Perspectives Series: Research Report

‘Pacifying vindictiveness by not being vindictive’: Do memory initiatives in Cambodia have a role in addressing questions of impunity?

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impunity watch

‘Pacifying Vindictiveness by not Being Vindictive’: Do Memory Initiatives in Cambodia have a role in addressing questions of impunity?

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Cover photo courtesy of Youth for Peace. Memory initiative at Kraing Tachan.

Impunity Watch

Impunity Watch (IW) is a Netherlands-based, international non-profit organisation seeking to promote accountability for atrocities in countries emerging from a violent past. IW conducts systematic research into the root causes of impunity that includes the voices of affected communities to produce research-based policy advice on processes intended to enforce their rights to truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence. IW works closely with civil society organisations to increase their influence on the creation and implementation of related policies. IW runs 'Country Programmes' in Guatemala and Burundi and a 'Perspectives Programme' involving comparative research in multiple post-conflict countries on specific thematic aspects of impunity. The present Research Report is published as part of IW's Memorialisation Project, within the wider Perspectives Programme.

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Executive Summary

This report addresses the question of to what extent memory initiatives in Cambodia play a role in helping Cambodian society to deal fairly and honestly with its violent past and provide a platform for mourning, remembrance and education. The underlying research rationale is to examine the contribution of memory initiatives to addressing questions of accountability and combating impunity in Cambodia.

Impunity Watch (IW) promotes accountability for atrocities in countries emerging from a violent past, in the belief that dealing with mass crimes is an essential part of conflict resolution, democratisation, establishing rule of law and protecting basic human rights. The way that issues of memorialisation are dealt with reflects not only events of the past, but testifies to the prevailing values and competing interests present in societies struggling to come to terms with a violent period (IW concept paper, 2010).

Since IW's Perspective Programme aims to enhance understanding of the role of memory initiatives in post-conflict societies, field research in several countries has been undertaken, including Cambodia, to form a basis for a comparative analysis. In Cambodia fieldwork took place in February 2011 in partnership with three local civil society organisations engaged in memory initiatives, Youth for Peace (YFP), the International Center for Conciliation Cambodia (ICfC) and the Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP). The research has been of qualitative nature to gain deeper insights into perceptions, notions and attitudes of Cambodians in memorialising a painful past. Nevertheless, the fieldwork is by no means exhaustive. After decades of silence this kind of qualitative research on the memorialisation of mass crimes is completely new to Cambodians. For this reason, it was difficult for villagers to fully open up to unusual questions that most felt to be very sensitive. Although NGO representatives accompanying the research facilitated easy access to communities, time was often too short for developing a deep atmosphere of trust for participants to fully overcome their discomfort to reveal more personal views and opinions beyond the standard rhetoric.

Given the novelty of trying to find answers to the questions posed in Cambodia the report should be seen as a very first entry point for further research and discussion. It intends in the first place to raise awareness on current tendencies in memorialisation in Cambodia and tries to discuss underlying reasons for these tendencies. At this early stage there are often more questions than conclusive answers.

Based on the assumption that the retributive, legalistic approach of the Extraordinary Chamber of the Courts in Cambodia (ECCC) has had little significant impact on changing attitudes among Cambodians in respect of reducing feelings of animosity and decreasing desires for revenge, illustrated by two recent surveys, the research has focused on memory initiatives with a more restorative approach. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they bear much more potential for engaging Cambodians (both survivors as well as youth) in pro-actively coping with their recent history and improving social relationships in respective communities. The central question of the research sought to examine the contribution of memory initiatives to addressing questions of impunity and what dilemmas surface in trying to forge this interconnection. For the purpose of the IW memorialisation project, 'impunity' is understood beyond simply the absence of judicial accountability for crimes to include the *absence of truth about the past and non-recognition of abuses* suffered. (IW Field Research Framework, July 2010). According to the framework of the comparative research and to ensure cross-cutting comparative aspects from the focus countries, the field research in Cambodia had the following objectives:

- to explore how different roles / identities (such as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, collaborators) are represented and how different identity groups respond memory initiatives;
- to explore how memory initiatives stimulate and facilitate processes of revealing/establishing the truth; and
- to explore how young people are addressed or involved in memory initiatives and how young people respond.

The research included a comprehensive literature review and a stock-taking of current memory initiatives in Cambodia, qualitative data from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with key informants, conducted through three case studies. Two of the case studies provide insights into memorialisation in rural areas, including local histories located in close proximity to where the crimes were perpetrated, whilst the latter examines the state-run Tuol Sleng Museum in Phnom Penh.

The research has specifically focused on these three initiatives because they reflect two different approaches and appear to produce different results. Few memory initiatives go beyond (one-way) dissemination of information, with only some provision of legal, logistic and/or psycho-social support, little explicit encouragement of Cambodians to actively 'break the silence' in society and few attempts to empower especially survivors to proactively cope with their painful past. More successful projects do appear to have been initiated by YFP and ICfC. By contrast, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum is significantly disparate from both of the other initiatives and reflects in particular the difficult political conditions for addressing Cambodia's violent past. While its main goal has been to illustrate, remember and condemn the atrocities committed during the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime it has never been a place for Cambodians to acquire understanding of the historic events and causes of the mass killings.

The context of dealing with the conflict and mass crimes in Cambodia

An important entry point for the research was to acknowledge that the three years, eight months and twenty days of DK regime cannot be cut off from the historical context. The violent conflict that Cambodians have endured began much earlier and persisted for almost a further twenty years after 1979. Fieldwork discovered that Cambodians not only wish to talk about their suffering under the DK regime but also remember vividly the effects of these events, particularly before 1975. For many DK survivors the turning point in their life was not 17 April

1975, as a common cliché suggests, but often occurred as early as 1971/72 or at least in 1973 when two thirds of the country was already under control of the Khmer Rouge, witnessing fierce military fights, increasing KR activities and civilian massacres. Victims of that time are still remembered and mourned by surviving family members and their descendants, with similar findings concerning memories of the 1980s. The exclusion of these memories before 1975 and after 1979 from official processes of seeking recognition through memorialisation and from much of the discourse on Cambodia means that the full dimensions of the conflict are not addressed and the historical background of the atrocities are not understood.

There are several reasons for this exclusion. Of course, it is without question that the three years of the DK regime was the most appalling period of violence, the extreme radical nature of the regime, with its attempt to completely destroy traditional family structures and interpersonal relationships, a shocking and traumatizing experience producing memories surpassing many others. In addition, the overemphasis of the atrocities committed by the DK regime was a dominant feature of the post-1979 regime, omitting much of the historical context in an attempt to demonise the KR in order to further its own legitimacy. Further, after the1991 peace agreement and elections in 1993 the entrenched stereotype of the KR was still being employed by the new government to pressure the last remnants of its fighters to finally give up, all of the other resistance fighters (especially FUNCINPEC and KPNLF who were allied to the KR in the 1980s) having been welcomed to reintegrate into political life without questions as to their involvement in the past conflict. Patched together in a new government and absorbed in new power struggles, there was little interest in delving into the past. The ECCC has further contributed to the situation, having jurisdiction only for crimes committed between 17 April 1975 and 6 January 1979. Using space opened by the ECCC, memory initiatives refer mainly to these three years rarely looking beyond.

Memorialisation of the mass atrocities committed during the Khmer Rouge regime

Even limiting memorialisation efforts to these three years appears to be a challenge for Cambodian society. Roughly three phases of memorialisation can be identified. The first began immediately after the fall of the DK regime in 1979, lasting throughout the 1980s until 1993. The second, rather a transitional phase, lasted until the ECCC began operating in 2006 and the third began to flourish alongside the proceedings of the ECCC. Each phase is characterised by different political conditions and the context in which they have been undertaken, the initiators, the purposes and the ways they have been pursued.

Initiatives undertaken in the 1980s were completely dominated by the state and the ruling Communist party (PRPK, the predecessor of the today's CPP). The most important memorial site during that time was the former KR detention, torture and execution centre, S-21 in the heart of Phnom Penh. Transformed under Vietnamese auspices into the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum immediately after the overthrow of the DK regime in 1979 and opened to the public in 1980, the main goal was to illustrate, remember and condemn the atrocities committed during the DK regime. Additionally, many mass graves were transformed into memory sites during this period, the most prominent of which are the 'killing fields' at Choeung Ek. These state-run memory initiatives have been used for official ceremonies to commemorate the victims of the DK regime, but since they were primarily burdened with the purpose of condemning the DK atrocities they have seemingly gained little resonance among the population. Over the years the annual celebrations have hardened into an exercise of duty rather than an accommodation of individual commemoration and mourning. In addition, the new regime pursued a rather benevolent policy against all those who might have had a role in the DK regime when they were willing to surrender, combined with the official policy to prevent people from individually seeking facts and information about the murder of relatives and demanding retribution. Consequently, only some of the perpetrators have been arrested and imprisoned.

In the 1990s, after the return of exiled opposition groups to participate in the UN-supervised elections of 1993, the issue of dealing with the KR past became even more politicised. Differing versions of history thrived and collided with the officially-established version. Instead of open discussion, these versions were used for political wrangling and became part of fierce struggles for power. After the 1993 elections, the new coalition government continued to pursue an ambiguous policy towards the KR, on the one hand trying to convince defectors to surrender by offering generous conditions, whilst at the same time prosecuting 'stubborn' elements who were not willing to surrender. The formal request by the Cambodian government in 1997 for UN assistance in organising trials against KR top leaders, combined with the six years of protracted negotiations that followed, added to uncertainty of how to deal with the KR past and to the 'big silence' in Cambodian society.

A new impetus for memorialisation efforts came with the official establishment of the ECCC in 2006, with some local NGOs engaging in awareness-raising and providing support for survivors wishing to actively participate in proceedings. Outreach activities have since increased, but so too have interesting experiments with artistic, educational and therapeutic approaches, as well as a variety of community-based efforts. This diversity of initiatives reflects a more favourable climate for memorialisation, less burdened by political motivations compared to the 1980s and 1990s. Nonetheless, they still must operate in a highly politicised environment and thus rarely go beyond providing support to survivors. At the same time, socio-cultural aspects considerably influence the manner in which Cambodians are willing and able to deal with mass crimes that Cambodians have committed against each other. Cambodian society is characterised by a high level of inequality and strong social hierarchy, which emphasise the importance of appropriate behaviour, avoiding creating conflict or giving offence. Combined with past trauma the effect is that many Cambodians place high value on maintaining peaceful relations, avoiding confrontations, especially with the powerful. The widespread practice of Buddhism impacts on memorialisation, since according to Buddhist doctrine punishment focuses primarily on repairing or preventing a related harm that was suffered by the community, not on retribution by the victim. It focuses on accruing good merit for the future rather than on investigating mistakes of the past.

The three case studies

YFP's *Youth for Justice and Reconciliation* (YJR) project is an outreach activity linked to the ECCC to involve youth in reconciliation efforts, engage them in breaking the silence about the Khmer Rouge past and, by going far beyond focusing on the ECCC, to establish positive community-based and -owned legacies for sustainable peace-building through education, art work and the creation of space for dialogue between the younger and older generations. Core activities of the project include workshops to improve understanding of the Khmer Rouge period, village dialogue to stimulate open discussion between youth and survivors, as well as study tours, an annual youth conference and documenting local history. A second component comprises aspects of building a local remembrance and memory culture in the communities with whom YFP is working through empowering Community Memorial Committees to organise and maintain local memorials and initiate regular remembrance activities.

ICfC's *Justice and History Outreach (JHO)* project aims at developing the abilities of villagers to communicate the horrific past of the Khmer Rouge era with their family members and the community, and to feel empowered in coming to terms with this past. ICfC staff have helped villagers and local CSO partners to design and organise activities such as village dialogue, visit to memorials in the capital and constructing a local memorial based on the needs and design of villagers to commemorate those who died and suffered under the KR regime.

Opened to the public in 1980, the *Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum* represents one of the very first and oldest memory initiatives in Cambodia dealing with the mass crimes of the DK regime. The five original buildings are for the most part preserved as they were left when the Khmer Rouge were driven out in the first days of 1979. The museum holds galleries of black and white photographs, predominantly mug shots of prisoners taken immediately after their arrival, and other objects including instruments of torture. They are accompanied by paintings of former inmate Vann Nath showing people being tortured.

Findings from the case studies

The NGO-led memory initiatives have significantly contributed to engaging rural Cambodians in addressing their violent past. Although focusing on different target groups, both projects helped to enhance the capacity and confidence of rural Cambodians in actively memorialising their experiences and making the past relevant to subsequent generations. Villagers responded positively to the initiatives, came into dialogue beyond the privacy of their families and developed their own ideas of commemoration based on their local resources. These processes strengthened their sense of community and started to build important entry points for more active involvement in dealing with the past.

By contrast, the Tuol Sleng Museum appears to represent rather a sinister place full of ghosts and strange happenings that Cambodians tend to avoid visiting. This is clearly reflected in the highly unbalanced proportion between the mass of foreign visitors compared to the very few domestic visitors. Even the mass tours organised by the ECCC for villagers cannot obscure the fact that for most locals (both KR survivors and subsequent generations) a visit to the TSM is a painful experience rather than an illuminating event or soothing experience of devout commemoration of the KR victims.

At the same time, clear differences in attitudes towards memorialisation became apparent among project participants. Survivors living in rural areas responded markedly positive to project activities focusing on mourning, commemorating and getting their sufferings of that time publically acknowledged, but were much less interested in open discussion of why these cruel events happened, how to hold those responsible to account, or why so many had collaborated with the regime. Young people, by contrast, tended more often towards seeking explanations for these atrocities. Fieldwork also reflected that there is considerable unease or uncertainty in Cambodian society of how to deal with the duality of becoming both victim and perpetrator, since suffering and guilt are obviously incompatible. This paradox may explain why it is completely 'forgotten' within the Cambodian public that most of the S-21 victims commemorated in TSM were actually KR cadres, soldiers or low-ranking public servants. Should there be a distinction between such persons and those 'true' or 'innocent' victims? Can one ever know the motivation of each 'perpetrator'? How far does responsibility extend? As yet, Cambodian memory initiatives have not gone into these questions, rather perpetuating the standard, simple and somewhat comforting narrative of KR stigma.

The question of different roles/identities

Whilst the CSO projects have largely succeeded in the encouragement of survivors to talk openly about their personal sufferings of the past, in connecting survivors with subsequent generations and in invigorating communities to regularly commemorate their loved ones, they have not addressed the different roles/identities of participants, nor thus the different degrees of responsibility. Both projects have taken it almost for granted that their participants are 'innocent victims' *per se* without knowing their individual stories and roles, and without considering the differences in remembering the past that may result between so-called 'base people' from rural areas and so-called 'new people' mostly with an urban background. Even among former KR elements themselves, experiences and memories appear to differ considerably, despite the crystallisation of the term 'Khmer Rouge' into an entrenched stereotype of a homogenous group. Motivations for participation in the murderous system remain completely unexplored. Demonization of the KR is most visibly cultivated at the TSM, which itself considerably obstructs any discussion of this problem and sustains an atmosphere of suspicion, subliminal fear and wholesale condemnation in society.

These dynamics, among others, mean that memory initiatives have the effect of perpetuating silence about the past in certain respects, including facilitating passive victimhood. An additional perhaps decisive factor underlying the widespread reluctance of survivors to engage in open, critical discussion is the considerable fear that detailed reconstruction of local events could lead to the recurrence of violence and revenge attacks - an argument that is specifically held by the authorities.

Equally, Buddhist concepts of punishment and reconciliation mean that harm and injustice is met with the individual isolation of offenders, often with the consequence of their exclusion from social and community life, a fate that many low-ranking KR and their families now suffer. In itself this exclusion, even without criminal accountability, indeed appears the most severe punishment possible. For reintegration, public confession and regret, together with compensation, is expected, whilst by contrast there appeared little importance among participants to the research attached to individual retribution. Exactly from whom confessions are desired remains unanswered: simply the handful of ostracised KR cadres, or also the numerous KR collaborators?

The question of truth-telling

Truth-telling in Cambodia in terms of addressing the full dimensions of the conflict and overcoming silence through revealing the truth is distinctly complex. Almost thirty years of civil war has led to considerable ossified rifts between different political groups and their supporters/sympathisers, manifested in entrenched stereotypes. Since history is utilised for political purposes without substantive discussion, there is much uncertainty among ordinary Cambodians about how to deal with divergent versions of history. Remembering the past with all of its associated atrocities has always been a highly sensitive and strongly political issue for Cambodians, preventing many of them from openly expressing their views or engaging in reflections on the past.

A constant policy of winning defectors by rewarding them with official positions, putting aside any prior involvement in criminal acts, continues to foster a mutual expedient silence about past roles/identities and questions of responsibilities. In neutralising conflict and putting political opponents out of action, the power holders in Cambodia have always left open the possibility of pursuing various options through which it may happen that criminal prosecutions are suppressed in favour of other options or being only selectively used whenever it appears to be opportune. In such a climate memorialisation in the sense of finding the truth and dealing openly with what had happened is a highly uncertain, not to say a risky endeavour. The fact that countless incumbent government officials and security sector personnel at all levels had ties to the KR contributes to the prevailing culture of silence, suspicion and fear.

As long as the undifferentiated demonisation of the KR continues, broader public discussion on the truth and individual responsibilities for mass crimes during the DK is out of question. Though the ECCC has targeted the remaining senior leaders, this policy has in itself reinforced attitudes within society, ensuring that critical self-reflection is unnecessary.

The question of memory initiatives and young people (future generations)

While survivors understandably continue to suffer the emotional burden of the events of the past, the YFP project in particular reflected a promising potential for subsequent generations to question entrenched stereotypes and seek plausible, fact-based explanations of the past. Youth have become an active part of the memorialisation efforts in their communities and made the KR history subject to discussion in their schools. However, a certain gradation was found among young people in their commitment to local history, particularly resulting from fewer opportunities among the rural youth to access information. The rural youth also appear to experience lesser individual freedoms in terms of questioning inconsistencies or obscurities in survivors' accounts of local events owing to village dynamics, a constraint suffered less by students in Phnom Penh who often reflected an impressive level of historical insight and critical reflection. Though not representing the majority of Cambodian youth, impressions from the latter group offer encouraging signs for the future in terms of dealing with Cambodia's past.

Similar to the interviewed survivors, a general attitude in favour of searching for the truth without the threat of legal proceedings against survivors was also expressed by the majority of youth, avoiding a process of 'hunting perpetrators' and open accusations, a process which could undermine reconciliation efforts. Combined with limited trust in the legal system, a belief was articulated that legal proceedings would not help to rebuild broken communal relationships. Accordingly, a general tendency among the youth questioned was expressed favouring the bringing of persons together, to include younger generations, to talk about the past. This process was suggested as appropriate for revealing the truth, achieving mutual acknowledgment, apologies and forgiveness, at the same time allowing younger generations to learn from past mistakes to ensure their non-recurrence. Though it was difficult to assess whether participants were simply reproducing the official government pacification and reconciliation policy, their often critical reflections suggest that this is not the case. It was apparent that younger generations have only recently begun examining what happened in Cambodia's past, which restricts their deeper questioning of issues including accountability for persons beyond the small number of individuals at the ECCC. This inexperience mirrors the nascent involvement of civil society with memorialisation.

Conclusions in relation to the central research question

It would be an over-simplification to attribute the reluctance of Cambodian society to address questions of responsibilities for crimes of the past merely and exclusively to an omnipotent pressure of a few former KR, now high-ranking government officials. The 'big silence' corresponds with socio-cultural patterns and the way in which Cambodians usually deal with questions of responsibility. Embedded in hierarchical structures and networks of patronage ties, Cambodians find comfort in informal norms of familiarity, trust and saving face, consequently avoiding finger-pointing and open accusations of individual responsibilities. Rather than challenging or offending powerful individuals, many Cambodians attempt to gain their protection by entering into relationships of personal dependency. Though such relationships are outwardly asymmetrical and unbalanced, to Cambodians they are commonly understood as representing crucial means for gaining access to resources and social status. In such context personal backgrounds and the origin of resources are of little importance.

