 600 children live in the orphanage itself; they range from little babies up to students in university. Some of them have been living there all their lives, others only arrived later. Some of them still have one or two parents, but still do not have a stable family because of for instance HIV,

²⁷ Interview with Alex, March 2013.

²⁸ Interview with Alex, March 2013.

poverty or other problems. These children are brought to the orphanage because their parents cannot take care of them anymore. The children sleep in dormitories, one part of the terrain of the orphanage is for girls, another part is for boys. There is a library and some classrooms for nursery school. Many visitors from outside Africa come to the orphanage to visit or to volunteer for a longer period of time. For instance, during my time there a group of American nurses visited the orphanage to do medical checkups and there was a Belgian couple that visits the orphanage every year. The children therefore have much contact with people from abroad. These people bring clothes, toys or give lessons, for example computer lessons. The Belgian woman that was at the orphanage at the same time with me just came back from the market and bought some fruits for the children. She told me that the students do not get any fruit at school, so during the holidays she has to give them some extra food. Some students have phones or Ipods that they received from volunteers. Some of them establish a special relationship with these visitors. For example James, who became friends with a woman from New-Zealand. She stayed at the orphanage for a month to give computer lessons. James helped her with translating to Kinyarwanda during the lessons. Now they are still in touch, she is paying his school fees and he wants to go to New-Zealand to finish his high school there. The orphanage is providing the young people with everything that they need in their daily lives, such as food, care and a place to sleep, but the visitors from abroad provide a distraction from their everyday lives. Furthermore, it shows that the lives of these children has become global. Even though they are confined to one place, they meet people from many different countries. These provide them not only with goods, but also with ideas and images from other parts of the world.

Some students are able to acquire a special position in the orphanage. For instance James; he teaches other children at the orphanage during the holidays and he uses a small classroom as his office. He even sleeps there, so he does not have to sleep in the dormitories. Other students have friends outside of the orphanage, people who live close by. They can go there occasionally to stay over and these people might give them some money or extra food. The children try to make connections everywhere, within the orphanage and outside of it.

The students from the orphanage who go to King David Academy are sponsored by an American organization. This organization collects money in the United States in order to pay the school fees of these students. The students are matched with a family in the United States, to which they write letters and with whom they stay in touch. They receive pictures from their families in the US and the organization tries to make the students feel like they are part of this family. The organization chose the families for the students, yet the students themselves do not know how this process took place. Every now and then a group of people from the United States comes to Rwanda to visit the students and to bring letters. Some of the sponsors come on this trip to meet the students personally. But many students have never met their sponsors, for example Alex: "No, I

didn't see them here, except from a picture. So I wrote letter to them and I think that letter will make them very happy".²⁹

The organization employs a person in Rwanda to take care of the students, to make sure that everything is arranged well and to solve problems. This person is the first one that has to address daily issues that the students face, because the people in the United States are simply not always present there. She is the contact between the students, the school, the orphanage and the sponsors. Thus, the students have direct contact with their sponsors by sending letters, but if they have problems at school these have to be solved by the person in Rwanda. Students are somehow caught in between these organizations and persons: they are dependent on them, but they are not always able to give them what they want or need.

English is very important in order communicate with the visitors at the orphanage and the sponsors. Many students expressed that they were happy to learn English at King David Academy, because now they were able to write letters to their sponsors and communicate with them. Furthermore, many students dream of going abroad to the United States or Europe. When they go there, it is also important to speak English. Many students from the orphanage in Gisenyi express this wish to go abroad, mainly to the United States. They are curious about the country and want to meet the people that sponsor them. One of the students explained: "I even want to go to visit the sponsors who are paying school fees for me. And that's a dream of all my colleagues who are studying at King David. They are curious to see their sponsors there and to meet them".³⁰ Some of them just want to go there to visit, others want to go there to study and to work and live there. James, who wants to study in New-Zealand, stated that he does not want to live in Rwanda in the future: "I can live there, because here in Rwanda I don't have a family, I just live in an orphanage".³¹ David has a very strong wish of going to the United States. He calls the couple that sponsors him his parents and he expressed to me that he wants to go to the United States to be with his family. His sponsors visit Rwanda regularly, so he probably has a stronger relationship with them than other students. This contradicts with for example Alex, he has a sponsor in the United States that he never met. He would like to go to the United States to meet them and to see how they live, but he pictures his future in Rwanda.

