

# THE INITIATION OF A NORM FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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## Rwanda's Gacaca, Pioneering the "Traditional" Transitional Justice Norm

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### **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the pre-emergence phase of an internationalized norm by focusing on Rwanda's creation of Gacaca. It argues that the Gacaca pioneered the "traditional" transitional justice norm. It thus, addresses a Western-centric bias, evident in the neglect of norms originating and norm entrepreneurs from the Global South and an under-specification of the early life of a potential international norm. Post/decolonial lenses serve to make norm creation from the Global South thinkable. This detailed qualitative study traces back the "traditional" transitional justice norm in the creation of Gacaca, based on context study conducted from 2005 to 2006 and material collected between 2007 and 2012, including academic literature, public policy documents and reports, 45 in-depth interviews and, direct observations of Gacaca stakeholders meetings. As a result, a qualitatively different norm creation picture from the one initiated in the Global North emerges thus, challenging some of the taken-for-granted dynamics in international norms scholarship. Countries from the Global South might initiate practices rooted in local traditions, that ultimately emerge as new norms in the conduct of international relations. Committed norm entrepreneurs able to persuasively frame ideas and skillfully use extant opportunities are central for norm creation from the Global South, given the aid dependence for policymaking and the multiplicity of gatekeepers of the status quo. When a political party combines activism and authority, it can transform into a crucial mechanism for norm creation. This thesis is a small contribution towards decolonizing academic debates on norm creation and the role of Global South countries.

Keywords: Gacaca, Rwanda, Global South, Norms, Norm Creation, Norm Life Cycle, Postcolonialism, Decoloniality, Genocide, Postgenocide