Ironically, nepotism and patronage was a prominent feature of the DK regime, despite the paradox that the Party preached egalitarianism. Relatives were placed into key official posts, whilst at the grassroots, village, commune and cooperative chiefs often gave preferential treatment according to kinship and inner circles. Many purges and mass executions were indeed carried out along such real or perceived networks. Insofar as not talking about individualised responsibilities of all those having been involved in the past crimes, many persons may hope to maintain their own impunity, favouring the more comfortable victim role.

While the research focused mainly on rural Cambodians, little information has been gathered on the extent to which survivors who suffered the harshest treatment(extreme discrimination, humiliation, enslavement, forceful deportations, etc.) feel interested, motivated and able to tackle questions of calling their past tormentors or individuals to account. The research has stumbled on a remarkable gap in knowledge when it comes to the concerns of city people regarding issues of the past and an analogous shortcoming in the engagement of these people with memory initiatives. Even though it could be assumed that the Phnom Penh infrastructure makes access to information easier and connection among people simpler than in rural areas, the actual situation is less clear-cut. For some, an application to become a civil party to the ECCC may be a safe way for realising their desires, but even more surprising is that the majority of the almost 4,000 civil parties to the ECCC's case 002 are former KR. The present study was not able to address these aspects in detail, leaving this to future research.

An apparent correspondence was found in the research between survivors and younger generations concerning punishment and dealing with past injustices. Redress through the formal court system was regarded as one option, but preference was expressed for traditional approaches that are inherent and deep-rooted in Cambodian society. An inclination towards restorative justice approaches was common, with a strong focus on confession, public acknowledgement, apology and compensation of 'bad deeds' of the past by doing 'good deeds' in the present. The two CSO memory initiatives described in the case studies and the YRDP project working with university students are each based on these traditional concepts of justice and mutual understanding. Operating under difficult political circumstances and being aware of the specific socio-cultural aspects discussed above, they have carefully sought entry points for breaking the silence by respecting and using local capacities and resources. Their main focus has consequently been put on mourning, commemoration and fostering communication about the past, increasing knowledge among young people on that past thereby connecting them to the memories of the survivor generation, and on motivating subsequent generations to engage in the country's recent history. The success with which they have mobilised survivors and young people alike to engage in these activities reflects positively on this chosen approach.

By contrast, the Tuol Sleng Museum seems to offer little benefit in terms of engaging Cambodians in coming to terms with their violent past, dealing with questions of responsibilities and fostering public memory as a foundation for peace. The demonisation approach utilised, together with the experience of being confronted with scenes of horror and merely learning about torture methods appears to repel rather than engage many Cambodians, particularly in engaging with lingering questions about the past. Instead, the museum's excessive emotional demands and tendency to leave the historic truth unaddressed by merely focusing on the agony itself contributes more to building mystical images which bear the risky potential for provoking alternative memories that justify revenge and incite further conflict. In this sense, the museum simplifies the narrative, including the responsibilities for the crimes committed. Considering these distorting effects that the museum has on (in particular) the understanding of subsequent generations about the past, a fundamental question arises of how it may better facilitate learning from the past and helping Cambodian society to constructively confront its legacy without perpetuating entrenched hostilities.

Recommendations

The report provides important insights into current tendencies of memorialisation in Cambodia and discusses underlying reasons. Giving omniscient and precise recommendations for all stakeholders is however a difficult task.

Though the ECCC gave important impetus to the emergence of an encouraging diversity of memorialisation efforts, questions remain concerning the extent to which these efforts are sustainable after the ECCC closes its doors. It seems that foreign donors who have provided considerable support to civil society efforts over the last few years could well become less interested and may even completely withdraw with the close of the ECCC. In addition, as the research has illustrated, Cambodian society appears unclear on how far memorialisation efforts should go, what they should include and how to deal with the victim-perpetrator paradox. Much greater public discussion on the importance, role and the potential of memorialisation for coming to terms with a violent past is needed. This should focus on the following aspects concluded from the research:

The research suggests that the restorative approach, including focus on re-establishing broken relationships without necessarily legal prosecution, may indeed represent the most promising way to come to terms with the past, given the complexity of the conflict and prevailing socio-political conditions. The two case studies demonstrate positive evidence of such an approach.

For strengthening these respective processes, civil society and other key stakeholders must continue efforts to create a social climate in which people feel safe to express their views, experiences and memories, and where others are willing to listen, with empathy. Such conditions would provide a basis for more public discourse, as well as the accumulation of greater knowledge about the past and the conditions for enabling younger generations to establish public memory as a foundation for overcoming silence and impunity about the past. These processes may gradually strengthen the ability and capacities of Cambodians to openly address questions of accountability for the past and come to a constructive debate in society on how to tackle them.

Shaping the TSM into a museum which takes into account the specific needs and requirements of a local audience instead of being primarily focused on foreign visitors would open up a variety of possibilities for Cambodians. Among others, young people would be encouraged to get

involved with history, since the museum could provide historical orientation for understanding the past and for considering actions to prevent such crimes in the future.

Further important steps for memory initiatives in Cambodia may include efforts to strengthen truth-telling elements at various levels, to specifically include communal mechanisms for revealing local histories in more detail. Cambodia has a rich tradition of oral history which has certainly suffered from the traumas of civil war and mass killings but may be revived under the careful facilitation of skilled experts. The research with survivors demonstrated that much detail on past events is embedded in their memories which many were open to sharing (even former KR), providing a rich source for memory initiatives. Compiling and producing local material with different perspectives, views and interpretations, and displaying them for example in local peace museums would similarly contribute to paving the way for more tolerance, overcoming demonising stereotypes and more rational coping strategies. In turn, the prospects for genuine reconciliation processes would be significantly increased.

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Abbreviations

CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPP	Cambodian People's Party (former People's Revolutionary Party Kampuchea, ruling since 1979)
CGDK	Cambodian Government of Democratic Kampuchea, established in July 1982 in exile to unify Cambodian resistance against the Vietnam-backed PRK in order to preserve the DK seat at the UN (comprising the defeated KR, FUNCINPEC under Prince Sihanouk and FPNLK under Son San)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DK	Democratic Kampuchea, regime of the Khmer Rouge from 1975-1979
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (also called Khmer Rouge Tribunal)
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independent, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif (founded in 1981 in exile by Prince Norodom Sihanouk to fight against the Vietnamese backed PRK)
ICfC	International Center for Conciliation (working in Cambodia since 2006)
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front (founded in 1979 in exile by Son San to fight against the Vietnamese backed PRK)
KR	Khmer Rouge
KRT	Khmer Rouge Tribunal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1989, 1989 renamed in State of Cambodia, SOC)
PRPK	People's Revolutionary Party Kampuchea (ruling since 1979, renamed CPP in 1989)
PRT	People's Revolutionary Tribunal (held in August 1979 to sentence two KR top leaders)
YFP	Youth for Peace (Cambodian NGO working since 1999 on issues of peace building and reconciliation with specific focus on youth)
YRDP	Youth Resource Development Program (Cambodian NGO working since 1992 on building critical thinking skills and civic engagement among university students)

1. Introduction

Cambodia is emerging from a recent history of violent conflict and one of the most disastrous experiments of communist rule the world has ever seen: the Khmer Rouge regime (officially the 'Democratic Kampuchea' (DK), 1975-1979). During this period between 1.7 and 2 million Cambodians died from starvation, overwork, misdiagnosed disease, and execution.

After the fall of the DK regime in 1979 civil war persisted for nearly two further decades. Although a peace agreement had been negotiated in 1991 under considerable international pressure and UN-supervised elections held in 1993, fighting between the Khmer Rouge (KR) and a new coalition government continued until the last two remaining senior leaders of the KR and their armed forced surrendered in 1998. Since then Cambodia has enjoyed increasing political stability and has achieved remarkable economic growth, the latter years of relative economic prosperity spurring unbridled consumerism particularly among the youth. In this context of newfound prosperity, questions of addressing a painful past are not at the forefront of many young minds. While the Angkor period is still a source of pride and cultural identity for Cambodians,[1] the legacy of the KR period creates rather a sense of unease or even shame, a scar on the Cambodian conscience.

For many, it is more important to focus on the problems Cambodians face in their daily lives rather than to seek redress for crimes committed thirty years ago. In this context, not much has happened in Cambodian society in the sense of active memorialisation or remembrance of the country's gruesome past, particularly efforts that aim to enhance understanding of the historic events and certainly not those that touch upon questions of responsibility. Too recent were the effects of persistent political rifts and ongoing military clashes between political opponents, including the prolonged suffering inflicted upon the general population even long after the fall of the DK regime. Only when the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC, also referred to as the 'Khmer Rouge Tribunal') opened its doors in 2006 were the most horrible excesses of the past conflict brought back to the wider public attention. The ECCC is the first internationally-recognised process to try senior leaders of the DK regime and those most responsible for the atrocities committed at that time.

Forcing many Cambodians to confront painful memories that they had repressed for many years may well bring positive results for the country's long silence and consequent impunity about this period. At the same time, there are considerable risks with such a confrontation, including the re-traumatisation of survivors.

The present report addresses the nascent memorialisation tendencies in Cambodia, particularly the question of to what extent memory initiatives play a role in helping Cambodian society to deal fairly and honestly with its violent past and provide a platform for mourning, remembrance and education. The underlying research rationale informing the report and the wider Impunity Watch project within which it is researched is to examine the contribution of memory initiatives to addressing cultures of silence that perpetuate impunity about the past.

1.1. Research Background

Years of what can best be described as a 'big silence' (culture of silence) in Cambodian society are now confronted with the ECCC's attempts to grapple with key figureheads from the KR period. The establishment of the ECCC has brought public attention back to questions of Cambodia's violent past. Since then some civil society organisations have gradually begun to engage in sporadic attempts to address this legacy of silence and impunity, long suppressed in the memories of survivors.

However, little is known about what impact these recent activities surrounding the ECCC have on a still fragile population. What Cambodians may need for healing some of the trauma and finding ways for reconciliation is far from clear. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the ECCC and its proceedings are not well understood by the majority of Cambodians.[2]Not only is there a cacophony of opinions about the procedures of official justice such as the hybrid tribunal, but there is also a multitude of understandings of justice and punishment found at the local level.[3]

Indeed, whilst the ECCC has opened up certain space for initiatives that address individual needs and ways of commemorating the past, attitudes among Cambodians towards the past have not seemingly changed in favour of rebuilding broken social relationships and establishing the truth. Feelings of animosity and the desire for revenge are still the same compared to the survey in 2008, with a large majority of Cambodians continuing to report feelings of

[1] A period spanning approximately six centuries from the 9th Century, during which the powerful Khmer Empire witnessed high splendour and decadence, well-known traces of which are found at the Angkor Wat Temples, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
[2] See for example HRC Berkeley survey 2009, Dicklitch, 2010 or ICfC 2007. The very recent 2nd HRC Berkeley survey 2011 reflects that knowledge has only slightly increased and many facts about the court still remain unknown or unclear.
[3] Kent (2006:5)

hatred (81%) and a desire to see those responsible suffer (68%).[4] On the other hand it seems that in contrast to the retributive approach of the ECCC, memory initiatives with artistic/educational and/or restorative approaches to justice significantly contribute to an increasing engagement of Cambodians (both survivors as well as youth) in pro-actively coping with their recent history with the result of improved social relationships in respective communities and a positively strengthened sense of community. However, given the complicated socio-political environment and the inexperience of Cambodian civil society organisations as entrepreneurs of memory, the current memory initiatives still have to be seen as experimental in terms of their effectiveness for meeting the needs of the various stakeholders, for assisting the coming to terms with the past and for the purposes of reducing impunity.

So far no systematic reflections for understanding the effects of emerging initiatives have been undertaken.

For this latter reason alone, not discounting the relevant contextual factors and unique situation in Cambodia compared to the other countries being researched, Cambodia provides an excellent context for analysing memorialisation within Impunity Watch's Memorialisation Project. With the goal of promoting accountability in countries emerging from a violent past, Impunity Watch (IW) initiated a Project to examine the contribution of memorialisation to reducing impunity for mass crimes. One of the founding principles of the Project was the assumption that the way that issues of memorialisation are dealt with may reflect not only events of the past, but may testify to the prevailing values and competing interests present in societies struggling to come to terms with violence. In this respect the Project aims to enhance understanding of the role of memory initiatives in post-conflict societies, utilising field research in several countries to form a basis for a comparative analysis.[5]

1.2. Objectives of the Research

The central question of the research is whether memory initiatives contribute to addressing the culture of silence in Cambodia and how they may play a role in helping Cambodian society to deal fairly and honestly with the past, and provide a platform for mourning, remembrance and education. In addition, whether memory initiatives contribute to addressing questions of accountability will be looked at, particularly in terms of any dilemmas that may inhibit the linkage of memorialisation with other efforts to combat impunity. According to IW, 'impunity' is understood beyond simply the absence of judicial accountability for crimes to include the absence of truth about the past and non-recognition of abuses suffered.

In order to tackle the objectives, the research attempts to enhance understanding on:

- how memory initiatives motivate and get survivors as well as young Cambodians engaged in memory activities ('breaking the silence');
- how these initiatives deal with controversial interpretations of the past and the fact that often a clear distinction between victims and perpetrators is not possible;
- how these initiatives consider and integrate local perceptions of justice and ways of reconciliation; and
- how these initiatives provide a way of learning from the past especially for young people and whether the initiatives contribute to acknowledging this period of the past as an integral part of national identity according to younger generations.

The research employed a qualitative approach, utilising focus groups and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key informants to gain deeper insights into perceptions, notions and the attitudes of Cambodians towards memorialising a painful past. The study draws on existing sources of theoretical and empirical knowledge and includes new data and findings obtained from field research conducted primarily in February 2011 in partnership with three local civil society organisations engaged in memory initiatives: Youth for Peace (YFP), the International Center for Conciliation Cambodia (ICfC) and Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP). The qualitative data and examination of memorialisation in Cambodia is presented by way of three case studies – two civil society memory initiatives and one state-run initiative.

According to the framework of the comparative research assigned to the researchers by IW to ensure cross-cutting comparative aspects from the focus countries, three principal components conceptualised to contribute to a culture of silence across contexts frame the present report's analysis. They are:

- how the different roles / identities (such as victims, perpetrators, bystanders) are represented in the memory initiatives of the case studies, and the response of different groups to these memory initiatives;
- the contribution of the memory initiatives to stimulating and facilitating processes of revealing and/or establishing the truth (truth-telling); and

[4] HRC Berkeley (2011), p. 32.
[5] The other countries where research took place are: Burundi, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala and South Africa.

- the way in which younger generations are addressed by or involved in memory initiatives, and the response of these generations that have not directly experienced the violence being memorialised.

Two of the case studies give insight into memorialisation efforts in rural areas working with villagers in the context of their local history and often closely located to specific places of mass crimes. The third tries to shed light on a state-run initiative in Phnom Penh, the Tuol Sleng Museum, principally through the insights of students. One representative of each civil society organisation partnering the research was involved in the field research and closely cooperated with the principal researcher in analysing the field data.

Field research of two weeks in duration examined four concrete examples of the YFP and ICfC projects to get an impression of how villagers deal with their memories of the KR regime and to what extent these memorialisation efforts address questions of different roles/identities, truth-seeking and the inclusion of young people. In addition, four focus group discussions were conducted with students in Phnom Penh, who are mostly engaged in voluntary work with YRDP and have partly participated in YRDP's KR project. One of these focus group discussions involved students not affiliated to YRDP. In the case of YFP, two focus group discussions were conducted with survivors, mostly native to the area under study and with an average age of 65-75 years old. Two focus group discussions with young people with an average age of 15-18 years old were also undertaken. In the case of ICfC, four focus group discussions were conducted with survivors, whereby in one location the situation was different related to age and historical background of the participants. In this specific case the project participants consisted mainly of former Khmer Rouge, often not native to the area, and some younger, on average 55-65 years old. In addition, one focus group discussion was conducted with villagers who had not participated in the ICfC memorialisation project. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with the commune chief of each location visited, supplemented by interviews with other members of the respective commune council, and also with the village chief of each location as well as some interviews with monks or achars of the nearby pagoda or well-known elders of the village.

1.3. Limitations of the Research

The research - and particularly the fieldwork undertaken in just three weeks – is by no means an exhaustive account of memorialisation in Cambodia. After decades of silence this kind of qualitative research on memorialisation of experiences of mass crimes is completely new to Cambodians. For these reasons, it was difficult for villagers to fully open up to unusual questions that most felt to be very sensitive.

Focus group discussions turned out to be little suitable for going beyond general statements of hardships suffered and moving into deeper personal views and opinions about what and specifically why these atrocities happened or even what to do with those who were involved in committing them. Several participants approached the researchers after the group discussions to make known that they had not been as open as they had wished during the group discussion due to feelings of finding themselves in an uncomfortable situation. Unfortunately the research schedule prevented these individual signals from being followed-up through individual interviews. Although both NGO representatives ensured easy access to the communities and the researchers were always received in a friendly manner, time restricted the true development of a full atmosphere of trust for exchanging and openly sharing opinions on matters perceived as sensitive.

Given the novelty of trying to find answers to such questions in Cambodia and the lack of research tackling this subject, the report must be seen as a very first entry point for further research and discussion. It intends in the first place to raise awareness on current tendencies in memorialisation in Cambodia and tries to discuss underlying reasons for these tendencies. At this early stage there are often more questions than conclusive answers.

2. Historical Context

The emerging memory initiatives of Cambodian civil society focus exclusively on the short period of the DK regime from 1975-1979, mirroring the jurisdiction of the ECCC which is similarly confined to this period. Violent conflict suffered by Cambodians nevertheless long preceded this period of history and persisted for many years thereafter.