These sponsorships and friendships provide the students with a family that they did not have before. Having this family gives the students support and hopes for a better future. These people help them to get a good education and might even help them to go abroad. Yet students are entirely dependent on their sponsors in order to achieve this. Those are the ones who decide to which school

²⁹ Interview with Alex, April 2013.

³⁰ Interview with Alex, April 2013.

³¹ Interview with James, April 2013.

they go and whether they will go abroad and those are the ones who will have to facilitate this. Furthermore, students are dependent on immigration regulations and government policies. When I was at the orphanage, David and James discussed that another boy from the orphanage applied for a visa to enter the United States, but it was denied. They were very sad about this and said that he could try to apply again after three months. The boys knew exactly what they had to do if they would ever get the chance of going there. James explained to me that if you applied, you had to show that you love Rwanda and that you are planning to come back there. Otherwise, they will not let you enter the United States. The students are thus aware of the fact that there are many procedures and restrictions when going abroad and entering other countries. Still, some of them have a great hope of going there. For example, when I asked James what he would do if they denied him access to another country, he said: "If I don't succeed, I will wait, I will still have the hope to go there".³²

The students at the orphanage in Gisenyi are not only constrained by the rules of the school, but are also dependent on other people in their daily lives outside of school. They receive their clothes, toys and phones from people outside of Rwanda who come to visit the orphanage. This made their world much larger and has fostered their dreams of going to other countries. At the same time, they are very dependent on these people; they are the ones who support them and without them they would not go to this school or have a chance of going abroad. Still, they make very clear that they are not always dependent on others, by acquiring a special position in the orphanage or choosing by making deliberate choice about the school they go to. Although they are subject to certain forces and institutions that they cannot control, they still exert control over their lives and have specific goals for the future.

³² Interview with James, April 2013.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I described the daily lives and future plans of students at the King David Academy in Kigali, Rwanda. As explained in the first chapters, it is important to take into account the daily experiences of young people in order to understand how they shape their lives in an era of globalization. However, before I present my conclusions, I want to note that the picture I painted is only based on the three months that I spent at this school and it probably does not represent the experiences of all students at all times. It is only a snapshot of the daily experiences of the students that I met and things have been different at school and will be different. For example, in May 2013, after I left the field, I received a message from one of the teachers in which he told me that the school administration decided to change the time that students have to wake up from 3:00 to 5:30 pm. Although it is not possible to generalize the results of my study, I am convinced that my research is useful in order to understand how young people shape their lives and their futures within a specific context.

By examining the daily activities of students at King David Academy, I was able to show how young people have agency and actively shape cultural practices (Bucholtz 2002). Students at King David Academy have to follow a tight schedule when they are at school. The description of the daily lives of the students illustrates the point made by Roth-Gordon and Woronov (2009) when they discuss the power relations in which young people are embedded and the regulative force of school. At King David Academy, students are subject to the power of the school; the school decides what clothes they wear, what language they speak and at what times they have to study. Students are restricted in their mobility by the school because they are forced to be in class at certain times and are not allowed to leave the school ground without permission. However, in this thesis I showed how students are not just subject to these rules, but find their ways of coping with these restrictions. They obey the rules, but sometimes find ways of stretching or dodging them. They adjust their uniform, secretly talk and pray in the language they want and they play music in class when there are no teachers around. In this way, they take control over their own lives even though they are punished if they are caught doing this. This reflects what Klocker (2007) calls 'thin agency'; even though their options are limited, the students still make deliberate choices to carry out their lives.

The students of King David Academy are confined to the school grounds during a large part of the year. It sometimes seems like the world in which the students live is very small since they are not allowed to have phones, to access the Internet or to play music. However, by taking a closer look, one can see that this is definitely not the case; the students live in a world influenced by globalization and they "are well aware of being-in-the-world and of what is out there" (Hansen 2008: 5). Although the school puts a restriction on the physical mobility of the students, their imagination not only

exceeds the borders of the school ground, but even the borders of their country and their continent. This is very obvious when examining the music they listen to, the football teams they support and the celebrities that they adore. It shows that they are indeed a part of the globalized world and have access to images and commodities that come from different places in the world. This enables them to construct imagined worlds and imagine their lives in a different place and a different way than it is now (Appadurai 1996, Madsen 2008).