2.1. Paternalistic Authoritarianism and Violent Suppression of Political Opponents (1954-1969)

After World War II and the struggle against French colonial rule, Cambodia won independence in 1953. King Sihanouk assumed power and sought to develop the country under his unchallenged personal rule. In 1955, Sihanouk abdicated the throne and founded his own political party (Sangkum Reastr Nyium or People's Socialist Community) which set out to lead the country and weaken, absorb or repress any other political group.[6]For several years Sihanouk's paternalistic authoritarian style was widely popular and the kingdom prospered. Almost all political parties had joined the Sangkum or had been suppressed through humiliation, intimidation, harassment or violence. The two most consistent aspects of his domestic policy were his intolerance of dissent and his tendency to identify his opponents with foreign powers.[7]

As Sihanouk's firm grip on Cambodian politics began to slip in the 1960s because of growing domestic problems and increasing involvement in the Vietnam Conflict,[8] violent crackdowns on his perceived enemies multiplied to unprecedented levels, particularly against left-wing elements. Popular leftists and members of the clandestine Communist Party were mercilessly persecuted, arbitrarily arrested and incarcerated, or in some cases beaten or killed. Social unrest among Cambodians increased and a peasant rebellion in the northwest of the country was brutally suppressed in 1968. Blaming prominent leftists for the unrest, Sihanouk coined the term *Khmer Rouge* (Red Khmers), threatening them with execution which drove them and their sympathisers into underground resistance. Scattered rural violence continued on a sporadic basis with the army taking harsh repressive measures whenever the opportunity arose. During 1968 and 1969, as the dissident challenge to the government in Phnom Penh grew in intensity, the government with Sihanouk's direct encouragement and explicit orders waged a campaign of brutal repression. Both sides – the army and the 5000 insurgents – were locked in an increasingly brutal conflict in which neither side hesitated in brutally and indiscriminately killing others.[9] The clandestine Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) or *Khmer Rouge*, as Sihanouk called them, tried to seize the initiative and announced that they had launched the 'armed struggle' against the oppressive regime, striking out from bases in the hilly northeast and the northwest of Cambodia.[10]

At the same time, the war in Vietnam threatened to spill over into Cambodia. North-Vietnam had set up military camps and storage facilities on Cambodian territory along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, prompting secret USB-52 raids beginning in March 1969[11] which effectively drove the Vietnamese communists deeper into Cambodia and into violent clashes with Cambodian villagers and government troops.[12]

2.2. Civil War and Communist Revolution (1970-1978)

In March 1970 open civil war broke out in Cambodia. While a coup d'état that had removed Sihanouk by replacing the monarchy with a republican regime was welcomed among educated Cambodians in Phnom Penh and the army, pro-Sihanouk riots broke out in rural areas. Still on a visit abroad, Sihanouk himself brokered an agreement with the Vietnamese premier, Pham Van Dong (among others) to take command of a united front government, allied to North Vietnam in the struggle against the US and its allies. Thousands of Cambodians responded to Sihanouk's call for armed resistance by joining the Cambodian liberation front supported by North Vietnam, alongside North Vietnamese communists and the *Khmer Rouge* insurgents that Sihanouk's army had been struggling to destroy just a few months earlier.[13] Brutal violence, involving war crimes ensued. Pro-Sihanouk protesters were met with stern repression and KR rebels were subject to torture, some beheaded and publically displayed.[14]

Though the government army received US support against the liberation front, they failed to suppress the joint forces. By the end of 1972, the government controlled only Phnom Penh, a few provincial capitals and Battambang

[6] Peou(2000:40); Chandler (1993:189, 191-92)
[7] Chandler (1993:197)
[8] For more details on this see Chandler (1993: 200-204) and Osborne (1994: 188-196)
[9] Osborne (1994:193-94, 196-97, 203); Kiernan(1997:69)
[10] Chandler (1993:202); Chandler (1991:174-177)
[11] Porter (1982:81)
[12] Shawcross (1993:113)
[13] Chandler (1993:205)
[14] Peou (2000:53-54)

province, the rest of the country either in Communist hands or unsafe for anyone to administer.[15]It took another two years of fighting before the Khmer Rouge entered the capital to topple the republican regime.

The effects of the war on Cambodian society were far-reaching. Between 1970 and 1975, an estimated half-million Cambodians, most of them non-combatants, lost their lives. The period saw thousands of young Cambodians join the Communist revolution and hundreds of thousands lose everything. In 1973, over a 100,000 tonnes of bombs fell on the Cambodian countryside before the US Congress prohibited further bombing. Over 750,000 refugees had streamed into Phnom Penh and other provincial capitals – a third of them since April 1973.[16] By the end of the war, perhaps half of the rural population had become refugee in the cities and starvation had already begun.[17]

An additional 600,000 were believed to have died in the Khmer Rouge zones,[18] most resulting from the effects of war but political repression by the Khmer Rouge started to also become a factor. The radicalisation of the liberation front by the Khmer Rouge who had gained dominance since 1972 spurred an increasing tendency for selective killings and disappearances. As soon as the Cambodian communist movement had gained military strength and North Vietnamese troops withdrew at the end of 1972 the Khmer Rouge began massacring all those Cambodians they considered close to the Vietnamese communists in secret, without explanation.[19] In the areas under their control, programmes of collectivisation were implemented, while any resistance against their policy was brutally repressed. Khmer Rouge cadres also started to 'discretely' remove Sihanouk followers from positions of influence within the military.[20] After 1973, purges of non-communist cadres massively set in to be replaced by young, uneducated but disciplined cadres recruited from the poorest sections of the rural population.[21]

The terror reached a new dimension after the Khmer Rouge seized power in April 1975. After entering Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, over two million Cambodians were immediately driven into the countryside, while only the families of top Khmer Rouge officials and a few hundred ministry and factory workers were allowed to stay in the cities. The Khmer Rouge leaders viewed the cities as breeding grounds for counterrevolution and their economic priorities were based on the transformation of Cambodian agriculture, especially on increasing the national production of rice. By exporting the rice surplus, it was hoped, the new government would earn hard currency with which to pay for imports and, eventually, to finance industrialisation.[22] To achieve this city dwellers were forcibly resettled in rural areas, receiving a special status of 'new people' or 'sent people' [*nèkphnjae*] considering them enemies of the revolution *per se* and being subjected to extremely harsh working and living conditions compared to the 'base people' [*nèkmoulethan*] who had lived in areas already under control of the Khmer Rouge before 17 April, thus enjoying certain privileges. Ten to twelve hour work days were common for 'sent people', sometimes even longer. Many of them were not accustomed to physical labour or rural life and thus soon died of malnutrition, overwork and illness.[23] Even 'base people' found themselves working much harder than they had before 1975, without material rewards and with very little free time.[24] The regime even began distinguishing among 'base people' into various new categories.[25]

With mounting problems in meeting the agricultural targets of the unrealistic 'Four-Year-Plan' and sharply deteriorating living conditions in most areas after 1976, secret executions intensified. By blaming 'enemies' and 'evil microbes' of conspiracy and counterrevolution, the focus of surveillance, distrust and punishment expanded to anyone who was suspected of having 'counter-revolutionary' intentions. The incessant search for and elimination of perceived enemies came to dominate the regime. Even, purges within the Khmer Rouge ranks multiplied, including high-ranking members of the party, military commanders and officials associated with zones and areas that were considered unfaithful and traitorous.[26] Thousands of cadres and Khmer Rouge soldiers were taken to the regime's central prison, S-21, the former Tuol Sleng high school in Phnom Penh, where they were interrogated, tortured and finally executed without trial. The S-21 prisoner list indicated that no fewer than 12,273 individuals were detained there, 10,000 of whom were members of the army and KR cadres. The number is likely to be higher as some records

[15] Chandler (1993:205-208)
[16] Chandler (1991:215, 229); Chandler (1993:207)
[17] Thion (1993:103)
[18] Peou (2000:54)
[19] Chandler (1993:205-208); Kiernan (1997:75)
[20] Shawcross (1993:255)
[21] Thion (2000:104)
[22] Chandler (1991:258-260); Chandler, (1993:210)
[23] Chandler (1993:215); Chandler (1991:265); Kiernan (1997:98, 164); Vickery (1999:99)
[24] Chandler (1991:265)
[25] Vickery (1999:87)
[26] Chandler (1993:219)

have been destroyed or lost.[27] Similar 'security centres' were established in all parts of the country to 'identify and kill internal enemies', to encourage providing information on others and to obtain confessions from the prisoners.[28]

Exact numbers of those killed in Cambodia during this period are difficult to estimate, let alone verify. Conservative estimates suggest that between April 1975 and January 1979, over one million people – or one person in seven – died as a direct result of the Khmer Rouge regime's policies and actions, whether through overwork or neglect, or through executions.[29]

2.3. Continued Civil War after the KR Terror Regime (1979-1991)

After the collapse of the DK regime in January 1979 and the establishment of a new, Vietnamese-backed government known as the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), civil war continued for 12 years with fluctuating intensity. One reason is that the Vietnamese invasion of December 1978-January 1979 to overthrow the DK regime was unable to decisively crush KR troops loyal to Pol Pot. Many KR soldiers took refuge in the jungles along the Thai-Cambodian border, numbering around 25,000 in early 1980.[30] Reduced to "starving, malaria-ridden ragtag bands"[31] they established guerrilla strongholds from which they mounted incursions in the interior to ambush Vietnamese forces, mine roads and blow up bridges. Benefiting from international relief provided to hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees in camps along the Thai-Cambodian border[32] and receiving generous Chinese supplies, arms and ammunition under secret arrangements, the defeated KR were able to survive, regain military strength and by the end of 1980 amass troops in the range of 35,000[33] to 40,000[34] using the refugee camps as a recruitment base.

Some of the refugee camps also became the base for separate non-communist resistance groups, formed by exiled former prominent Cambodians previously ousted from power. These groups - the KPNLF of a former prime minister and the FUNCINPEC of Sihanouk – were much smaller in number[35] and made little inroad on the PRK with their attacks, not least due to lack of discipline and fighting between these groups. Only the revived, Chinese-backed KR forces were disciplined enough to increase their systematic guerrilla war and render large parts of the country insecure. To survive they regularly attacked villages, forcing people to provide food, medicine and other goods and killing those who refused.[36]

At the same time a majority of UN General Assembly members repeatedly voted in favour of the ousted KR to retain its seat at the UN, under pressure from China and the US, despite being keenly aware of the gross violations committed by the KR during its rule.[37] As a result, the UN refused to recognise the new *de facto* PRK government in Phnom Penh, meaning that the devastated country could not receive UN development aid. In the context of the Cold War, China was determined to leave the conflict in Cambodia unresolved because it feared that a quick settlement would be favourable to Vietnam, a threat to China's regional ambitions for power against a perceived Russian-Vietnamese attempt to gain hegemony in Indochina. Equally, though then US president Carter had earlier denounced the DK regime as the "greatest violator of human rights" the US did not want to jeopardise its gradually improving relations with China.[38] In this context, an International Conference on Kampuchea in July 1981 focused much on the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia rather than on the Khmer Rouge's atrocities.[39]

While several regional peace initiatives for a political solution were regularly boycotted at international level, growing anxiety about the erosion of international support for the 'unsavoury' Khmer Rouge led China, the US and

[27] ECCC (2010:51)
[28] ECCC (2010:41-42)
[29] Chandler (1993:212) suggests that around 100,000 people were executed as enemies of the revolution, whilst Kiernan (1999: 456, 458) estimates the death toll at around 1.5 million people, half of them 'new people' and the other half 'base people', Peou (2000: 62) suggesting that 300,000 – 400,000 were executions. The new regime that ousted the KR in 1979 claimed the death toll at 3 million (PRT dossier, 1979:292).
[30] Kiernan (1982:377)
[31] Chanda(1986:382)
[32] For more details on the Cambodian refugee problem see Barry S. Levy and Daniel C. Susott, *Years of Horror – Days of Hope. Responding to the Cambodian Refugee Crisis*, Millwood N.Y.: Associated Faculty Press 1986; Linda Mason and Roger Brown, *Rice, Rivalry, and Politics. Managing Cambodian Relief*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1983; Eva Mysliwiec, *Punishing the Poor. The International Isolation of Kampuchea*, Oxford: Oxfam 1988
[33] Carney (1991:202)
[34] Chanda (1986:382 referring to Heder)
[35] The KPNLF consisted of around 9,000 men under arms and FUNCINPEC claimed to have around 5,000 men under arms (Carney, 1990:197)
[36] Kiernan (1982:378-379)
[37] For figures of the UN votes of every year between 1979 and 1982 see Mysliwiec, 1988:156-161 (appendix II)
[38] Chanda (1986:377-379); Roberts (2001:7-8)
[39] Peou (2000:133); Carney (1990:205-206)

the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to seek ways of improving the DK's reputation and broadening the base of anti-Vietnamese resistance. Under immense pressure, both Cambodian non-communist resistance leaders (Sihanouk and Son San) were urged to join a formal coalition with the KR. In July 1982, a joint DK Government (Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea – CGDK) was publically announced with Sihanouk as president, Son San prime minister and Khieu Samphan vice-president and foreign minister.[40] Its formation, combined with the commencement of economic and military aid from the US in addition to China's massive assistance, breathed new life into the resistance, which intensified its guerrilla attacks resulting in huge numbers of casualties, particularly from anti-personnel mines.[41] In response, Vietnamese and PRK troops mounted a series of offensives, driving the coalition forces back to Thailand in 1983-1985 by completely destroying their encampments within Cambodia. Vietnamese troops then remained in position along the border, whilst the PRK conscripted thousands of workers to clear the forests, erect fences and lay land mines along the border. As a consequence the resistance adopted a new strategy. Instead of engaging in a 'hot' war on the border they split into smaller units and penetrated deep into Cambodia's interior from where they undertook armed raids, sabotage of communication routes and psychological warfare.[42]The security situation remained extremely dangerous, many villages lacking any protection.[43]

When Vietnam withdrew its troops and most of its advisors from Cambodia in the course of 1989, guerrilla activities intensified again, with the KR seeking not only to gain military territory, but also to build state authority of Democratic Kampuchea within the occupied areas. The KR captured several areas and redoubled their raids of villages and planting of mines, the latter leading to hundreds of casualties every week and the disruption of agricultural production after many areas became too dangerous.[44] Nevertheless, major geopolitical changes in the mid-1980s encouraged renewed regional initiatives to find a political solution for the Cambodian conflict, particularly the shift in Soviet policy in which it scaled back its involvement in Indochina and reduced its support to both Vietnam and the PRK. By 1989, the PRK was under increasing pressure to modify its policies towards the CGDK resistance forces and to consider non-military ways of ending the conflict. Seeking to transform Indochina into a trading ground rather than a battlefield, Thailand opened negotiations with PRK Prime Minister, Hun Sen and then brokered talks between Hun Sen and CGDK president, Sihanouk. Angry at the recognition the initiative afforded to the PRK, the US intervened to halt this initiative, sticking steadfastly to its support for the non-communist resistance and its desire to vote in favour of a CGDK seat at the UN to prevent international aid from reaching Cambodia and to oppose all attempts to legitimise the PRK government.[45]

After more attempted talks between the PRK and CGDK with the inclusion of all four factions, an international conference on Cambodia held in 1989 in Paris was seen as an opportunity for a breakthrough in terms of national reconciliation. However, lasting fundamental disagreements on key issues meant that the conference failed to break the impasse. Instead, the inter-party conflict was bitterly aggravated, with the various parties continuing their attempts to out-manoeuvre one another,[46] including through strategies to win Cambodians' heart and minds. The PRK announced a series of reforms intended to improve its image, changing its name to the State of Cambodia (SOC), introducing a free market economy and making Buddhism Cambodia's state religion.[47] Nevertheless, further international pressure paved the way for the signing of the 'Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict' by all four Cambodian factions on 23 October 1991 in the presence of the UN Secretary-General in Paris, the five permanent representatives and twelve other countries.

2.4. A Peace Process Under Threat (1991-1998)

The Paris Agreements determined that a transitional period would begin with the entry into force of the agreements and would terminate when a Constituent Assembly, elected in conformity with the Agreements, approved a new Cambodian Constitution and transformed itself into a legislative assembly, thus creating a new Cambodian government. During that period, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was established, deploying more than 20,000 international personnel with the mandate to ensure the implementation of the Agreements, including placing all of the administrative agencies under its 'direct control' to ensure neutrality in the run-up to the election.[48]The much-heralded settlement suggested an end to the Cambodian conflict, but lingering

[40] Chanda (1986:383-392)
[41] Peou (1997:26)
[42] Chandler (1993:234); Chanda (1986:396)
[43] Slocomb (2003:245)
[44] Chandler (1993:235); Slocomb (2003:247)
[45] Clymer (2007:193-194)
[46] Roberts (2001:24-25); Peou (1997:37-41, 47)
[47] Chandler (1993:236-238)
[48] Curtis (1998:8-9)

mistrust and suspicion between the four Cambodian signatories continued to dominate their further actions. Just two months after the peace accord the ceasefire began to break down.

In January 1992, political violence among individual leaders and military clashes restarted. The KR launched a new offensive on 20 January 1992, committing 195 ceasefire violations in the period up to March 1992 alone, involving civilian casualties and forcing thousands to flee their homes. The SOC responded by launching a military offensive in northern Cambodia. As the KR continued to respond in May eventually capturing three villages, hope for peace and stability was waning. By September 1992, UNTAC was dealing with more than 250 complaints of harassment and intimidation, arbitrary arrests or detention, wrongful death and injury, and the destruction of property. Fighting continued, with both the SOC and KR contributing to the derailing of the electoral process, undermining all UNTAC attempts to end the ceasefire violations. By the end of 1992 and into 1993, the situation further deteriorated, with escalating violence and mounting civilian casualties.[49] UNTAC also became the targets of attacks, with the KR firing on UN helicopters and taking UNTAC personnel hostage. Refusing to comply with the provisions of the accord, in particular to disarm its forces, the KR eventually withdrew from the peace process completely, taking no part in the electoral contest.

Despite the ongoing fighting and the abortive disarmament efforts, UNTAC proceeded with the election preparations. The election was successfully held from 23-28 May 1993, with a turnout of some 90% of registered voters. A new coalition government was formed, comprising representatives of three of the four conflict parties (CPP, FUNCINPEC, and BLDP), headed by two Prime Ministers,[50] followed by the adoption of a new constitution which made Cambodia a monarchy again after more than 20 years. King Sihanouk returned to the throne. Yet still the war in Cambodia went on. As the new coalition government was beginning to sort out the differences among the different parties involved, the KR renewed their military attacks to which government forces immediately replied. After the KR rejected the offer of the coalition government to negotiate an end to their military confrontation, the National Assembly passed a resolution outlawing the rebels in June 1994. The KR responded by creating its own government and intensified its propaganda efforts to discredit the elected leadership alongside its military actions. The propaganda and psychological warfare on both sides ultimately prevented any further negotiations, with violence continuing unabated well into the second half of 1996. However, a surprising and significant split occurred within the KR after the defection of Ieng Sary, former foreign minister during the DK regime, in August 1996 with a large number of loyal troops. Ieng was granted amnesty by King Sihanouk, sparking a number of subsequent defections – 2,500 by later October 1996.

Although these mass defections were seen as a significant victory for the Royal Government, they only widened the rift between the government's coalition partners. In an increasing rivalry, the two Prime Ministers sought to generate political and military support from the different 'cliques' of the KR leadership remnants for their own advantage.[51]By the end of 1996, political tension had already sharply increased with repeated military clashes between troops of both coalition partners, FUNCINPEC and CPP. Further secret swelling of their ranks with KR soldiers even led to open conflict breaking out in July 1997 and the '5-6 July coup' during which troops loyal to the Second Prime Minister, Hun Sen began forcibly disarming FUNCINPEC troops. As a consequence of the weekend violence, First Prime Minister Ranariddh (FUNCINPEC) was ousted from his position. Many FUNCINPEC military officials fled to the Thai border where they attempted to mount an armed struggle together with the remaining KR forces against Hun Sen. Although the plan ultimately failed because most FUNCINPEC troops finally agreed to a ceasefire with soldiers loyal to CPP,[52] military confrontations along the Thai-Cambodian border again led to up to 60,000 Cambodian civilians seeking refuge in Thai border camps.[53] Towards the end of 1997, there was no end in sight to Cambodia's civil strife, with the problem of the remaining KR elements still unresolved. However, following the death of the KR's 'brother number one', Pol Pot, in April 1998 fighting indeed died down. More KR leaders and troops defected, declaring that they no longer recognised the few remaining senior leaders, Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan. This wave of defections was finally followed in late December 1998 by the defection of Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, who 'surrendered' with their armed forces to Hun Sen.[54] With the arrest of the last KR leader, Ta Mok in March 1999, civil war in Cambodia had definitively ended.

[49] Peou (1997:54-57)
[50] Between 1993 and 1998 the Cambodian government had a First Prime Minister (Norodom Ranariddh, FUNCINPEC and winner of the elections) and a Second Prime Minister (Hun Sen, CPP), because CPP refused accepting the position of Deputy Prime Minister. Government decisions could only be made in mutual agreement of both.
[51] Peou (2000:357-366); Curtis (1998:40-42)
[52] Peou (2000:351-352)
[53] Curtis (1998:55)
[54] Peou (2000:359)

2.5. The Situation After the Conflict

The end of the war in 1998/99 did not automatically bring the demilitarisation of Cambodian society. Armed forces remained numerically large and politically influential, 24% of the population indicating in a 2003 survey that their voting was based primarily on keeping the peace. Indeed, propitiation of the military remained important, owing to the extensive business interests that certain generals had developed and control of the most profitable natural resource industries by the military.[55] Furthermore, after the mass defections of KR troops after September 1996, thousands have been integrated into the Royal Armed Forces, including their commanders and generals, often according to previous rank within the KR structure.[56] Although the political and military organisation of the KR was dismantled, fear existed that any attempts to address their crimes would lead to a resumption of conflict.

The democratically elected government sought to promote political stability, internal peace and security, considered as prerequisites to development and national reconciliation. With the new start that the peace agreement and the UNTAC mission had signalled for Cambodia, the coalition government set its priorities in rebuilding a country devastated by more than two decades of civil war, for which political stability was deemed crucial, even at the expense of justice. In the context of the 'win-win policy' the government had little interest in pursuing efforts to address the mass crimes committed during the war and to hold those responsible. In the immediate post-conflict situation however, interest for criminal proceedings appeared to clash with the government's priorities of pacification and reintegration, the government thus taking a reluctant stance against the continued efforts of the UN to push for KR accountability. The government also accused the UN of hypocrisy – for so many years being blind to the KR's mass crimes, even allowing them to occupy a seat at the UN, now calling for an international tribunal.[57]

While Cambodian society kept largely silent on issues of the KR past, pressure for a KR trial came from outside. After a first round of tense negotiations in August 1999, the UN agreed to a compromise proposal of a tribunal situated within the Cambodian legal system, with jurisdiction over both international and national crimes and staffed by both internationals and Cambodians. However, it took several more years of difficult negotiations before the UN and the Cambodian government finally signed an agreement in June 2003 creating the "Law on the Establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea". Situated in the capital, Phnom Penh, the hybrid ECCC officially opened in July 2006 with a mandate to "bring to trial senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those who were most responsible for the crimes and serious violations of Cambodian penal law, international humanitarian law and custom, and international conventions recognised by Cambodia, that were committed during the period from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979."[58]

2.6. A Convoluted History of Shifting Allegiances and Multiple Conflict Identities

Over the whole period of almost 30 years of civil war there have not always been clear front lines between conflict parties, even though the ideological component and the global east-west confrontation played a decisive role. Cambodians who had fought on one side later defected to the other, forming new alliances with former enemies they had once fiercely opposed, only to again turn against them at a later stage or even find themselves on both sides at the same time. Many tried to survive by collaborating first with one side, then with the other. In addition, Cambodians often had family members or relatives active on different sides at the same time, making it difficult to clearly take sides, in particular during the 1980s. According to Slocomb (2003): "In Cambodia, people act like family. […] The obvious fact was that in many instances the guerrillas were 'family' and family obligations naturally took precedence over obligations to the state. In a civil war, all boundaries are blurred and state loyalties are hard fought and narrowly contested."[59]

As shown, a factor complicating Cambodia's conflicts was the close inter-connection between the domestic fighting for power and the regional conflict in Indochina, as well as Cold War politics. Foreign intervention contributed significantly to the outbreak of the civil war and the radicalisation of Cambodian domestic politics, which finally led to the DK terror regime. Foreign intervention also made the continuation of the conflict possible. However, mass atrocities that took place in Cambodia between the 1960s and 1990s have never been the result of conflict between

[55] Hughes, 2005:7-9)
[56] The three core elements of a so-called 'win-win policy' of the Prime Minister were that in return for the defections all those who broke with the KR leadership were "assured of their personal security" (meaning no arrests), "allowed to maintain their jobs and positions with only change in uniform and accepting one rule" (that of the elected and thus sole legitimate government) and "recognized of their ownership of properties" (CNV, No.155, Jan 2011).
[57] Hammarberg, PPP 14-27 Sep 2001, Supplement A.
[58] Law on the Establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers, with inclusion of amendments as promulgated on 27 October 2004 (NS/RKM/1004/006), Article 1.
[59] Slocomb (2003: 249)

different nations or ethnicities. In fact, although massacres of Vietnamese living in Cambodia occurred sporadically for several generations, they did not constitute the root cause of the Cambodia conflict but instead were staged for political purposes. The terror in Cambodia was particularly directed against inner-political dissent, regardless of ethnicity or religion, with thirty years of conflict witnessing massacres by Cambodians on Cambodians.

Cambodia's history of actors, their interconnections, their motivations and the targets of violence is complex and demonstrates fluid identities and fluctuating allegiances. As noted, the Khmer Rouge went through various evolutionary stages, including marriages of convenience with former enemies and attempts to radically reshape Cambodian society according to their unique ideology, persecuting both real and perceived enemies. The shifting and malleable nature of identities within the conflict is further demonstrated by the overthrowing of the KR by their own renegades, leading once again to political alignments between former enemies. Unravelling this convoluted history, shifting loyalties and lines of responsibility makes searching for the truth and justice an extremely complex undertaking.

3. Dealing With the Past in Cambodia: Memories of Violence

Thirty years of conflict in Cambodia ended relatively recently in the late 1990s. Combined with the only very recent emergence of memory initiatives for dealing with this past, there is little experience in Cambodia in addressing questions of the past, particularly of reasons and responsibilities.

Remembering this time and the mass crimes committed specifically during the DK regime has always been a highly sensitive and strongly political issue for Cambodians. The socio-political context is difficult and socio-cultural factors have a similarly strong influence on memorialisation processes. Due to the peace agreement, general elections and the 'pacification policy' of the new government, many of the actors, commanders and persons involved in atrocities during the civil war and DK period have been co-opted into the new system without having their individual histories and backgrounds vetted. This applies to the former KR cadres as well as the non-communist forces.

The fieldwork found that Cambodians not only wish to talk about their suffering under the DK regime but also remember vividly the terrible effects of the civil war on their villages and families long before 1975. Bombings, fierce military fights, increasing KR activities and massacres against civilians suspected of collaboration with one or the other side had killed Cambodians since the early 1970s. These events are still remembered and mourned by surviving family members and their descendants. The same is true for memories of the civil war during the 1980s. In informal talks it became apparent that memories of that time (in which Cambodia still was under communist rule) are often inseparably intertwined with painful memories going back to the 1970s. These individual memories and the dead of that time are currently excluded from every process of official recognition through memorialisation efforts. Instead of addressing the conflict in its full dimension in order to make the causes and background of the atrocities and mass crimes understandable to the victims, all current memorialisation efforts are limited to the three years of DK regime, particularly as there were generally more actors to the conflict than just the Khmer Rouge. The restricted focus nevertheless has several reasons.

Of course, it is without any question that the three years of KR regime was the most dreadful peak of violence and terror Cambodians suffered during the conflict. The extreme radical nature of the regime, especially the forced collectivisation of virtually all aspects of life, including the attempt to completely destroy traditional family structures and interpersonal relationships leaving no space for any individuality, combined with the extreme dependence on the arbitrary allocation of food was such a shocking and traumatising experience that its memories outstripped all other terrible experiences during the civil war before 1975. In spite of the hunger and chaos of the civil war, opportunities for individual self-determinative action and escape still existed. This minimal freedom was utterly absent during the KR regime, the totality with which literally every Cambodian had been forced to become part of the regime absolutely excluding any space for choice between supporting, sympathising, indifference, dissent or active resistance. To survive, the only choice was unconditional participation, even to develop sufficient revolutionary fervour and euphoric support to preclude any suspicion and avoid inevitable death. Many survivors had not been able to maintain moral standards and hide the shame of having been silent slaves.[60]

On the other hand, this terror regime and the atrocities committed during that time cannot be cut off from the historical context. The violence did not suddenly erupt out of nothing, as is commonly perceived. It was a part and a consequence of the conflict, therefore to address these crimes necessarily requires that all of the circumstances and different actors be examined, including the regional and international interests which significantly contributed to preparing the ground for the extreme excesses of the KR rule. The principal reason for isolating these crimes by just focusing on the KR as such, while refusing to take note of all of the other atrocities committed by various actors against Cambodians before or afterward this period, was and is rather political. After the fall of the DK regime and in the context of the continuing civil war, KR cadres who escaped to the Thai-Cambodian border continued to represent a significant factor in the persistence of the conflict. A dominant feature of the new regime thus became its (partly also ideologically motivated) overemphasis of the atrocities committed during the DK period, without putting them into historical context. The few memory initiatives at that time were exclusively dominated by the state and the ruling Communist party (PRPK, the predecessor of today's CPP) and had a strong tendency of demonising the KR to create an ideologically-based stereotype towards their public condemnation.

Permanently using the horror of the KR regime in official propaganda was specifically motivated by the desire to ensure lasting gratitude among survivors to the new (still communist) regime for their liberation from the DK regime. It was also a tool in the pursuit of the willingness of survivors to cooperate, always invoking the threat that the KR regime could return. Such propaganda also served to justify the presence of thousands of Vietnamese troops and advisors on Cambodian territory and was further intended to secure the surrender of the remaining resistance fighters, including the KR. Amnesty from legal prosecution was also a tacit proposition. On the other hand, it was completely out of the question to subject the measures of the new regime (including forced military service and

[60] Thion (1993:173)

labour[61]) to any critical discussion, which remains a taboo to this day, as do critical questions concerning the wider atrocities committed during the wider conflict and the number of civilian casualties.

That there is no discussion about the multifaceted sides and responsibilities of the conflict during the 1980s, aligns with the fact that after peace agreement in 1991 and elections in 1993 the entrenched stereotype of the DK regime continued to be employed by the new government to pressure the last remnants of the KR to finally give up. By contrast, all of the other resistance fighters, especially from FUNCINPEC and KPNLF, who were allied to the KR in the 1980s and had been part of the atrocities at that time as well (including all the high-ranking officials and decision-makers) were welcomed to reintegrate back into Cambodian political life without questions about their past role and responsibilities. Patched together in a delicate government with former enemies after the 1993 elections and consumed by power struggles, it goes without saying that no side was interested in a historical examination of the conflict.

Perhaps a final, resounding confirmation of the almost exclusive focus on KR crimes came after the agreement to establish the ECCC. As noted, the strict jurisdiction of the tribunal restricts the judicial investigation to crimes committed between April 1975 and January 1979, boosting international and domestic attention to the KR regime.

The ECCC did however create space for local civil society to support the prosecutions and to engage with ordinary Cambodians through raising awareness about the mandate, role and function of the ECCC, as well as expectations of what the tribunal should achieve. Over time the focus of civil society initiatives expanded from dissemination of information and supporting Cambodians in becoming civil party or witnesses in the trial to encouraging Cambodians to actively address what happened in their localities and to support them in memorialisation efforts, through which they feel empowered to cope with painful memories. Using the space widened by the ECCC for memory initiatives, these activities still refer mainly to the three KR years. Though isolated efforts have attempted to buck this trend (e.g. ICfC recognises that many of the villagers they work with suffer mental trauma stemming from beyond the 1975-1979 period and thus includes memories of what happened during the civil war and KR activities in the early 1970s in village dialogue sessions) there is still little to no formal acknowledgment of the suffering of that time through devoting specific memorials to the victims of the civil war or at least integrating these memories into memorials or celebrations for the victims of the KR regime. No memory initiative deals with the conflict after 1979.

3.1. Memorialisation of Mass Atrocities Committed by the Khmer Rouge Regime

Even limiting memorialisation efforts to the three years of the KR appears to be a challenge for Cambodian society. Roughly three phases of memorialisation in Cambodia can be distinguished. The first began immediately after the fall of the DK regime in 1979, lasting throughout the 1980s until 1993. The second, rather a transitional phase, lasted until the ECCC went into official operation in 2006. The third phase flourished in conjunction with the ECCC proceedings.

These three phases are different in respect of the political conditions and the context which they represent, the initiators, the purposes and the ways that they have been pursued.

3.1.1. Phase 1: Memorialisation in the 1980s

Initiatives undertaken in the 1980s to memorialise the atrocities of the KR regime were completely dominated by the state and the ruling Communist party (PRPK, the predecessor of today's CPP). The most important memory initiative established during this period was at the former KR detention, torture and execution centre, S-21, in the heart of Phnom Penh. Transformed under Vietnamese auspices into the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum immediately after the overthrow of the DK regime in 1979 and opened to the public in 1980, the main goal was to illustrate, remember and condemn the atrocities committed during the DK regime. Tuol Sleng, as it is commonly known, was never (and still is not) a place for providing understanding of the past or for addressing any difficult questions of responsibility for the mass killings, though sometimes local visitors had come to find information about relatives they assumed to have been brought to the centre. The horrors of the regime were symbolically demonstrated by the 'skull map' of Cambodia composed of 300 skulls and other bones found by the Vietnamese in 'the killing fields' of Choeung Ek, the place where thousands of S-21 prisoners were executed and buried.[62]

[61] Ten thousand civilians were conscripted yearly to labour work at the border with Thailand to seal off the border and prevent the infiltration of resistance troops and supplies to support their guerrilla bases within the country. This service for 3-6 months included clearing the forest, erecting fences, laying land mines, repairing roads or cutting down trees along main roads. The border region was peppered with mines that had been placed there by all parties to the civil war, the mortality and mutilation rate among the construction workers extremely high. For more details see Slocomb (2001: 195-210) and Slocomb (2003:229-240).

[62] The map was dismantled in 2002, but the skulls of some victims are still on display in shelves in the museum.

The 'killing fields' at Choeung Ek, on the far outskirts of Phnom Penh, became another important official remembrance place. Between 1980 and 1984, 86 of the 129 mass graves found at this location were excavated and the skulls and bones put onto a type of large wooden shelf, later replaced by a multi-storeyed building with glass walls. During this period many other mass graves throughout the country were similarly excavated (often initially on the private initiative of individuals) and transformed by local authorities into memory sites where the skulls and bones were displayed in wooden huts (without sidewalls). Some of these huts were later replaced by small brick buildings to better protect the remains.

These state-run memorials have been used for official ceremonies on the 20 of May – the 'Day of Anger' introduced in 1984[63] to commemorate the victims of the DK regime. However, these annual celebrations were obligatory for those in state employment, over time representing an exercise of duty rather than genuinely reflect and accommodate individual needs for commemoration and mourning. All memorialisation efforts were heavily burdened with the purpose of demonstrating and condemning the atrocities committed during these three years in order to justify the Vietnamese intervention and to attain international support. They consequently gained little resonance among the population.

In addition, apart from the People's Revolutionary Tribunal in August 1979 in which two top leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime – Pol Pot and Ieng Sary – were sentenced to death *in absentia*, the new regime pursued a rather benevolent policy against KR and other resistance fighters who were willing to surrender. Countless lower-ranking cadres, collaborators and soldiers who had not fled to the border with the collapse of the KR administration in 1979 and willing to cooperate with the new regime were quickly co-opted into the new administration system and the army. Welcoming deserters willing to give up armed resistance and reintegrating them back into civil life without questioning or vetting their past involvement was a policy throughout the 1980s. This highly ambiguous policy had the effect of inhibiting survivors from voicing the need for openly addressing responsibilities for the atrocities. Spontaneous outbursts saw the killing of those tormentors perceived as particularly cruel and merciless immediately after the collapse of the DK regime, but the new regime quickly took action to stop these killings and to encourage people to hand over caught KR cadres to the authorities.

3.1.2. Phase 2: Memorialisation from the 1990s until the Establishment of the ECCC

The issue of dealing with the KR past became even more politicised after the return of exiled opposition groups (politically allied to the KR since 1982) to Cambodia to participate in the UN supervised elections in 1993. Differing versions of history flooded into Cambodia and collided with the officially established picture of the KR past. Instead of being openly discussed in society, these versions were used for political purposes, becoming part of the ongoing fierce struggle for power of each political group.

After the 1993 elections, the new coalition government continued to pursue an ambiguous policy to finally end the military clashes with the KR. On the one hand, both Prime Ministers competed with one other to convince defectors to surrender to their side by offering generous conditions to the remaining KR, such as continued control over some territory, autonomy, resources and favourable positions in the government and military ranks.[64] On the other hand, the government continued to prosecute 'stubborn' KR fighters who were unwilling to surrender. The formal request of the Cambodian government in 1997 for UN assistance in organising a trial against the top KR leaders and the six years of protracted negotiations that followed further added to the uncertainty of how to deal with the KR past and to the 'big silence' in Cambodian society. For most Cambodians talking about the KR past is still a highly sensitive, political issue and few Cambodians wish to be involved in politics.

Meanwhile many of the provincial memorials of the 1980s had been abandoned.[65] The celebration of the official remembrance days of 7 January (the day of the fall of the DK regime in 1979) and the Day of Anger on 20 May are now mainly limited to followers or sympathisers of the ruling party CPP, the latter now removed from the list of public holidays.[66] Despite this removal, 20 May still plays an important role in the internal memorialisation practice of the CPP, especially to remind its supporters of the links that the contemporary opposition groups had to the KR during the 1980s. In addition, since forming the new coalition government patched together by former enemies, the

[63] The actual objective of the National Day of Anger was to mobilise international public opinion against the Khmer Rouge, their allies and their foreign backers (stated at a 1983 conference of the mass front where the introduction of this Remembrance Day has been recommended to the party).

[64] The first significant split off was by KR top leader Ieng Sary who defected with his military forces to Hun Sen in 1996. In return he got administrative autonomy over the Pailin area and his commanders received the same military ranks in the army they had in the KR military structure.

[65] DC-Cam report 2006; Government circular 2001

[66] Introduced in 1984 this national holiday was put on hiatus by the UNTAC as the UN administration sought to involve the KR faction into the political process. After the election in 1993 the celebration had been revived, renaming the event in 2001 'Day of Remembrance'. The reason why this celebration had been completely removed from the official list of national holidays a few years later is unclear.

state lost its dominance in shaping and controlling memorialisation processes. Clashes between the different political groups related to content and visions of the past ended in political stalemate and the mutual obstruction of one-sided initiatives. For example, the attempt of the ministry of culture (in the hands of former opponent FUNCINPEC after the 1993 elections) to officially eradicate all of the memorials erected during the 1980s and to cremate the exhibited skulls according to Buddhist traditions was thwarted by the CPP. By contrast, after several years of halted celebrations, the CPP succeeded in reviving 7 January (the most meaningful and valuable day for CPP – the Day of liberation from the Pol Pot Regime) as a public holiday, now officially celebrated as the Day of Victory. Still, although a one-party government has been in office after 1998, considerable differences within the ruling CPP concerning how to deal with the past appeared to continue to obstruct a clear memorialisation policy. In this respect, a sub-decree [*anukret*] of 24 September 2002on the protection of cultural heritage determines regulations concerning the dealing with and the excavation and trading of cultural assets / historic artefacts, but fails to explicitly refer to this very recent history of the country. Only a (lower-level) government circular [*sarachâr*] of December 2001 signed by the Prime Minister gives some instruction for preserving the remains of the victims of the DK atrocities as evidence and a basis for remembrance. This circular sets out that the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism shall issue technical guidelines for the restoration and maintenance of the existing memorials. However, for the purposes of this research it was not possible to obtain possession of these documents or to come to any information on whether these guidelines have already been developed at all.

The only state initiative very publicly present is the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. However, despite some efforts in recent years by foreign initiatives to modernise the presentation of historical facts and to transform the museum into an interactive place of learning, no significant changes (apart from physical infrastructure) have been made. The museum is under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and thus has little space for developing its own initiatives, although recent capacity-building among its staff has increased motivation and ideas. In addition, most visitors have been foreign tourists who usually have the visit on their itinerary when coming to Cambodia.