Globalization entails an increased flow of images, people, capital, ideals and commodities, but these flows do not occur everywhere in an equal way. Some people or areas are excluded and have limited access to the increased mobility and new possibilities that occurred due to the process of globalization (Inda & Rosaldo 2008). Furthermore, people become more aware of these restricted mobility and possibilities (Bordonaro 2009). One way of making this clear is by looking at the future plans of the students at King David Academy. Hansen (2007) showed that the future of young people has become more uncertain in an era of globalization. Dolby and Rizvi (2008) state that the fact that school to work transitions have become less certain affects young people even when they are still in school. This is reflected in the future plans of students at KDA. Jobs are not easy to obtain in Rwanda and therefore making money is the first priority for many young people. Becoming an entrepreneur by starting your own business seems to be a good option to ensure an income. In the previous chapters I showed that students at King David Academy are well aware of what is happening in the world around them. As reflected in the concept of 'youthscapes', young people have an ambiguous place within local, national and global power structures (Maia & Soep 2005). Even though the students are not able to control forces that restrict them in achieving their future ambitions, such as the high unemployment rate, they are actively shaping their future and pursuing activities to reach their goals. They try to make friends at school that will help them in the future, choose a certain combination of courses in order to obtain the job that they want and study hard to receive a sponsorship for university. In this way they are defining who they are and what they want in the context of a globalized world (Hansen 2007).

Many of the students want to study or even live and work abroad. They are aware that this is not easy, but it does not stop them from dreaming about it. Even though their everyday lives is confined to one place, their imaginative world and their dreams have become global (Appadurai 1996). They actively try to find people who can help them in reaching their goals, although it makes them dependent on those sponsors at the same time. Karen Tranberg Hansen (2008) points to the fact that the life of young people is full of contradictions and that expressions of agency and dependence are not mutually exclusive but are present at the same time. So, on the one hand, students at King David Academy are very active in making plans for the future and they have dreams

of going abroad and being successful. At the same time they are dependent on people who can sponsor them and on forces that they cannot control, such as the insecure job market in Rwanda.

The students who come from the orphanage provide a case to prove this point. They clearly occupy a marginalized position in society and are dependent on different people and organizations to provide their daily needs, such as food and education. Even when they want to go abroad, they need other people to finance and support them and have to get through many legal procedures in order to obtain a visa. Still they have the feeling and express that they are able to shape their own lives. They choose to which school they go, they actively build relationships and have a clear vision of the future. Again, the concept of 'thin agency' (Klocker 2007) is useful to understand the lives of these students.

The importance of English has become apparent throughout the chapters. The government of Rwanda has changed the main language of instruction to Kinyarwanda in 2008, but in many schools the quality of English education is poor. King David Academy is an exception in this and has a unique way of promoting the language and encouraging students to speak English. This has a serious impact on the lives of the students; they are restricted by it, because they are forced to speak English all the time and are punished whenever they speak vernacular. However, at the same time the ability to speak English opens many doors for the students. It is important to be able to speak English when trying to find a job. Moreover, it helps students to communicate with sponsors or to come in contact with people who might possibly help them. One student explained that learning English helped him to fit into society and this is exactly the point. By learning English, students are able to access the global world. They are able to communicate with people from other countries and to compete for jobs with people from other countries in the East-African community. It makes their marginal position in society somehow less marginal.

In this thesis I put youth at the center of analysis and looked at the daily experiences of students at King David Academy in Rwanda. By doing this, I showed that they are restricted and influenced by different institutions and actors, such as the school and sponsors, but that they are at the same time able to take control of their lives, make deliberate decisions and use their agency. In this thesis I demonstrated how the lives of young people today is full of contradictions. The process of globalization has put these young people in a marginal position in some ways and made their future more uncertain. But on the other hand, it enables them with new opportunities and the ability to envision a different life than the one they have now. The futures of the young people that I studied may be uncertain, but they are determined to make the best of it.

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Appendix 1: Methodology

Anthropology, like other disciplines, has its own distinctive methods. Qualitative research, long-term fieldwork and doing participant observation are inextricably linked to this field of study and the first fieldwork is seen as a 'rite de passage' within the discipline (Robben and Sluka 2012). This thesis presents the results of fieldwork conducted from January 29th to April 25th 2013 at the King David Academy in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. The main research methods that I used were participant observation, conversations, unstructured interviews and focus group interviews.

Participant observation entails the participation of the researcher in the daily activities of the people that are studied, while at the same time observing what they are doing (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). Doing this provided me with much information about the daily lives of the young people involved. Furthermore, participant observation helped me to obtain information about how people interact, behave, spoke, as well as other data. I was able use this information to adapt to the situation, to know how I was supposed to behave and which questions were appropriate to ask. This helped me to build a relationship of trust with the research participants as well, which later helped me during interviews.

There is always a tension when doing participant observation between observing and participating, being an insider and an outsider. The term participant implies that the researcher actively takes part of the daily activities, while the term observer demands the researcher to observe from a distance. This tension is part of anthropological research, because the researcher tries to understand the point of view of the participants on the one hand (emic point of view), while looking at in a scientific, objective way (etic point of view) (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). Some authors argue that you will never be able to be a real insider and participate fully, because you will always be different and you will eventually leave (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). Moreover, 'going native' is seen as something bad and negative, because it implies that the scientist has completely taken the perspective of the people he is investigating and abandons his/her research identity (Robben and Sluka 2012). On the other hand, authors argue that observation alone does not provide enough information about meanings and interpretation. It is important to know what people do, but it is even more important to know why people do this and you can't acquire this knowledge by observing alone (Geertz 1973).

Closely related to participant observation is the use of conversations as a research method. This is a very significant source of information acquired through participant observation. In conversation the researcher has little control over the topics covered and tries to exert as little influence as possible over the course of the exchange. Yet, participating in a conversation while doing research is different from a conversation in a non-research setting, because the researcher is more

interested in certain themes and subjects and he or she will be taking notes of the conversations (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). By engaging in everyday conversations, I was able to know more about the daily experiences of the young people at the school and which issues were important to them. Because of this open approach, issues came up that I did not expect when starting the fieldwork. For instance, in the conversations with the students it became apparent how important the discipline and the English speaking was at school. I did not expect to be covering these topics so densely in my research, but it was an important issue in the everyday lives of the students.

However, it turned out to be difficult to participate in all the activities at school. During most of the time, the students were in class I joined some of their classes, but this did not provide many opportunities to talk to the students. However, the time in between lessons, after classes and during the weekends were occasions during which I could 'hang out' with the students and talk to them. I participated in the sports activities on Saturdays; this helped me to get to know the students better and to build rapport with them. During the time that I was there, a special project was carried out, the *Romeo and Juliet* project: a group of students practiced together to perform Shakespeare's play of *Romeo and Juliet*. They met every day after classes and during the weekends. I joined this group and attended many of the rehearsal sessions, which gave me the opportunity to get to know this group of 30 students, to talk to them and to observe how they behaved and interacted. I also brought my laptop to school and sat in the computer room to work on my notes. In this way, I was still 'there' during the class time, when there was not much opportunity to participate in the activities of the students.

During the last three weeks of my fieldwork there were school holidays, which meant that all the students went back home and there were not many activities at school. During this period, I visited some of the students that I had got to know at their homes. It was very useful to see where they came from and how they behaved when they were not at school. Moreover, this gave me the opportunity to conduct unstructured interviews. In unstructured interviews, the researcher is able to exercise more control over the conversation. He or she makes a plan for the interview and uses a topic list. This list makes sure that every topic is covered during the interview. However, the topics are presented in an open-ended way and the researcher tries to exert as little influence as possible over the interaction. The topics do not have to be covered in the same sequence every time and, depending on each interview, different topics may be more densely covered (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011). This method provided me with more in-depth information about the students, especially about their future plans and ambitions. Besides, I visited an orphanage in Gisenyi, where a group of students from the King David Academy live, and I was also able to interview four students there. In the end, I had conversations with around 30 students. With ten of them I talked more regularly and I conducted unstructured interviews with them.

Finally, I organized four focus groups with students from different classes at King David Academy. Each group consisted of five to nine students, mostly from the same class, with approximately the same number of boys and girls. These group interviews were very informative on how students interact and helped me to obtain much information in a relatively short period of time. These interviews were mostly focused on the daily activities of the students and how they perceived the school, for example what they thought was important and which activities they did and did not like.

Joshua was my key informant during the research. I talked to him almost every day, he helped me organize the focus groups and brought me to his friends during the holidays. Because of this, I was able to come into contact with students that I had not met before and he could help me to interpret the information that was given.