3.1.3. Phase 3: New Impetus for Memorialisation, Emerging Civil Society Commitment

During the process of formal establishment of the ECCC a few local NGOs began to pay attention to the upcoming trial. In mid-2005, CHRAC, a coalition of around twenty local NGOs working for the promotion of human rights, democracy and rule of law in Cambodia, initiated some discussion among its members on how Cambodian civil society may support the ECCC in addressing the crimes of the past and ensuring a credible accountability process. The CHRAC secretariat started a general awareness program explaining the mandate, role and function of the ECCC to the public as well as expectations of what the tribunal is intended to achieve, mainly through a newsletter and some radio broadcastings. Since 2006/2007, some member organisations began their own activities, mainly aimed at informing particularly rural Cambodians of the ECCC and inviting survivors to participate in the court proceedings as witnesses and/or civil parties. Certain NGOs like ADHOC,[67] CSD[68] or DC-Cam[69] created specific projects to educate Cambodians on how to file complaints and fill in application forms. In 2007, around 18 groups – including NGOs and NGO coalitions, radio stations and the ECCC itself – were planning or implementing outreach on the ECCC.[70]

Whilst most of these NGO and CSO activities consisted of (mainly one-way) information distribution and revolved specifically around civil party and witness participation (e.g. ADHOC, KID,[71] CDP,[72] LAC,[73] CJR[74] or TPO[75]), little attention has been paid to questions of encouraging Cambodians to actively discuss issues of the KR past among themselves in their communities. CSD, for example, has conducted a series of public forums in different provinces to try to initiate a debate on hopes, needs and fears related to the KR tribunal and the extent to which Cambodia's youth understand and accept the atrocities of the DK regime. However, these meetings have again mainly concerned the same topics of basic information on the ECCC, its structure, jurisdiction and mandate, fair trial principles and ways of victims' participation in the court proceedings. Interesting is that instead of looking directly at the KR perpetrators, participants have raised the question of foreign involvement in the KR atrocities and wanted to see the ECCC holding these nations accountable (see for example the bi-monthly newsletter of CSD No. 135 and 137, 2007[76]).

[67] The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association.
[68] The Center for Social Development.
[69] Documentation Center of Cambodia.
[70] ICfC(2007)
[71] Khmer Institute of Democracy.
[72] Cambodian Defenders Project.
[73] Legal Aid of Cambodia.
[74] Center for Justice and Reconciliation.
[75] Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation Cambodia.
[76] However, this is not supported by the recent 2008 survey according to which only 1.6 % of the respondents said they want foreign countries that supported the KR to be held accountable (see HRC Berkeley, 2009:31). It might be that the outreach activities concerning the ECCC have had an effect (in the sense that it is clearer that the ECCC has no jurisdiction over other nations), but on the other hand, still almost 40 % of the respondents said they have no knowledge of the ECCC. It could also be

A special position in dealing with the KR past is held by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). Emerging in 1997 from the field office of Yale University's Cambodia Genocide Program, which began as a project to go through the thousands of written 'confessions' and other documents left in the S-21 centre, DC-Cam continued collecting material concerning the KR regime and has increasingly done research on this period. The results have partly been published, mainly in English, through monographs and since 1999 a regular magazine. The magazine is also published in a Khmer language version but since a reading culture is little developed in Cambodia it seems the audience is mainly limited to (foreign) academics and Cambodians living abroad.[77] Over the years DC-Cam developed a variety of different projects and expanded its activities from research to education on DK history[78] and participating in ECCC outreach activities. DC-Cam is the only NGO in Cambodia that has received continuous funding over the last ten years, mainly from the US.[79] DC-Cam not only enjoys US backing in terms of finances and professional expertise (visiting scholars, legal advisors, foreign interns etc.), it has also become an important source for the Cambodian government in providing documents of the KR regime, which may be used in the ECCC proceedings.

For all other 'classical' (or professional) Cambodian NGOs, the involvement in memory initiatives is a temporary endeavour that is not part of their core activities.[80] The continuation of these specific projects depends exclusively on foreign interests and funding, many projects having already run out. Acquiring new funds appears very difficult, even for major civil society players. One example has been ADHOC, which alone provided more than 20% of all civil party applications to the ECCC, but is now facing a critical situation resulting in the cancellation of its ECCC radio broadcasting in 2009. Funding of its three-year ECCC/ICC Justice program by the EU ended in 2010 and it took intense efforts to mobilise subsequent funding for continuing some minimal advisory work at least with civil parties of case 002.Some NGOs thus speak frustratingly of a certain 'donor fatigue', particularly as the ECCC itself must equally continue to appeal to an increasing reluctant international community for securing further funding.[81]

Apart from ECCC-centred outreach there are more recent ongoing efforts to establish a specific memorial for the victims of the former KR S-21 torture centre on the compound of the Tuol Sleng Museum. The initiative originates from one of the two recently created victims' associations whose members are mainly civil parties to the ECCC and its president one of the few survivors of S-21. The Ksemksan Association was founded in March 2010 (with support of the Victims Support Section (VSS) of the ECCC) out of an urgent need to better coordinate the civil parties' representation before the court. To date the association has 451 registered members living in 17 provinces. The association's program in supporting its members is ambitious but because of the very young organisational age the means to realise its objectives are still very limited. At the moment the association can only rely on the monthly contribution of 4,000 Riels (1 USD) of each member and additional voluntary contributions for small events. The association strives for more public support and if possible even stable partnerships with NGOs, government departments, private institutions and individuals. This, however, proves to be very difficult as in Cambodia the socio-political environment for fundraising within society is little conducive. The other victims' association founded in 2009 is currently inactive because of lack of funding and serious management problems.

Interesting experiments with an artistic approach have taken place in recent years. Two new independent art institutions in Phnom Penh (the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center and META House) have included some performances dealing with the KR past in their programs, as well as occasional documentary film screenings and

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that in an 'official' survey many respondents did not dare to openly blame these nations out of fear on such sensitive political question.

[77] In 2002 DC-Cam conducted a survey of the readers by sending out 7,000 questionnaires along with its magazine; 712 came back and were analysed. However, it is not clear to the public who these respondents are (where are they from, what is their social-educational background etc.) In addition, only 5.5 % of the respondents identified themselves as regular readers (Linton, 2004:19). A small survey among 100 youth (done by YFP in 2005) revealed that 13% mentioned reading the magazine and 9 of those 13 live in urban areas; 91% of those living in rural areas have not specified the magazine as a source of information on that time (Münyas, 2005:22).

[78] In 2007 DC-Cam published the first textbook on DK history in Cambodia (both in English and Khmer language) and convinced the Ministry of Education to recommend it for use in formal teaching. Very recently DC-Cam has started to train 24 Cambodian officials of the ministry who in turn will train 185 educators to lead efforts in DK history education in various districts. DC-Cam has also planned to provide basic training to 3,000 secondary school teachers (DC-Cam Strategic Plan 2009-2011).

[79] In 2005, USAID established a permanent Endowment of $2 million and the annual earnings from this endowment can be used by DC-Cam for its core and specific program costs.

[80] For a detailed listing see annex

[81] Because of serious financial shortages, the ECCC is currently unable to pay the salaries of the entire national staff since January 2012. Like last year, this year once again has seen the national side facing a serious funding shortage, especially for national judges and prosecutors as well as their legal officers, who have not got paid since October 2011 (ECCC statement 27.01.2012). Until 2011, the ECCC had spent about US$150 million since its investigations began in 2006. The biggest funder is Japan, which has provided $70.57 million to date; Australia is ranked second with $14.2 million; Germany, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and a UN Trust Fund follow. Cambodia has spent about $5.16 million, or 4%, of the overall total costs. Thirty countries and groups have contributed, including Microsoft, which donated $100,000 (Bangkok Post 22.01.2012).

exhibitions on their premises. The Bophana Center is collecting all audiovisual material about Cambodia (including KR propaganda films) and provides access to its archive on its premises via internet, as well as the opportunity for NGOs to gain direct access if they are interested in using film material for their activities. META House also supports young Cambodian artists in expressing their feelings about the KR past whose work has been exhibited to the public. In partnership with two local NGOs, ICfC has also used participatory filming to confront Cambodians with their past in 2009. Villagers from three provinces were invited to take the camera in their hands to document their experience from the KR era. This process resulted in an impressive documentary film, 'We want (you) to know', illustrating the lively attempts by villagers to use different artistic approaches to come to terms with the local events from the KR era. Further, theatre performances concerning the KR past have been developed, notably by the international performing arts production company, AMRITA, based in Phnom Penh. AMRITA has created two plays ('3 Years, 8 months, 20 days' and 'Breaking the Silence'), occasionally performing them in Phnom Penh. Both plays have also been broadcast on the radio to reach rural Cambodians. Whilst there is no systematic information on how Cambodians have responded to them, sporadic feedback indicates that while the plays had a certain appeal among young people in Phnom Penh, older generations especially in the countryside felt rather confused and that their experience was not well reflected. The limitations of broadcasting a theatre performance by radio perhaps contributed to these shortcomings. Finally, since 2007/08, two Phnom Penh-based NGOs (YFP and ICfC) have made efforts to empower grassroots communities in rural areas to actively cope with what happened in their locality during the KR regime and to connect the younger generations of the villages to these experiences. Recently, a third NGO (YRDP) began pilot activities to encourage students in the capital to engage with the KR history, against the background that lessons on this period are still not a regular part of formal teaching curricula in Cambodian schools.

Each of these efforts aim to 'break the silence' in Cambodian society and strengthen the capacity of the survivor generation to share their opinions, views and experiences and to discuss and face their personal, regional and national histories. They also aim at initiating inter-generational 'village' dialogue to encourage young people to know their local history, to participate in memory initiatives their communities have developed and to strengthen their proclivity for taking somehow historic responsibility by being committed to reconciliation processes and peaceful conflict resolution in their communities. Since 2007, another local NGO, the Trans-cultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO) has initiated a comprehensive psychosocial program to support witnesses and civil parties, as well as to raise awareness of mental health issues amongst the general population. TPO believes that trauma recovery and reconciliation are long-term processes that require more than just retributive justice and should be carried out in tandem with psychological support services and social reconstruction efforts. Therefore, by working in close cooperation with the Witness and Expert Support Unit (WESU) and the VSS of the ECCC, the organisation provides a variety of psychosocial services through its Cambodian mental health experts. These range from on-site psychological support during and after the ECCC proceedings, to awareness-raising activities on mental health, and community-based truth-telling and memorialisation initiatives.

The abovementioned initiatives reflect a new impetus and emerging commitment to memorialisation among civil society. Since the establishment of the ECCC an encouraging diversity of memorialisation efforts have slowly emerged, which are much less burdened by political purposes compared to the 1980s and 1990s. However, these initiatives must still operate in a highly politicised environment and thus rarely go beyond supporting survivors to cope with memories of their hardships and/or providing ways to relieve mental pain when remembering this past. Efforts to increase historical understanding of the past, particularly among younger generations, are usually limited to general historic facts at a macro level and do not go beyond the officially-accepted picture. Fieldwork reflected that in terms of local histories, for example locations where mass graves had been discovered, knowledge is still very restricted and little explored. After all, to publicly discuss issues and accept diverging views, interpretations and attitudes which are perceived as affecting politics, has never been a tradition in Cambodia. Dissent has always been met with suspicion especially by those in powerful positions. Given the difficult political context described above and the newness of civil society commitment to memorialisation, these initiatives thus tend to avoid confrontation by raising embarrassing questions.

Socio-cultural norms also considerably influence the manner in which Cambodians are willing and able to deal with the mass crimes Cambodians have committed against Cambodians. Society is characterised by a high level of inequality and strong social hierarchy which emphasise the importance of behaving appropriately and graciously and avoiding creating conflict or offence. An overriding social norm is to "maintain the balance of things".[82] This cultural background, combined with the trauma of recent war and conflict, means that most Cambodians place high value on maintaining peaceful and harmonious relations and avoiding confrontations, especially with those who are considered powerful. These social norms are closely connected to the high importance of saving face, both of oneself and of others. The practice of saving face is also an important characteristic of politics and, if not respected (or intentionally disregarded), can have serious consequences both in terms of damaging personal relations and causing

[82] Luco (2003:26)

the permanent rupture of political alliances and/or patronage ties.[83] Additionally, fieldwork indicates that underlying Buddhist concepts and rituals have an important influence on memorialisation efforts, individual celebrations for commemorating one's relatives who died during the KR regime having been integrated into traditional Buddhist festivities. Renewed or newly-constructed memorials usually show the form of a Buddhist Stupa and when commemoration ceremonies take place, Buddhist monks are always invited to actively take part.

Since Buddhism was revived after the fall of the DK regime and became the state religion in the 1990s, Buddhist concepts have again considerably shaped interpersonal and social relations, which has a respective impact on memorialisation processes. Cambodian Buddhism places high importance on peace, harmony and reconciliation, in a way that does not necessarily require accountability or retribution. Living in peace with one's enemies is preferable to continuing war[84]and many monks and lay Buddhists are reticent to try former members of the Khmer Rouge, instead advocating amnesty or forgiveness as the best method of achieving national reconciliation. As already noted, according to Buddhist doctrine, punishment focuses primarily on repairing or preventing a related harm that was suffered by the community, not on retribution for the victim. Added to this, strong beliefs in karma and destiny also impact Khmer notions of accountability and justice. Little is however yet known about these effects and to what extent Buddhism shapes the content and ways in which Cambodians remember their past. This is an extensive field still to be researched.

[83] Malena/Chhim (2009:6-7)
[84] Marks (1999:716-717)

4. The Case Studies

The following three memory initiatives have been investigated:

- the *Youth for Justice and Reconciliation project* (YJR project) of Youth for Peace (YFP);
- the *Justice and History Outreach project* (JHO project) of the International Center for Conciliation Cambodia (ICfC); and
- the *Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum* (TSM) of the Ministry of Culture.

The research has specifically focused on these three initiatives because of their different approaches to memorialisation. As described above, only few activities go beyond outreach to delve into questions of survivors' needs, and to relate the general and rather abstract information to the survivors' very individual memories of mass atrocities. While the purpose of most initiatives is largely the (one-way) dissemination of information about the ECCC and/or providing legal, logistic and/or psycho-social support to civil parties/witnesses, very few current memory initiatives try to encourage Cambodians to actively 'break the silence' in society and to empower especially survivors to proactively cope with their painful past. Among these, the YJR project of YFP and the JHO project of ICfC appear successful.

Started in 2007, YFP's YJR project aimed at contributing to the justice process in the context of the proceedings of the ECCC by encouraging young people to get involved in learning about the country's recent history and helping the survivor generation to cope proactively with the atrocities of the past. As an outreach program, the YJR project provides trainings, conducts inter-generational community dialogue, art workshops, public exhibitions, theatre plays, trips to former local mass killing sites and traditional water ceremonies. It also encourages local communities to take care of memorials and to nurture motivation for keeping local memories and historic knowledge alive in a self-determined participatory process. Results so far indicate that young people in these communities are interested and want to be involved. With support from YFP, local authorities and local teachers, young people and other villagers have jointly organised activities such as movie screenings about the KR history and the current ECCC process, and have developed memory initiatives such as plans for new memorials or Peace Gardens. Some communities have started to undertake remarkable efforts in renewing local memorials and preserving local history through the creation of small peace museums.

By stimulating discussions in villages, ICfC intends to foster the abilities of villagers to communicate the gruesome past of the KR period with their family members and the community, and to empower villagers in coming to terms with this past. The project has encouraged villagers to establish visible permanent places of remembrance in their village and provided conceptual thoughts and funding to them. Evidence suggests that through dialogue, villagers feel relieved and increasingly confident in memorialisation processes, often with the effect of an increased sense of community, greater self-disclosure of their experiences related to the KR regime and fewer social constraints against talking with others about those experiences and their impact.

The state-run Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum represents a significant contrast to the civil society initiatives, reflecting in particular the difficult political conditions for addressing Cambodia's violent past. Founded as early as 1979, immediately after the fall of the KR regime, its main goal has been to illustrate, remember and condemn the atrocities committed during the DK regime by focusing on visual evidence of torture. The Museum was never, and is still not, a place for providing understanding of the past or addressing any questions of responsibility for the mass killings. Without hiring a tour guide who can provide information it is hard for visitors to understand anything about the historical context, since the myriad photographs and other objects are not accompanied by explanatory texts. In addition, most visitors to the museum are foreigners, Cambodians rarely visiting the museum. Thus the question is what role the museum plays for domestic processes of memorialisation in the context of the ECCC.

4.1. Case study 1 – YFP's Youth for Justice and Reconciliation project (YJR project)

Founded in 1999 and officially registered in 2001, YFP offers education in peace, leadership, conflict resolution and reconciliation to Cambodia's youth. At the time of its founding, a survey among students in Phnom Penh indicated that young people lacked opportunities to receive spiritual value-based education, whereby they showed little responsibility for their own actions, poor communication skills, bad attitudes and indifference to their own responsibility to society. Responding to these needs, YFP conducted a series of peace-building and conflict resolution workshops using participatory methods and interactive communication, equipping young people with practical skills in identifying and handling conflicts in their interpersonal relationships, in their families and in their community interactions.

Since then, YFP has achieved remarkable success in awareness-raising and capacity-building among young people, mobilising them to engage in processes of peace, justice and reconciliation. Over time, it has expanded its activities

to several provinces and it is evident that YFP, through working with young Cambodians, has made a significant contribution to changing the attitudes and behaviour of high school students. Of particular note is the strong commitment of YFP staff to the organisation and its mission. This commitment is key to YFP's success and has a strong influence on the lives of the young people with whom they work.

In 2007, YFP developed an additional program component to its original *Peace Education* project and the *Leadership* project, the *Youth for Justice and Reconciliation* project. It is an outreach activity linked to the ECCC that involves youth in reconciliation efforts and engages them to break the silence about the KR past.

4.1.1. Background, Genesis and Activities

The *Youth for Justice and Reconciliation (YJR)* project aims to involve youth in remembrance and reconciliation efforts in Cambodia and to go beyond the ECCC by establishing positive community-based and -owned legacies for sustainable peace-building. Though outreach was the original focus of the project, it has now changed its focus to issues of remembrance and memory culture as YFP believes that this is a crucial element of establishing sustainable peace. YFP's methods appear to achieve some success in initiating change and engagement on the local level and the organisation continues to work through advocacy, education, creative art work and intergenerational dialogue. Further emphasis will also now be placed on support and capacity-building of local communities, youth and monk groups who are in the process of establishing (or seek to establish) a memory culture in various forms in their communities. One important goal is to raise awareness among youth about how this violent past is still shaping society and politics today.

For this purpose, the YJR project seeks:

1. To improve youth's understanding of the history related to the KR, the ECCC, and the legacy of memory concepts and the root causes of genocide through intergenerational dialogue to facilitate the healing of past atrocities.
2. To engage youth in the search for justice, in promoting accountability and reconciliation in a well-informed and peaceful manner in Cambodia.
3. To engage communities (especially youth groups) in creating their own memorial projects and supporting their initiatives towards the creation of a memory culture and to promote reconciliation and healing processes.
4. To build capacity of community memorial committees and youth to manage and conduct their projects in process. Most community memorial committees are still at the beginning of the process and need assistance in the development of their memory culture projects.
5. To build a network among existing youth groups and community culture committees to be able to exchange knowledge and capacity and to assist each other.