Throughout the entire fieldwork period, I made notes of the conversation that I had and things that I experienced when doing participant observation. Notes are very important to make sure that you remember everything and write everything down. During conversations I made jottings, which are very small words and sentences which helped me to memorize the things that were said. Sometimes it was not possible to make notes during a conversation or during participant observation. In that case, I made the notes as soon as possible afterwards. These jottings were expanded to field notes later. I recorded the unstructured interviews with a tape recorder, but made jottings during the interviews as well, to remind me of things that caught my attention and to record things that you cannot hear on the tape, such as the setting in which I the interview took place and the number of people that were present.

Besides that, I wrote in a diary during my fieldwork, in which I wrote down my feelings, reactions and considerations about myself as a researcher. This helped me to be reflexive about the way I approached the field and the relations I established with my informants. This is very important, because in doing fieldwork, all the information is gathered by the researcher and reflexivity will help to ensure the objectivity of the research. Finally, I kept track of everything I did by making a logbook. In this log, I wrote down the activities I pursued on a day, the people I spoke to and the things I planned to do next. This was very useful to get an oversight on how far I was with the research and what was the next step. I also made a list of all the people I spoke to, which helped me to get an overview of my informants.

The field notes and interviews were the raw data that I used to write my thesis. To do this, the data had to be analyzed first. I already started to analyze the data during the fieldwork and this gave me insight in what information I still needed in order to answer my questions. I used a computer program called Nvivo to analyse my data. This program helps to attribute different codes to different pieces of data so I got a good overview of the information and the relations between

different concepts. I made different codes for different subject, such as the daily activities at school, future plans of the students, the importance of English and going abroad. I also made different files for different informants which gave me an overview of all the information I had about one person.

There are different phases in the process of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The process starts with open coding, in which I distinguished between different themes and attached codes to different parts of your data. The next phase is that of axial coding, in which I ordered the data and tried to make sure if I have enough information about every theme or code. This helped me to find out which information was missing and about which themes I had enough information. The last phase is that of selective coding, in which I tried to get an overview of the relations between different themes and incorporate this into a theory. The process of selective coding only started after I returned from the field.



Focus group in the library of the school, March 2013.

Appendix 2: Reflection

In anthropological research, especially with regard to the method of participant observation, the researcher is his or her own measuring device. Since the 1970s an increased attention has been paid to the role of the researcher in anthropological research (Robben & Sluka 2012). When using participant observation and other qualitative research methods, all information is interpreted and recorded by the researcher him or herself. As a researcher, it is therefore important to be aware of how your own emotions, views and personality influence the collection and interpretation of the data. By being reflexive about their attitude, feelings and their relation with participants, researchers make clear how information is gathered and under which circumstances. In this way, other scientist are able to judge the interpretations made by the researcher, or even come to other conclusions. This helps to improve the objectivity, validity and quality of the research (Robben and Sluka 2012). Furthermore, it can help other, beginning researchers to anticipate on common problems and issues in doing fieldwork (DeWalt & De Walt 2011). DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) see reflexivity rather as the starting point than as an end to ethnography. They state that a researcher should be fully aware of his/her own characteristics, limitations, perspectives and interactions with people before studying regularities in human behavior.

For me it was the second time that I travelled to Kigali and the King David Academy. The first time that I came to Rwanda was in 2009. Together with 20 other students from my high school I spend two weeks at the King David Academy in Kigali. In this period, we made wall paintings in the classrooms of the school and set up a computer room. But most importantly, we got to know the students. It was great to hear their stories and to discover that although we lived in different countries, we had many things in common. After three years of studies in anthropology I decided to go back to this country to conduct my final research. However, this time I was there on my own for a longer period and I had to conduct research. The school was still the same, the computer room and the paintings were still present at the school. But in four years' time the people at school had changed. There were new students and new teachers, so in some aspects it felt like I had to start all over again. The advantage of coming to the same place again was that it took me less time to adapt to the situation. This gave me more confidence and a good base to start. Some people at the school, the director for instance, already knew me which made it easier to gain access to the school and its people. The disadvantage might be that I took some things for granted and did not write them down, because it was not new to me. However, because it had been four years since I last was in Rwanda, I think this was not really the case. Furthermore, the first time I was there, I was only there for two weeks, so I hardly knew anything about the daily lives and experiences of students at school. For

instance, I had to get used again to the fact that everyone stares at you and calls you “mzungu!”.³³ The only difference was that I already knew what “mzungu” means.

For me it was the first time to conduct anthropological fieldwork and sometimes I sometimes found it difficult to actively approach people and ask them questions for my research. The first weeks, my main activity was just to ‘hang out’ at school. Since I was different and new, people would come up to me anyway and talk to me. These people were mainly the teachers of the school, they were always eager to talk to me and to share their time with me. This was very useful, because it was important for the teachers to approve of the research, I needed them to access the students. Furthermore, they also provided me with much information about what was going on in the school. Finally, this helped me to realize that it is also useful just to listen to people without asking specific questions. In my experience ‘being there’ was very important and people often told me how much they appreciated that I was always there, listened to what they had to say and showed genuine interest in their lives.

It was harder to get in contact with the students. They mainly stared at me and I really had to go to them and to start a conversation. Furthermore, they were in class during most of the day, so they did not have much time to talk to me. The sports activities provided a good opportunity to get to know them and to build rapport. During the week, it always became very clear that I was not one of the students, no matter how much I tried. I was always able to walk in and out of the school and the classrooms whenever I wanted, I did not sleep in the dormitories and I did not have to wake up so early or to study so hard. But during the sports, I was able to have fun with the students, to pursue an activity together and this made me finally feel like I was one of them.

Apart from using participant observation and conversations, I planned on using more structured forms of interviewing in order to get enough data. However, I found out that it was quite hard to plan an interview with students. They were not always comfortable to talk to me alone in an official setting. They were more at ease during a casual conversation. Furthermore, at school there were not many places where you can sit down alone with someone to have some privacy. There are almost always other people around. During the holidays, I visited some students at home and during these visits it was more easy to sit down with them and have an interview. Often, there were still other people around, but that was just something that I had to take for granted and to which I had to adopt. Furthermore, I also conducted some focus groups during the school term, which were more successful.

The focus groups provided me with much useful information, mainly about the daily activities at school. During these discussions, it was harder to go deep into what people wanted to achieve in

³³ “Muzungu” means white person in Kiswahili. it is a common word used to address white people and does not necessarily have a bad connotation.

life and how. Different focus groups had different results, which depended on the group composition. It was important to ensure that the students were at ease and that no teachers were around. I ensured that we were in a room on our own, for example the library or the computer room. If the students were not confident in speaking English, I arranged an interpreter so that they could talk in Kinyarwanda. This enabled them to speak more freely, although it might have influenced my data slightly, since I was dependent on the interpreter. It was mostly Joshua and one or two other students who translated for me and often they would give me a summary of what the student had said, instead of translating their words literally.

The aim of my research was to find out how the activities of the Dutch foundation called Rwanda Solidair affected the daily lives and the future plans of the students at King David Academy. This foundation is the organization that organized the project which I joined in 2009. However, when I came to the school, I realized that this foundation does not play a significant role in the daily lives of the current students. Most of the students that they sponsor already graduated from KDA and are in university. Furthermore, the projects were already a long time ago and not many students at school knew about the foundation and the fact that they facilitated the wall paintings, the library and the computer room at school. Consequently, I had to change the focus of my research. I decided to focus mainly on the daily activities and future plans of students at KDA. Besides, I soon found out that a large group of students from an orphanage in Gisenyi just started at school and I decided to focus on them as well. I was not able to investigate the effect of the Dutch foundation on the daily lives of the students, but I might be able to investigate the effect of the American organization on the lives of the students from Gisenyi.

Soon I met Joshua who came from the orphanage in Gisenyi. Because of him, I was able to talk to more of students from that group and together we visited the orphanage during the holidays. He was the one who helped me with organizing the focus groups and visiting students during the holidays. He became my key informant and without him I would not have had come into contact with many students. This had its advantages and disadvantages. In composing the focus groups, Joshua asked some of his friends to participate in the discussions. For me it was often hard to make appointments with students, because they were not always in time, would just not show up or the agreements that we made were very unclear. Joshua was able to mobilize many students and in this way I was also sure that all the students in the focus group knew each other and were confident to talk. They knew Joshua and trusted him. However, this means that I only talked to a specific group of students, of which I am not sure whether they are representative of the entire student population. However, there were other students to whom I talked regularly and with whom I could validate the information that I obtained.