In 2005, YFP conducted a study among young people on levels of their knowledge, attitudes and feelings about the DK regime and of how the memory of mass violence is transferred to this first post-KR generation. The study found that that most young people in Cambodia have very little understanding of the KR history, but wish to be taught more about it.[85]This research has stimulated YFP to address these extreme knowledge gaps and to design new projects that will assist youth in learning about, discussing and developing a healthy attitude toward their country's past with the aim "to raise the issue among Cambodian youth, to inspire in them a will to understand the causes of the atrocities, to help draw lessons and raise consciousness against genocide, and breed a responsibility to remember the sufferings, and move on to the future as agents of positive change and reconciliation."[86]In developing the YJR project in 2006, the executive director of YFP, Long Khet, therefore wanted to make sure that young people are equally integrated into the transitional justice process and understand the tribunal. An important first focus was thus to fill the knowledge gaps among Cambodia's younger generation on the ECCC, the persons brought to trial and the history of the DK regime, and to create a greater public space for discussion based on young and old expectations of justice, reconciliation and history. The YFP team working on the project received intensive training about the KR, the ECCC and trauma counselling from international organisations[87] and in March 2007 the first activities commenced by way of workshops in four provinces, followed by initiating village dialogue and an annual conference.

Continuously learning from the experience of implementing the project, YFP realised that breaking the silence, promoting reconciliation processes and stimulating inter-generational dialogue needed more than outreach activities focusing on the ECCC.YFP widened its perspective, putting a strong focus on non-judicial aspects of the KR past. In addition to the "Understand, Remember, Change" workshop in which young people interactively learn and discuss socio-political, economic and ideological factors of the KR regime, YFP has developed a wide range of activities that

[85] Münyas (2005)
[86] Münyas (2005:1)
[87] Including: Bridge Across Boarder (BAB), Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), International Center For Conciliation (ICFC) and TPO.

stimulate and initiate inter-generational dialogue to connect youth to the memories of the survivor generation and to encourage a commitment to non-recurrence. Art workshops were introduced at community level as a medium to deal with the past and to validate voices of the survivors by painting their memories. YFP published an Art Memory Book, *Eyes on Darkness,* containing pictures painted by younger and older generations. The book now serves as an educational tool for youth groups, schools, NGOs and universities.

The YJR project focuses on specific groups and locations. The main target group are young people (14-24 years old) in rural areas, often high school students, who are active members of a local youth group organised by YFP. In addition to trainings, workshops and activities, they are encouraged to build connections to the survivor generation by involving them in dialogue about the past and to support them in memorialisation activities. Over the last three years, YFP has established 16 youth groups working within the context of the ECCC and memorialisation in several provinces. These youths act as multipliers as they carry information and dialogue to their schools, families and communities. They initiate their own projects on KR history and memorialisation, such as theatre performances and a successful project in which high school students gained support from teachers and the local authorities to stage film screenings or initiate local documentation projects on the KR period. In addition, survivors living in the community (mostly older than 45) are invited to share their past memories, with a specific targeting of women as an explicit attempt to integrate women in decision-making processes. Women played a significant role during the KR period, but until now have not had a prominent voice in Cambodia. YFP seeks to encourage them to share their truths and acknowledge their experiences, since they are an important group for family communication and the intergenerational dialogue.

YFP also supports memory initiatives in communities that are close to mass graves, former KR prisons and abandoned or neglected memorials from the 1980s. Communities that demonstrate good cooperation between villagers, school principals and local authorities, and initiatives that are nearby schools or are former strongholds of the KR are prioritised. In these locations YFP encourages the community to create a Community Memorial Committee to take charge of the memory initiative together with the YFP youth group. YFP has helped to establish seven Community Memorial Committees in five provinces. These committees consist of representatives of the Commune Council, the village chief, members of the community (male and female), religious representatives and youth representatives. People in the community are stimulated to develop ideas for memory initiatives and under the careful facilitation of YFP, and in agreement with the local authorities, these committees have developed their memory activities according to the needs of the communities, often at the site of a former memorial or mass graves.

At a location, for example, that has been investigated by ECCC for case 002, a former prison and mass killing place in Takeo province (called Kraing Tachan), the YJR project supported the community to jointly rediscover the historic importance of this location, especially for the younger generations and to develop a respectful way of remembrance of the events that took place. Although a Stupa that contains the skulls of people murdered during the KR regime had been erected close to the former mass killing place in the 1980s, no specific information or historic details about the former prison and the events at that time were known to the villagers. Through many preparatory discussions, intensive involvement of the Community Memorial Committee and a ten-day workshop using various methods, the local community in Kraing Tachan developed a strong motivation for being involved in working on their local history, actively remembering the past and taking further initiatives for continuingly improving their memory site. In the meantime, this community has begun building a small peace museum in which they want to maintain information on the KR regime so that young people have an opportunity to learn and discuss the past events, to commemorate and to encourage non-recurrence. Similar efforts have been undertaken in Pailin.

Meanwhile, the YJR project has become part of a broad engagement of YFP in memory initiatives that is strategically leading to the establishment of the Peace Institute of Cambodia (PIC). The PIC will place memorialisation of the KR past as a principal area of focus, promoting research and an expanding spectrum of memory initiatives such as community peace learning centres, memorials, peace museums, survivor testimonies, radio programs, oral history projects, rescuer exhibition projects, performance and theatre in Cambodia.

Funds for the YJR project come mainly from international (mainly German) organisations, though communities are encouraged to mobilise internal resources through collecting donations or inviting officials and relatives of victims to charity events. Fundraising is nevertheless a highly precarious activity since YFP relies heavily on external funds leaving the organisation vulnerable in its operations. Faced with uncertainty over the future allocation of funds, YFP often struggles with bridging shortages of money which can lead to turbulent periods within the organisation.

Outcome of the YJR project of YFP

Starting in 2007, the YJR project has since been implemented in 18 communes of 7 provinces including the last former stronghold of the KR in Pailin. In 7 communes (of 5 provinces) local Community Memorial Committees are engaged in preserving the legacy of the KR past, transferring local memories to the younger generations and managing the development of their memory site together with committed youth into a historic site to also inform

visitors about the KR atrocities that had occurred. Sixteen youth groups in 8 provinces, usually consisting of 20-30 members, sometimes even up to 50, have been formed after conducting the URC workshops and are continuously supported in their activities, which include participation in village dialogue with survivors, organising art workshops, exhibitions and study tours to other places of crimes. In 2010 alone, ten art workshops and exhibitions took place in seven provinces, ten study tours to local mass crime sites were undertaken and YFP organised more than forty capacity-building seminars for the youth groups and the Community Memorial Committees.

The results from the URC workshops indicate that young Cambodians are interested in learning about the KR history and want to be involved in the processes of reconciliation, peace-building and genocide prevention. The critical thoughts and activities of the youth with whom YFP is working to break the silence in society regarding the past have remarkably increased. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these young people feel more confident in addressing questions of the KR past, be it through asking their parents / grandparents / neighbours / teachers or actively participating in local initiatives of remembrance organised by the Community Memory Committees. Based on their increasing experience and skills in managing their local initiative some even developed remarkable ability to mobilise peers and other community members to join memory activities or supporting the maintenance of the local memorial.

The constant commitment of YFP over the last four years in inspiring and supporting local communities to actively address suppressed memories of the KR regime, encouraging intergenerational dialogue in which survivors reflect the historic events of their location and young people listen to these memories, has led not only to a stronger sense of community but also to increased motivation for self-initiated activities. Experience suggests that ordinary Cambodians have realised the importance and advantage of actively dealing with their local history for their mental well-being and have seemingly developed more self-confidence in planning and organising community activities for revitalising, repairing and maintaining historic places close to their commune such as mass graves and memorials. Of particular importance is that elders reflect positive experiences after YFP-facilitated initiatives, evidence indicating that they feel diminished anger, loss and helplessness when memories of the KR regime surface. In this respect, one of the FGD participants in Kraing Tachan, for example, reported very emotionally that he always avoided reminding himself of the KR period, focusing on daily issues in order to prevent rage and depression from arising. After YFP initiated talks in the village about what had happened and held joint art activities with young people, the man gradually felt more able to remember the period. Similar stories from other participants indicate the same response.

This process enables participating survivors to more and more move beyond the privacy of their families into communal space for joint historical reflections and to set up a legacy of the local historic events of the DK regime for future generations. At the same time, young people develop much better understanding of what their parents/grandparents occasionally told them informally about the atrocities they suffered during the KR time and overcome doubt about the truthfulness of these horrible stories. This again creates a high feeling of satisfaction among the survivor generation who often had to struggle with the fact that people born after the KR regime dismissed such descriptions as exaggerations or even as inventions to reprimand children.

4.1.2. Representation of Different Roles/Identities

The all-embracing approach which the YJR project strives for, in getting young and old interested in the proceedings of the ECCC, to encourage communities to cope with the local events of the KR past by sharing survivors' memories through intergenerational dialogue and to motivate them to initiate memorialisation processes themselves, has not paid much attention to questions of differentiated views and perspectives resulting from different roles / identities that the survivors had in this period. Survivors are simply invited to participate on the basis that they feel motivated to engage in dialogue about the past, to contribute to keeping memories of the KR regime alive in locally-determined practices of remembrance and to pass on their experiences to younger generations.

The field research uncovered that it is little known to YFP - and thus not an issue discussed in more detail - what the individual histories of the participants are. In the FGD, all of them considered themselves as victims of the KR regime, although many have been former 'base people', being somehow privileged compared to the deported 'new people', often serving in the system during that time (e.g. as cook in the cooperative kitchen, group chief, barber for the local KR cadres, KR soldier). In this respect, certain participants may have been considered to have deliberately collaborated, even having co-responsibility, in the maltreatment, discrimination and killings of their fellow Cambodians.

In the FGD only very few dared to reveal their concrete personal backgrounds. In Kraing Tachan, for example, just one out of eleven participants reported to have been a KR soldier during that time. All others remained silent when it came to such personal issues, although their accounts of this period revealed indirectly that they had information and experiences which forcefully deported and enslaved 'new people' could not have. In Somrong Knong, another community with which YFP is working, only those who were clearly victims of the regime such as a former student who was deported from Battambang city to work in a mobile youth brigade in the countryside and felt forced to hide his intellectual background to escape persecution, openly shared their status and position during the KR regime.

Another YFP project participant from the same group admitted only in informal talks after the FGD that he had not dared to talk much because he was a former KR soldier. Yet, this same individual has become a respected member of the Community Memorial Committee and as deputy director of the primary school nearby the memorial, is very active in connecting youth to the survivor generation. In general, YFP has very little to no information about the historical background of the Committee members, even those very active and committed members.

Questions of different roles and identities during the KR regime which may lead to the discovery of different levels of participation or collaboration and thus a more nuanced picture of experiences, views and interpretations of these events, have thus far remained hidden. Instead, the common approach is to find comfort in the unspecified picture of 'we are the victims' and 'they' [ké], the anonymous KR, the ones who have maltreated us. This approach is thus duplicated and becomes physically represented in memory initiatives, for example the wall paintings of the art workshop as well as the picture book of the survivors with whom YFP has worked illustrate impressive scenes of suffering and atrocities whereby the perpetrators usually are portrayed as KR in black clothes, wearing weapons and being in the position of giving orders, using violence or killing someone. Blame is emotionally assigned to the KR as such, although FGD participants tended to somehow make a distinction between KR leaders and those who followed their orders. A very broad view prevailed of who is considered a victim – reaching from the deported 'new people' to those whose relatives were killed to all those who lost relatives because of starvation, illness or overwork, and finally to all those who have suffered under the KR regime including 'base people' or former KR soldiers.

A female participant in the Kraing Tachan FGD (who reported to have been one of the deported 'new people') confirmed that 'base people' did not dare to interfere and just did what had been expected from them.[88] Another added that the situation was complicated and life threatening, everybody being expected to show sufficient revolutionary spirit and requested to be permanently watchful of 'traitors'. "If we were not able to hide each other we would have died. If it has been discovered that we would conceal something the whole 'nest' (the whole clan of relatives) including children would have been killed. It often depended on the group chief or brigade chief. In order to survive we had been in accord with them".[89] Probing the issue further, a few FGD participants recognised that 'base people' were those who had joined the resistance after the coup d'état in 1970 and had been considered during the KR regime as particularly reliable. Therefore, they were often entrusted with administrative tasks, privileged positions and leading functions in the communes that 'new people' could seldom hold. Only those 'new people' who proved to work very hard not only in physical respect but also to increase their revolutionary spirit had a chance to be elevated to the status of 'candidate', which meant receiving slightly better treatment than before. At the same time some FGD participants stated that this did not mean that 'base people' were automatically KR.

This point indirectly shows that it was not only KR as such that were responsible in the past. Yet, this issue has not been made subject of public discussion in Cambodia, even not, at least, in the concerned communities with whom YFP is working. The project rather indirectly supports the emphasis of another aspect of this issue, namely the victimisation of 'base people' by having sometimes been downgraded to the lower category of 'candidates' and thus receiving harsher treatment than before. However, for YFP, working on these questions represents a considerable challenge. In all activities and capacity-building measures, YFP favours the terms 'survivors' and 'former Khmer Rouge', rather than talking of perpetrators. They feel the latter term is too sensitive and may prevent many people from joining dialogue on the past. In addition, YFP accept that not all KR were automatically perpetrators and thus do not want to contribute to cementing stereotypes by using this term. In areas where YFP facilitators work mainly with former KR such as in Pailin, they even prefer using the term 'former fighters' instead of former KR. There are considerable concerns that careless wording may cause harmful consequences not only in initiating dialogue about the past but also in terms of personal safety.

So far, YFP has not yet considered prioritising these details of different roles/identities in engaging survivors to participate. The project coordinator believes that this may develop with progress and consolidated interests of the communities to continue dealing with their local past. Most important for that, however, would be to strengthen mutual trust and relations and to develop improved facilitation skills so that participants increasingly dare to communicate and reflect their own roles during that time. Single interviews with survivors clearly reflect that even former KR are becoming more willing to share some of their experiences even though this does yet involve critical review of what had happened, why it could happen and what role they themselves had played in it. The reluctance among many in looking deeper into these issues is still high, particularly as they do not feel able to anticipate possible consequences for them and their families when 'talking too much and too openly'.

4.1.3. Truth-Telling

YFP activities also include encouraging project participants to discover their local history and to improve their understanding about the DK regime in general. In Kraing Tachan and Somrong Knong, for example, the communities

[88] FGD, Kraing Tachan, 8 February 2011.
[89] Ibid.

were involved in reconstructing the location as it was during the KR regime by compiling memories of various survivors and transforming this information into a map showing important places and buildings such as the prison, the interrogation and torture house and the communal kitchen. Architecture students supported the communities in drawing the maps which were then enlarged and transferred to metal plates for displaying them to the public. This process included a joint field-walk with villagers for rediscovering almost forgotten places and interviewing elders and former KR. Following this highly participatory process of producing the map the Community Memorialisation Committees, communes and young people received training from YFP to process the information and to be able to give 'professional' explanations to visitors of the memorials. While the Kraing Tachan memorial site is little visited because of its remote location, Vat Somrong Knong memorial, which is close the Battambang city, is regularly frequented by foreign visitors. This memorial has recently been renovated and complemented by artistic projects showing scenes of life and terror during the KR regime.

Apart from the map and the figure of how many had been executed, most information on these historic sites is rather symbolic. No written documents have survived and even the recordings of the prison at Kraing Tachan that had been discovered immediately after the fall of the KR regime in 1979 got lost over the years. According to one FGD participant in Kraing Tachan, in the early 1980s local authorities collected the prison documents, compiled statistics about the prisoners who had been killed in Kraing Tachan prison and submitted these reports to the higher level. Since then, nothing has been heard about this information and today the committee is not able to find it back. On the other hand, it seems that some people who had been involved in the killings or running of the prisons are known to survivors but this has always remained informal knowledge and is rarely shared in public. Some interviewed commune council members confirmed that such people are indeed known, but assured that few perpetrators remain alive and those that are live peacefully side by side without creating any trouble. It may well be that deep feelings of anger persist, but as a coping strategy or through fear of stirring trouble, villagers do not go into these questions and it is thus preferred to leave such stories un-told in order not to endanger peaceful life in the villages.

The YFP project has encouraged and supported young people who have participated in the URC workshops to interview their parents, grandparents, neighbours, former KR and whoever is willing to share their experiences, in order to figure out more about what had happened in their locations during that time. The aim is primarily to motivate young people to become more interested in taking note of the stories of the survivor generation and to develop understanding and commitment for learning from the past. In Kraing Tachan, for example, youth reported during the FGD that before YFP came to work with them they had little interest and understanding of what kind of place Kraing Tachan actually was. They were aware of the displayed skulls and bones but had no idea why they were displayed. Their parents had sometimes talked about the extreme hardship suffered during the KR regime but it was hard for them to believe because information was so fragmented, often in the context of rebuking disobedient children. Through the project a feeling of historic importance of their home area and a closer connection to their parents was engendered, but many questions - why it happened, who was behind it and why people killed others in Kraing Tachan -remain unanswered.

While the communities are encouraged to re-discover and cope with their local history of that time, respective efforts have not yet examined historic details in depth, for example by discussing the question of having arbitrarily categorised people into 'base people', 'candidates' and 'new people', which had dramatic implications for setting off an unknown dynamic of mutual suspicion, discrimination, maltreatment and killings. Without collaborators, the little number of confirmed KR cadres would not have been able to administer the cooperatives and labour camps in such a totalitarian manner. Youth in the FGD still had no clear idea of these categories, especially that 'base people' had been considered superior to 'new people' and having rights and privileges, while 'new people' had been considered as enemies *per se* without having any rights. Questions of the identities of the people killed in Kraing Tachan prison and the reason for those killings would make youth much more aware of why these terrible events occurred, but it seems that there are fundamental reservations in doing so. Considerable fear exists that such knowledge could create unrest among survivors in the village and revive feelings of anger and hatred, leading to revenge and reprisals. In the case of Kraing Tachan it is also highly likely that the ECCC investigations (for case 002) had a chilling, even silencing effect on the community.[90]

In Kraing Tachan, the planned local museum may well play a crucial role in the future in continuing seeking explanations and precise historic facts. Construction work is already underway and very soon decisions will have to be made of what information will be presented there. However, the question is to what extent the initiators have free scope for going beyond general standard information into specific facts of the very local events and naming concrete actors. YFP sees its role as facilitator and wants to leave the content-related decisions with the community and the Community Memorialisation Committee. The intention of the project is not to contribute to confrontation or

[90] Several former KR cadres and witnesses had been questioned about the Kraing Tachan prison and eleven civil parties have been declared admissible with regard to this former security centre. See ECCC Closing Order Case 002, 2010:126-133

to open up old rifts of the past, nor will the project seek to discover specific information on responsibilities for the crimes. Instead, the aim is to increase mutual understanding in the community, to find joint explanations, to commemorate and to keep memories alive for future generations. Based on Buddhist principles, survivors seem most interested in seeking explanations from their fellow Cambodians, their acknowledgement of wrongdoing and remorse. In both communities, Kraing Tachan and Somrong Knong, this process has already made significant progress. People, especially youth, are much more sensitised to dealing with their legacy than before YFP began working and are committed to maintaining their memorial and to celebrate regular commemoration ceremonies. Cambodians from other locations have even started to visit in the belief that they lost relatives at these places.

According to the project coordinator, how far these communities want to continue revealing the truth is a matter of time and depends on how the general circumstances and social climate alter accordingly.

4.1.4. Addressing Future Generations

The YJR project specifically focuses on youth since YFP is an organisation working primarily with young people. Recognising that generations born after the fall of the KR regime have little to no knowledge about what happened during that time, YFP is committed to encouraging interest in these issues and, based on better historical understanding, is committed to contributing to reconciliation processes and the establishment / maintaining of peaceful relationships in their communities. The main target groups are high school students and other young people in rural areas and children of former KR, mostly between 14 and 24 years of age. A small percentage come from poor or very poor families, particularly drop out students, but most participants are from wealthier backgrounds. Youth participants have often been involved with other YFP activities and are expected to play a role as multipliers, spreading information to their friends and peers. YFP is convinced that working with children of former KR is particularly important in building connections with this group and fostering their participation in dialogue.

As described above, the activities are manifold, from trainings, workshops and annual conferences to networking, study tours for visiting memorials in other communities and memorialisation activities in their local community.

A large percentage of young people who joined the project showed genuine interest in learning more about the KR past and being involved in practical activities. Interesting to note is that children of former KR often appear to be more interested and committed than those from families considering themselves pure victims of the regime, which may reflect that youth from a former KR background are more critically searching for historical facts and verification of the information they were passed. Working with this sub-group has made YFP aware of the fact that there are also content-related differences, such as using different words in reflecting the past (e.g. they do not talk of former KR but of ‘former fighters’, the term former KR calling themselves) or preferring different activities, for example, rather bringing people together for dialogue than organising theatre performances about the KR time (which is usually very popular among rural youth). Though it is still difficult for YFP to rate their views and opinions, it seems however that they recognise that many Cambodians died during the KR period but they also believe that their parents / grandparents had fought for a good reason. So far, there are no objections against those views on the part of YFP, although it may become an issue to take a clearer position on in the future, particularly since future generations will likely intensify their discussions and public debates on the issues based on increased historical knowledge.

For the moment YFP instead has to tackle very practical problems in engaging young people. YFP always requires permission from school directors and local authorities before inviting youth in implementing any activity. Obtaining such permission is not particularly difficult, but their involvement clearly sets the frame in which the project can operate. On the other hand, YFP is of course interested in having them on board because many of them still belong to the survivor generation and/or have experienced memorialisation efforts of the 1980s. The commune councils are also often in charge of the memorials, as in Kraing Tachan and Somrong Knong, and part of the Community Memorialisation Committees. In certain cases, school directors and teachers play an important role in bringing the issue of KR past into the classroom and encouraging students to actively contribute to keeping memories of their parents/grandparents alive. Conducive for this is prior knowledge about YFP as a very committed NGO. Nevertheless, school directors have not always been open-minded. Strong reservations in approaching the issue and in cooperating with an NGO have surfaced. Teachers are also often more interested in getting students into private classes for which they have to pay extra fees, than to encourage them to voluntarily work with an NGO.

Another challenge for the involvement of future generations is represented by the family background. Young people are sometimes interested but too busy with helping their families in livelihood activities or lack the means to travel to participate. Further, parents have at times prohibited their children from participating since they consider that being involved in dealing with questions of the KR past is linked to politics, from which they want to keep their children away. The response from young people, however, clearly reflects that YFP does attract many through its variety of activities, participatory approach and circumspection with which the project handles the sensitive topic.

During the FGD in Kraing Tachan, youth voiced their pride about their achievements in improving and expanding the local memorial and that elders appreciated their involvement. They reported to now have a better understanding of

the situation of their parents/grandparents and believe much more in their stories from the past. Youth in Somrong Knong reported to have become more interested and motivated to continue searching for historical facts and better understanding. The FGD reflected that those who have been involved for almost a year developed a more differentiated understanding about the past than those who recently joined and still repeated common stereotypes and general slogans. Though of course not applicable to all, some participants had developed a more nuanced assessment of the past, one participant, for example, indicating that many KR may have been misused, indoctrinated and often rarely thought independently of the righteousness of their actions. Some participants also reported to have increasingly come across conflicting information, sometimes in contrast to the official version, creating an uncomfortable feeling. Though insightful, it is hard to probe these questions deeper as elders often respond with suspicion and discouragement. That said, while working with young people on this topic, YFP attaches great importance to fostering empathy in listening to families and other survivors, to develop critical thinking skills and to feel committed in learning from the past for a more peaceful society in the future.

YFP is aware that there is still a far way to go in achieving these goals, particularly as they are closely connected to the general socio-political circumstances and development processes in Cambodia.

4.1.5. Conclusions

It has always been important for the YJR project to engage rural youth in an intergenerational dialogue, to learn about local KR history and the reasons for the mass killings and to commit young people to take part in remembering and acknowledging the suffering of their parents and grandparents generations. These memory initiatives are important, particularly since young people have no possibilities to gain this knowledge in school.

By striving for an all-embracing approach, YFP hopes - and indeed appears - to succeed in breaking certain silences in the communities in which they work, in getting young and old interested in the proceedings of the ECCC and in motivating them to initiate their own memorialisation processes regarding the local KR past. This approach is completely new to Cambodian communities and therefore observed with caution from many different sides. The FGD with YFP participants reflected that so far, except for a few official speeches from state officials at the annual Remembrance Day, it was solely in the privacy of families that these old stories had been informally remembered and shared at occasional gatherings with relatives. YFP is slowly succeeding in making the past a more public issue at least in the local communities that they work, even though the process is still embryonic and has not yet had the opportunity to delve deeper into concrete, incontrovertible historical facts and questions of responsibilities for the atrocities that happened in these locations.

Many survivors still have to struggle with the traumatic experiences of having gone through brutalities and extreme violence, losing relatives and witnessing mass killings. Equally, many struggle with having been more or less 'one cog in the wheel' that made the whole system function.[91] YFP takes this into account when trying to encourage people to 'break the silence' and to become more engaged in dealing with these experiences. Changes in the attitudes of youth and survivors during several years of the project have proven to be of great importance for the process of social conflict transformation in the communities, but are also a challenge. The activities require the ability to continuously observe the events unfolding in the project implementation, to analyse immediate and long-term impacts and to design strategies to adjust the activities to a changing environment in the communities. YFP, with its relatively young but very committed staff, is still in an important learning process concerning memorialisation and contributing to the development of a memory culture in Cambodia. Ongoing, in-house trainings on issues such as questions of mental health, reconciliation, peace-building and project management are regularly complemented by participatory reflections on the effects of YFP interventions. However, one important observation is that the intergenerational dialogue has created a window of opportunity for peace and reconciliation education. It eases the relations between survivors and the post-war generation as they have space to sit together to relate their experiences, which leads the younger generation to transform their attitudes and to support the elders in coping with the horrific experiences of the past. The project activities have been regarded as a unique starting point for the development and empowerment of young people and survivors in memorialisation processes.

4.2. Case study 2 – ICfC's Justice and History Outreach project (JHO project)

In 2007, the International Center of Conciliation (ICfC, based in Boston, USA) established an office in Phnom Penh with four local staff. In 2010 this office localised and has been registered as a Cambodian non-governmental organisation. Observing that much of the outreach about the justice system in Cambodia – including the ECCC – relies on a quantitative perspective, ICfC created a qualitative outreach program based on a theory of community development where the outreach material and discussion originates in the needs expressed by rural Cambodians themselves. Funding for ICfC remains a continual challenge.

[91] YFP (2011:136)

4.2.1. Background, Genesis and Activities

The main goal of the *Justice and History Outreach* (JHO) project is to understand how Cambodians living in rural and remote areas discuss issues of history and justice in their everyday lives and to bring the voice of this population group to those authorities and officials in a position to meet their needs. By stimulating discussions in villages, ICfC intends to foster the abilities of villagers to communicate the gruesome past of the KR period with their family members and the community and to feel empowered in coming to terms with this past. It is expected that villagers involved in the project would become more open to talk about their experiences during the DK regime, to experience fewer constraints among their peers to express their experience, to be closer to their community and to become more inclined to forgive people directly involved in their suffering.

ICfC believes that Cambodia must confront its own history in order to successfully move forward through the transitional justice process as it recovers from mass atrocities. Furthermore, ICfC aims to help rural Cambodians play an active role in the process of healing by using a participatory approach that empowers villagers to respond to their community-defined needs such that a culture of peace can be built from the ground up. In recognising that the ECCC would not be able to meet the needs of Cambodians in dealing with historically-rooted conflicts, ICfC began implementing projects that aimed to create a culture of peace by redefining relationships on the basis of understanding and empathy, utilising experience from other contexts. In 2009, ICfC also started to implement a memorialisation phase within the JHO project, aiming at encouraging the communities with whom ICfC is working to establish visible, permanent places of remembrance in their village by providing conceptual thoughts and funding to them. The JHO project has since expanded every year to other villages and has meanwhile been implemented in fourteen provinces (one village per province) by working with villagers in those communities that have historically-rooted conflicts between victims and perpetrators and are interested in becoming involved in an active process of dealing with this past.

ICfC staff have helped villagers and local CSO partners to design and organise activities such as village dialogue, a visit to memorials in the capital Phnom Penh and constructing a local memorial based on the needs and design of villagers to commemorate those who died and suffered under the KR regime. ICfC endeavours to work together with CSOs, local authorities and ordinary people in communities, seeking partnership with CSOs as a basis for the future continuation of its work and seeking cooperation with the local authorities as a source of historical background information on the particular region. Local authorities have sometimes been reluctant to participate because of concerns about the politics of the initiatives, sometimes wanting ICfC to obtain permission from the provincial and district office first. In most instances, especially at the lower levels of authority (particularly village chiefs), cooperation has been much more forthcoming once the formalities have been fulfilled. At the higher levels of authority there is obviously little interest in the initiative.

In the beginning of the process, ICfC staff has always completed several phases of assessment to identify possible activities, such as convening dialogue among villagers, bringing villagers to Phnom Penh to visit the Tuol Sleng Museum and scheduling meetings with ECCC officials. ICfC invests a lot of time listening to people's pained memories, fostering their ability to communicate the past with their family members and community, and acknowledging and validating their experiences. In bringing villagers into dialogue with each other to share memories and jointly remember the difficult past, the expectation is that they will be more open and encouraged to actively seek ways for solving their problems. Facilitators, usually locally-known and respected people, invite villagers in small groups to share their experiences from the war, such as the events that they cannot forget or suffered the most brutally. After that, facilitators give participants the opportunity to think about their problems and to discuss how they can address and solve these problems based on their local knowledge and resources. In a next step the small groups come together and present their outcomes to the larger group. During these discussions ICfC also provides general information about the ECCC and updated information about the trial proceedings. These talks often take place in pagodas, as a place of comfort for villagers, a good place for remembering their suffering and facilitating the participation of monks.

One of the results of the village dialogue sessions is that participants often wish to visit national memorials and historical sites such as the Tuol Sleng Museum, the mass graves of Choeung Ek and the ECCC. ICfC has therefore organised study tours for about 20-25 villagers from each community, including religious leaders, monks, teachers, students and village chiefs to learn from these places and to bring the knowledge and experiences back to their fellow villagers. These visits are often combined with remembrance ceremonies [*bângskól*] at these historic places where, together with monks, the participants commemorate those victims who have died there. Afterwards the participants reported impressively about their experience and some villages have been motivated to organise similar study tours by themselves based on the new contacts with the ECCC or through ICfC, sometimes for up to 300 people.

Another result of the process is a joint decision by participants to create visible places of remembrance where they can commemorate their relatives who died during the KR regime. These memorials are mostly in form of a Stupa

according to Buddhist tradition. Most villagers do not know where their relatives died and they have no physical remains of them to conduct a proper funeral, therefore a Stupa is a suitable symbolic place to pray and remember especially during religious festivities. During the process of discussion participants are encouraged to form a construction committee comprising respected members of the community selected by them. This committee is in charge of organising the construction process, collecting donations and to managing financial support of ICfC. At a meeting with the project participants the committee suggests and discusses the location, size and design of the Stupa. For this reason, the memorials often differ from one village to another. In Thnol Loak village, Takeo province, for example, the Stupa is located on the pagoda compound but slightly modified from the typical, traditional closed form, by leaving one side open and being inscribed with all the names of the relatives who died during the KR regime. In Koh Krâlâr, Battambang province, the Stupa has been built at a public place in the village used by the community for meetings or festivities, but is built in the exact traditional form without referring to any persons, thus serving rather as a very symbolic, unspecified reminder to that time.

After completion of the construction work, participants always conduct an official ceremony for the whole village [*bun chhlong sdob*] in agreement with the village chief and in the presence of monks from the pagoda to inaugurate and communicate the meaning and importance of the memorial to everyone in the community.

Participants in the JHO project of ICfC

The project has no specific focus on particular groups. It is directed at everybody in a village who wishes to join. However, the composition of the participants (usually 20-25 persons) depends on the concrete circumstances of each village, especially on the openness of survivors with similar backgrounds and experiences to share opinions about the atrocities that had happened in their area.

In Thnol Loak village, most project participants are native to the location and are former 'base people', witnessing KR activities as early as 1972/73 when KR cadres set up one of their base camps close to the village. In Koh Krâlâr, by contrast, project participants are mostly former KR, many of whom also remained in its ranks after 1979 and continued fighting against the new regime or spent many years in refugee camps along the Cambodian-Thai border.

Outcome of the JHO project of ICfC

For Cambodians, the sharing of memories with neighbours and family members in an organised, communal way beyond the informal privacy of the family is a new and exciting experience. Through the creation of space for people to recount their own suppressed trials, tribulations and troubles, space is provided for the validation of voices that have been long silenced and for the remembrance and documentation of history that should not be forgotten or repeated. Through dialogue, villagers demonstrate relief and increasing confidence to decide what to do next in coping with their painful past. They often decided to see the killing field site, Tuol Sleng Museum and to create their own memorial that reminds them of the atrocities that happened specifically in their home area.

Under careful facilitation of ICfC, villagers have managed the construction process of Stupas and maintain the upkeep of the structure, all of which creates a sense of personal and community responsibility and ownership of both the process and the memorial itself. One widow from Takeo thus stated during the follow up activity that, "I am very happy to have the name of my husband in that memorial site and the Achar always calls the name of my husband and other names in that memorial when the people do ceremony in the pagoda. It is very important for the young generation to know about this history. I always tell my children that now your father is in that place so if you remember him, you can go to see at that place."

Evidence suggests that the JHO project creates a sense of completion among some of the villagers. Their memories and experiences are finally shared and acknowledged, with a sense of validation rather than disregard. After the ICfC intervention, project participants in some villages collected other people in the commune to visit the ECCC by connecting to ECCC staff directly. Others indicated that they pray and remember their relatives at the memorial site during communal ceremonies. The FGD in Thnol Loak village found evidence that survivors had managed to find ways out of their inner silence to develop the strength to articulate long suppressed grief. Project participants reported that before the engagement of ICfC it was hard for them to talk about that time, with feeling of anger, pain and helplessness often stoked. By contrast, participants reported feeling less troubled by negative emotions after the ICfC project and satisfied to have a proper place for remembering their relatives. In addition, during the FGD participants were able to recall historic details of their life and social relationships during that time which have never been brought to light to such degree before. For this purpose the participatory process of producing a film with Thnol Loak villagers appeared extremely helpful, some villagers themselves taking the camera. The film has been a key tool to attract the whole village, but also younger people to become involved in the history of their village.

Similar positive experiences have been made in other villages as well. The follow-up activities of ICfC often discover that after an intense process with ICfC, villagers have continued to share their experiences from the study visit with their fellow villagers and regularly integrating the memorial they have constructed into village celebrations. Through

this dynamic, some people even felt encouraged to admit the part they played during the KR regime in front of others and their regret at having participated. An external evaluation of the JHO project in 2009 stated that villagers reported a greater sense of community, self-disclosure of their experiences related to the KR regime, as well as fewer social constraints against talking with others about the experiences and their impact.[92]

4.2.2. Representation of Roles/Identities

As ICfC aims to benefit the entire community, both young and older generations as well as former KR cadres who are willing to speak about the past are involved, as the project focuses on creating opportunities to share memories of the hardships of life and survivors' sufferings during the KR regime. It also focuses on coping with mental pain when survivors remember the loss of family members and on encouraging survivors to keep memories alive by building self-designed local memorials. While the project makes efforts to reconnect people, to foster empathy where each side commits itself to listen to the memories of the other side and to motivate them to re-establish broken relationships, there is little focus on talking about differentiated roles people had during the KR period. Specifically, the considerable differences between 'base people' and 'new people' are not explored.

Evidence from the case study suggests that at the local level the deep and hostile rifts between victims and perpetrators are far fewer than the official picture of condemning the KR may suggest. This is particularly the case since many survivors find themselves in different roles at the same time. On the other hand, most 'new people' had gone back to their original place after the fall of the KR regime, leaving those 'base people' who had collaborated with the KR mainly among themselves. By way of example, the project group in Thnol Loak village comprises survivors of different backgrounds, but the FGD reflected a rather strong sense of community and mutual understanding. All of them considered themselves to be victims of the regime although most had been 'base people' and more or less collaborated with the local KR cadres. These people had often held privileged positions in the village/cooperative administration, such as being cook in the cooperative kitchen or group chief. Others had been 'new people' and received the harshest treatment, not just by KR cadres but often from 'base people' in the location they had been deported to.

Some participants in the FGD did describe how bad the relationships between both categories in the village were, sometimes even among own relatives, often with deadly consequences. One female participant reported how she struggled to get the status of belonging to the 'base people' immediately after she had been deported from Phnom Penh to join her family in Thnol Loak village. Receiving the lowest status of 'sent' or 'new people', even her father who had been considered as part of the 'base people' and accorded the status of group chief had been consequently downgraded, her relatives thereafter blaming her for this shame. Fearing for her life, she eventually succeeded with her complaint but was sent to another area where she enjoyed moderate living conditions compared to the fate of 'new people' in Thnol Loak village. While reporting her story she never blamed particular people or demanded retribution, appearing to simply accept that that was how life during the KR period was.

Asking directly who killed or did 'bad things' during the KR period, FGD participants often equated them with former village chiefs, former cooperative chiefs, spies and full-rights 'base people'. They made a strict division between victim 'base people' [*nek tream*] (candidates, sometimes called half-rights base people) and perpetrator 'base people' [*nek penh seth*] (full-rights base people).Another female participant in the Thnol Loak FGD was convinced that it was the KR village chief (full-rights base people) who ordered the killings of her relatives one after the other, but she did not want to go deeper into this issue. She had *pacified vindictiveness by not being vindictive*, and instead invited the wife of the former KR village chief to join the FGD to listen to the sad stories of others. To everyone's surprise, the wife of the former KR village chief accepted the invitation even though her participation was minimal during the FGD and she had not revealed her background during the discussion.[93]

What unifies the participants is the experience of having suffered extremely harsh living conditions and the loss of family members and relatives, be it through arbitrary killings, starvation, illness or exhaustion. The question of perpetrators and holding them accountable rarely comes into focus, with concern directed towards communicating and acknowledging their sufferings and losses of that time. Instead, when dealing with questions of responsibility or clarifying roles, in the case of perpetrators FGD participants preferred to talk of 'them' [*ké*], meaning rather anonymous KR cadres who had leading positions and the power to order killings and were supposed to have fled to other areas immediately after the fall of the regime. Nonetheless, this stereotype is sometimes undermined by reports about former KR village chiefs, but who are not considered perpetrators because they had administered their village without arbitrary killings.

[92] ICfC (2009:33)
[93] The research team got this information from one participant only after the FGD.

In Koh Krâlâr it was more difficult to talk openly about these questions. Nevertheless, in both cases, the common understanding was that the responsibility for the catastrophic outcome and the killings lies with the top leaders as they gave orders while the lower ranks simply had to follow them, faced with fatal consequences of non-compliance.

Recently, ICfC has continued the village dialogue activities by explicitly inviting former KR to participate. By trying to bring all sides to talk about the past together, explaining what and why the violence happened, and finally moving towards acknowledgement by both about what role the accused had played, the aim is to reconnect their relationship in the community and to create opportunities for victims to receive formal recognition for their suffering. Still, the challenge remains to bring former KR to talk and few such dialogue sessions have yet taken place. Those who have agreed have been exclusively of the lowest ranks and join the discussion from the perspective of considering themselves more or less as victims as well. It seems that this latter understanding is partly shared, at least informally, by participants as the fieldwork found that project participants often indicated that those lower-ranking KR who were involved in the arrests or executions were often very young, ignorant and indoctrinated with hatred or under immense pressure to follow orders.