The focus of my research made me also think about my position as a researcher. I think it was an advantage that I was young as well, just a few years older than most of the participants in my research. This made it easier to relate to their experiences and to find topics to talk about. But on the other hand, it also made me realize that I was in a different position than some of the young people I met. I have enough money to enter university and I am free to travel around the world as I wish. It was very confronting for me, and maybe for my informants as well, that I could go to Rwanda and stay there for a couple of months, while it would be much harder for them to come to the Netherlands. When I was at school, students often asked me if they could borrow my phone. In the beginning I was a bit hesitant about it, because I did not want anyone to get in trouble, since phones are not allowed. But I was aware that teachers did the same thing, so in the end, my phone was used by many students. It was one of the ways in which I could give something to my informants, in return for how they helped me. But sometimes it made me feel uncomfortable, because virtually everyone was asking for my phone, or to help them with my laptop so that they could check their e-mail and Facebook. Sometimes it felt like they were not interested in me, but just in the things that I owned. Furthermore, it emphasized that I was different from them, because I had all these expensive things. However, I also knew that it is very normal to share things with other people in Rwanda.

During my time in Rwanda I did not only learn many things about the students at school and many other people that I met. On top of that, I learned many things about myself and my own attitude towards other people. All in all, this made my fieldwork a very interesting and exciting experience.

Appendix 3: Summary

This thesis describes the daily lives and future plans of students at the King David Academy (KDA) in Kigali, Rwanda. By looking at the everyday experiences of youth, we can study how global flows and processes take shape in a specific local context. Instead of looking at young people as vulnerable, passive victims of larger processes that they cannot control, attention is paid to their agency and the way they make conscious decisions to carry out their lives.

King David Academy is a secondary school in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. It has about 900 students and is a boarding school. Students at KDA have to follow a strict schedule, they have to study hard and do not have much spare time. During the weekends they are more free and they play sports, wash their clothes, sleep and go to church. Discipline is valued highly at the school, which means that students have there are many rules and punishments. Furthermore, it is compulsory to speak English at all times. This tight schedule illustrates the point made by Roth-Gordon and Woronov (2009) when they discuss the power relations in which young people are embedded and the regulative force of school. At King David Academy, students are subject to the power of the school; the school decides what clothes they wear, what language they speak and at what times they have to study. Students are restricted in their mobility by the school because they are forced to be in class at certain times and are not allowed to leave the school ground without permission. However, in this thesis it is shown how students are not just subject to these rules, but find their ways of coping with these restrictions. They obey the rules, but sometimes find ways of stretching or dodging them. They adjust their uniform, secretly talk and pray in the language they want and they play music in class when there are no teachers around. In this way, they take control over their own lives even though they are punished if they are caught doing this.

By looking at the future plans of the students at King David Academy, one can see the impact of globalization in their lives. Jobs are not easy to obtain in Rwanda and therefore making money is the first priority for many young people. Becoming an entrepreneur by starting your own business seems to be a good option to ensure an income. Globalization entails an increased flow of images, people, capital, ideals and commodities, but these flows do not occur everywhere in an equal way. Some people or areas are excluded and have limited access to the increased mobility and new possibilities that occurred due to the process of globalization (Inda & Rosaldo 2008). Furthermore, people become more aware of these restricted mobility and possibilities (Bordonaro 2009). Students at King David Academy are well aware of what is happening in the world around them. Even though they are not able to control forces that restrict them in achieving their future ambitions, such as the high unemployment rate, they are actively shaping their future and pursuing activities to reach their

goals. They try to make friends at school that will help them in the future, choose a certain combination of courses in order to obtain the job that they want and study hard to receive a sponsorship for university. Furthermore, the students have 'global minds' in the sense that many of them are focused on going abroad. Their future plans exceed the borders of their country and they want to study or to live in another country. This is not easy to achieve for everyone and some of the students are dependent on sponsors in order to achieve this goal.

In conclusion, students are restricted and influenced by different institutions and actors, such as the school and sponsors, but that they are at the same time able to take control of their lives, make deliberate decisions and use their agency. The process of globalization has put these young people in a marginal position in some ways and made their future more uncertain. But on the other hand, it enables them with new opportunities and the ability to envision a different life than the one they have now. The futures of the young people in this study may be uncertain and full of contradictions, but they are determined to make the best of it.