4.2.3. Truth-Telling

The village dialogue sessions that ICfC has initiated have facilitated survivors to reflect not only their individual stories but also to relate them to the historical events that happened in their villages and communities. Important entry points for compiling such information are often talks about those who had died, under which circumstances and who exactly was behind the killings. Participants thereafter created lists with all the names of those who had died and in the case of Thnol Loak village, put them visually onto the memorial. However, these names are not officially registered or formally recognised by the authorities - they have simply been collected by the participants for their personal commemoration.

Since many executions took place in secret or at specific places far from the villages, it is also not always an established fact who exactly the killers were. Many disappeared after they had been called for re-education and thus project participants often tend towards assumptions by referring to those who had formal decision-making powers, such as village and cooperative chiefs. For many it is difficult to assess why family members or relatives had been taken away and what had happened to them afterwards. The arrests usually occurred without explanation and with no official information concerning the fate of those arrested. Whilst some persons are indeed specifically known for having executed or provided incriminating information which later led to the disappearance of relatives, for example those who had been spies [*chhlóp*], intense discussions are sometimes sparked in the village dialogue sessions but usually without the accused themselves participating or providing information to clarify the situation.

On the other hand, in certain cases project participants indicate uncertainty about the often cited argument of killings happening simply on the basis of orders. In Thnol Loak village, one FGD participant expressed his continued astonishment about the different treatment people suffered when high-ranking KR cadres came to visit the cooperative. On those days, local cadres offered plenty of food and even entertainment, “as if they wanted to hide our true living conditions”. The man noted, “The higher-level (cadres) did not treat us as strictly as the low-ranking in our village did. We ourselves gave us [*sic*] a hard time every day, so strictly as if we would hate us [*sic*] so much. I still do not understand that.”[94] Despite recalling this difference in treatment during the KR period, little further reflection was provided on understanding why it had been like this, with other participants only confirming how hard times indeed had been.

In terms of truth-telling, some villages also try to remember the localities as exactly as possible and draw maps showing the pits, torture and killing sites or facilities such as the communal kitchen, detention centre, huge mass working places and other specific places. The suggestion is that these maps should be placed at local public places such as the village hall or the memorial. ICfC has made efforts to increase activities among survivors towards (re-) discovering local histories and promoting shared understanding. The organisation has facilitated village exchange dialogue so that villages located in different provinces can share their own local experiences and relate them to the experiences of others. For example, in the autumn of 2010, ICfC implemented an exchange dialogue between different Cham communities[95] so that these villagers could reflect on the general Cham experience in Cambodia. These dialogues not only helped villagers cope with the loss of their relatives, but also support the understanding of local history so that future generations can learn from past mistakes to ensure their non-recurrence. In the past, ICfC has also conducted an oral history project, interviewing individuals about their experience to be compiled in a book that the community can keep for future generations.

Despite these advances, truth seeking has not however been a priority for project participants so far. Although people know or assume to know who had committed the crimes in their area, ICfC has experienced that they do not

[94] FGD, Thnol Loak, 10 February 2011.
[95] The Cham are an ethnic group located predominantly in Cambodia and Vietnam, and form the main Muslim community.

delve deeper into these issues, nor expand on them further. Several reasons for this arrested truth-telling are forwarded. First, some of those who were believed to be involved or perceived as particularly cruel had already fell victim of reprisals immediately after the fall of the regime in1979. Extra-legal killings by enraged victims had taken place, as well as arrests by the new regime in the early 1980s putting certain individuals into jail. A second reason is the policy of *Renaksé* (the mass front created in December 1978 as a new mass movement to support the new communist regime in Cambodia in the 1980s), which did not allow people to individually seek facts about killings and atrocities. It was feared that to otherwise allow this to take place would obstruct the pacification of Cambodian society and undermine the re-normalisation of daily life. Likewise, after the overthrow of the DK regime in 1979, many Cambodians fit for military service had been integrated into the new army regardless of their role during the KR period and without any process of vetting. In addition, as civil war persisted throughout the 1980s, the new power holders always strove for winning as many defectors from the opposing groups as possible, tacitly promising exemption from legal proceedings in return for their defection.

In this respect, the representative of the Kirivong district (Thnol Loak village) explained that pardoning was a pragmatic and urgent decision at the time, with former KR village and commune chiefs even placed into the new system after undergoing intensive trainings about the new policy. Everybody at that time was treated in the same way and former 'base people' for example were similarly integrated into the new organised agricultural production groups [*krom samaki*] without questions about their previous actions. This was regarded as a suitable means to prevent people from taking revenge against each other. For these reasons, the official remembrance days - especially the 'Day of Anger' on 20 May - only served to commemorate the victims of the KR regime as a generalised category, rather than being intended to raise questions of why so many Cambodians were killed during the DK regime, or to whom responsibilities could be given.[96]

Finally, local truth-telling has suffered the limitations that result from some perpetrators not coming from the area where they committed crimes and later returning to their original villages after 1979 where people seldom realised what role they had played. In addition, owing to the chaotic situation after the collapse of the DK regime, many of these people were able to change their personal identity, perhaps moving to other areas. 'New people' also went back to the original places from where they had been deported, mostly not knowing or even being interested in tracing the whereabouts and fate of their former tormentors. For them, memories within their families are often fragmented since they had been separated after deportation, thus enduring different working and living places, and perhaps different conditions.

Participants in the research demonstrated that they felt inhibited from going further into such questions, indicating that they have given up seeking such specific information. Many expressed discomfort at the prospect of opposing the pacification and harmonisation policies of the authorities, while according to the majority of participants it is more important to achieve the rebuilding of broken relationships in their own villages, especially with a view to ensuring that future generations are able to live peacefully together, the primary goal of the dialogue that ICfC has initiated. Additionally, seeking reasons and tracking down those who were involved in the killings of one's relatives would be time consuming and costly - resources that most of the participants do not have or are unwilling to spend. For them, being concerned with such matters has ostensibly lost its meaning after so many years, priority being given to dealing with problems they face on a daily basis.

At the time of writing, and until that moment in time, the memory initiatives spurred by ICfC have not come into conflict with the official framework for memorialisation. The initiatives supported by ICfC have focused on specific local histories rather than a broader national understanding of the past, encouraging participants to cope with their personal painful memories by seeking open discussion with each other in the community. This dialogue tries to avoid perpetuating the circle of mutual accusations that often prompts merely defensive reactions or even complete withdrawal from the issue (as has been the case in the past), seeking to instead overcome hostile splits within the community for finding ways to begin talking about the past. Since the initiatives currently remain at this local level of histories, the broader framework is not overtly challenged. While ICfC educates rural Cambodians about the ECCC proceedings (speaking about senior KR officials), it has not been considered pertinent to the goals of the project to hold discussions on other senior leaders not being tried at the ECCC who may have responsibility. In fact, in examining their local history, villagers have never referred to higher-ranking people in power who might have been involved in local atrocities. ICfC has equally not initiated this debate. In contrast, ICfC considers that the main priority should be to use the space that is available at the moment to as far as possible encourage people to open up about the past and address questions of that past. To otherwise work on issues pertaining directly to the official policies could be counterproductive, potentially hindering ICfC's efforts and discouraging villagers from participating.

[96] In-depth interview with commune chief, Thnol Loak, 09 February 2011.

4.2.4. Addressing Future Generations

ICfC is aware that many villagers voice a desire for sharing their painful memories with their own children and grandchildren in order to make them understand what happened during the KR period. Young people often tend to respond with scepticism and disbelief when elders describe the extreme hardships, hunger and atrocities of the past. To help reconnect different generations in dealing with the past, ICfC always tries to include young people of the respective communities in the project activities, particularly by involving them in the village dialogue sessions and spreading information among them.

Nevertheless, during the FGD in Thnol Loak village some participants voiced certain disappointments in trying to cultivate the interest of young people in the village. They referred to the fact that because pupils and high school students are not taught KR history in school they have difficulties in believing the personal stories of their parents/grandparents this period. Even after screening the documentary film about the KR experience of Thnol Loak village that had been produced by ICfC in a highly participatory manner involving many villagers, young and old, lingering doubts remained among those born long after the fall of the KR about the truthfulness of the stories. For these reasons some elders feel discouraged to compile and document facts about the local history of Thnol Loak village. A general lesson was forwarded among this latter group that only when lessons about the KR regime have been integrated into the formal curriculum and are properly taught by history teachers will younger generations develop understanding, belief and a sense of what their parents/grandparents had suffered.[97]

Similar concerns were expressed by FGD participants in Koh Krâlâr. Their experience is that after the ICfC intervention young people have become slightly more attentive to issues of the past and began to believe that such cruel things indeed happened. However, their knowledge about these times still remains very poor as the community itself has no resources to undertake further explorations of the local history. One participant complained that young people want to see concrete evidence, such as pictures and documents as displayed in Tuol Sleng Museum, for example, but the community is unable to provide any historic material. In addition, the community is patched together by families originating from different locations and having very different historical backgrounds, experiences and views on history, making it quite difficult to impart consistent knowledge to the next generation. Therefore they wish that school teachers would take more efforts to provide at least important basic knowledge to their pupils.

4.2.5. Conclusions

In aiming to benefit the entire community through empowering "survivors in the villages to 'unclog' the mental arteries of painful memories"[98] ICfC's project activities have taken specific efforts to reconnect people and foster empathy where each side commits to listen to the memories of the other(s). This approach appears quite fruitful as visible in the two communities that have been researched. Villagers opened up to actively deal with their memories beyond the privacy of their families and developed their own locally-determined commemoration activities including the creation of remembrance places. Although, however, it seemed during the fieldwork that villagers who actively participated still had somehow grouped among equals, either considering themselves just victims by always referring to the 'other side' not involved in the dialogue or acknowledging that they had somehow been associated to the KR, interesting dynamics of subtle changes at the village level were perceptible. The interest on both sides to come into contact had remarkably increased and was more openly voiced by giving respective signals to each other, e.g. invitations to join the dialogue. In addition, the local memorials created by the project participants have often widely been accepted by other villagers and sometimes even integrated in celebration ceremonies of the whole community.

Similar tendencies in other villages where ICfC is working[99] confirm that with the help of a third (external) party through a long-term commitment, entrenched rifts and cleavages between former hostile groups in the villages may indeed heal, at least to a certain degree. Advancements in the reestablishment of broken relationships are clearly possible. This also paves the way for villagers to slowly begin to accept the possibility of alternative viewpoints than simply the traditional notions of evil associated with anyone who worked for the KR regime.

While the re-establishment of broken relationships, and with this an individual healing process for the survivor generation, are the very focus of the ICfC activities, less attention is paid to promoting a more consistent and sustainable process of truth-seeking. Being aware of the difficult political circumstances and socio-cultural characteristics, ICfC's approach is not to jeopardise the process of improving relationships in the communities by overstretching expectations and the space currently available. It remains to be seen how the continuation of ICfC's project activities towards improving social relationships and strengthening community ties may contribute in the

[97] FGD, Thnol Loak, 10 February 2011.
[98] ICfC (2009:6)
[99] See ICfC evaluation report, 2009

middle-term to developing stronger capacities and more conducive political conditions in order to tackle questions of truth-seeking and accountability. Younger generations will likely have a key role to play in this regard.

4.3. Case Study 3 – Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (TSM)

4.3.1. Background, Genesis and Activities

Opened to the public in 1980, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum represents one of the very first and thus oldest memory initiatives in Cambodia dealing with the mass crimes and atrocities of the DK regime.

The premises on which Tuol Sleng Museum is located served as a detention, interrogation and execution centre from April 1976 to January 1979, called at that time 'S-21' (Security Centre 21). The prisoners at S-21 comprised mainly military personnel of the KR army and numerous DK and CPK high- and low-ranking cadres, their family members and affiliates, housed in prison cells that had been converted from the classrooms of the original high school on the site. It is estimated that at least 13,000 persons were detained and executed at S-21. More than 100 former staff of S-21 themselves were among this number, as well as foreign nationals from various countries, particularly Vietnam. The actual number of all those executed at S-21 is likely to be considerably higher than 13,000 since the prisoner list is incomplete and files may have been lost after the abrupt abandonment of the centre on 7 January 1979.[100] Photographs that were taken of the prisoners immediately after their arrival are now displayed at the Museum.

None of the detainees held within the S-21 complex were to be released as they were all due to be executed in accordance with the Party policy to "smash" all enemies.[101] Prisoners were subjected to interrogation and torture in order to extract confessions, which was the overriding objective of S-21 in order to uncover networks of possible traitors. These confessions, some many hundreds of pages long, contained detailed descriptions not only of one's own alleged traitorous activities, but also names of other persons who were allegedly complicit in such networks who were then often subsequently arrested. A few days after the Vietnamese army entered Phnom Penh on 7 January 1979 a Vietnamese combat photographer discovered the abandoned buildings, first being alerted by the stench of rotting corpses. The photographer was the first outside person to document what he and his colleagues saw inside, pictures that are now exhibited at Tuol Sleng. Later, in February or March 1979, Mai Lam, a Vietnamese colonel experienced in legal studies, museology and fluent in the Khmer language, was given the task of organising the documents found at S-21 into an archive and transforming the facility into a museum. In doing so, Mai Lam wanted to arrange Cambodia's past to fit the requirements of the PRK and its Vietnamese mentors, constructing a history that denied the leaders of the CPK any socialist credentials and encouraged visitors to make connections between the DK regime and Tuol Sleng on the one hand, and Nazi Germany and what Serge Thion has called the "sinister charisma" of Auschwitz on the other.[102] In the same year, seven survivors came forward to contribute to the development of the Museum by giving detailed information on their lives within S-21 and by painting scenes showing the conditions and torture endured by detainees. Thousands of confession texts, biographies and pictures of the prisoners were sorted and included in the Museum's archive.

Guided tours of S-21 were first organised in March 1979 for foreign visitors only, since the site was primarily intended to show international visitors the cruel torture committed by the KR. In July 1980, the Museum opened to the Cambodian public every Sunday, while on weekdays group visits were organised. Many of the Cambodian visitors were seeking information about relatives who had disappeared, Cambodian officials stating that by October 1980 300,000 Cambodians and 11,000 foreigners had passed through the facility.[103]Through radio broadcasts, the population was informed that the Museum had prepared a display of around 6,000 small-format pictures of the prisoners held at S-21.

After two or three years the Museum reshaped its exhibition by considerably reducing the number of small-format pictures of the prisoners, replacing them with selected large-format pictures with a stronger focus on the illustration of torture committed at S-21 and the condemnation of the Pol Pot regime in general. One reason for this was a distinct drop in the number of local visitors seeking missing relatives, while on the other hand, in the prevailing context of little international recognition of the PRK while the ousted DK retained its seat at the UN, the Museum intensified its efforts to emphasise the mass atrocities and cruelty with which the DK leadership had ruled the country. In this respect, the Museum's principal purpose lay primarily in justifying the Vietnamese intervention, making the world aware of the 'true' nature of the DK regime, specifically its leaders, and gaining international support and recognition for the PRK as the only legitimate representative of the Cambodian people. At the end of the

[100] The exact figure of the prisoners list on which the ECCC based its conviction of 'Duch', the S-21 director at that time, is at least 12,273. Among them 5,609 entries are members of the KR army, 4,371 DK or CPK cadres, 155 former S-21 staff, and 1,751 others (e.g. soldiers of the Lon Nol army, teachers, doctors, lawyers or engineers). (ECCC, 2010:50-52)
[101] Duch Trial Judgement (ECCC 2010), p.37.
[102] Chandler (2000:4-6)
[103] Ledgerwood (1997) quoting a 1980 report of the Ministry of Culture, cited in Chandler (2000:8)

1980s, geopolitical changes prepared the ground for a political solution to the Cambodia conflict, prompting a more conciliatory policy of the PRK government towards reconciliation. Still, even after the departure of the Vietnamese expert and an increase in the number of foreign visitors from non-communist countries, no essential changes have been undertaken neither regarding the physical infrastructure nor concerning conceptual content-related issues at the Museum. The status quo has been maintained.

Since its existence, TSM has not been an independent institution but always under authority of the government. In the 1980s the relevant ministry was the Ministry of Propaganda, Information and Culture (with CPP ministers Keo Chenda replaced in 1981 by Cheng Phon, candidate of the Central Committee of CPP since 1984). Around 1992, the ministry split and the Museum came under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and since 1993, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. With the arrival of non-CPP staff at the ministry as a result of the establishment of the new coalition government in 1993, some efforts to makes changes and even revise the major messages of the TSM were proposed, but these met with harsh opposition from various leadership levels, the ministry's established staff and those in charge of the Museum. The only significant change was the removal in 2002of a huge map of Cambodia composed of 300 skulls and other bones. In 2008, the TSM's archives were registered by UNESCO's Memory of the World for Asia and Pacific region, later being inscribed on the Memory of World Register. In August 2010, both UNESCO-Phnom Penh and the ministry organised a celebration of the first anniversary of the inscription by inaugurating a memorial on the compound of the Museum. Since registration, the culture unit of UNESCO Phnom Penh has supported the Museum in digitalising its archive and in carrying out restoration works at some of the Museum's buildings. Once digitalisation is complete, discussions about the creation of a virtual archive will be held. Under the Memory World program it is also UNESCO's vision to develop TSM into an interactive peace museum.

Concerning the physical structure of the Museum, the five original buildings of the torture centre have been for the most part preserved as they were when the KR was driven out in 1979.In some of the rooms rusting iron beds onto which prisoners had been tied and other items are displayed, alongside pictures on the walls showing the original situation as it was discovered. In each photograph, the mutilated body of a prisoner is depicted chained to the bed. In another building, galleries of black and white photographs of prisoners are displayed, whilst another building shows the paintings of a former inmate of scenes of torture. Yet, at the same time, no specific content-related guidance is provided to visitors and no written introductory information is provided, including an explanation of the identity of the prisoners. Visitors not accompanied by a guide may well feel disorientated at the message being presented, with even the basic information provided by Museum guides greatly varying in extent and quality. The lack of written explanations is a facet replicated throughout the Museum.

For foreigners this absence may have a certain appeal. As a popular travel guide explains: "It is precisely the starkness, plainness, and subtleness of the museum that is the most chilling….What is also remarkable is that while all the atrocities are presented quite explicitly, there is very little finger-pointing, more a quiet resignation and understanding that the evil was perpetrated by normal people just like you and me."[104] However, exactly this atmosphere and message is likely one of the main reasons why few Cambodians visit the Museum of their own accord. Apart from groups organised by the ECCC twice a week since 2009, almost all TSM visitors are foreigners, usually tourists, who have a visit on their itinerary when staying in Phnom Penh. Accurate numbers of visitors were not possible to obtain, particularly since Cambodians are not required to pay an entrance fee. Two museum guides interviewed estimated that in the high-season (Oct-April) the museum may see up to 300 visitors per day. In low-season this number may be as few 20 or 30 foreigners per day. School classes may sometimes visit, but according to the two tour guides this is not very common, with only some private schools organising yearly visits. The ECCC-organised visits under the mandate of the Public Affairs Section provide Cambodians from all over the country with the opportunity to visit the Museum as part of a one-day tour that includes a visit to the ECCC and the killing fields. Every Tuesday and Thursday a group of around 300 villagers are guided around the TSM, the ECCC suggesting that since 2009 more than 100,000 Cambodians have participated.[105] An interesting observation taken from the research is that a little private shop offering books on the KR only sells foreign language publications, the book seller explaining that she had given up selling Khmer language books since they were never sold.

According to the interviewed guides, particularly local visitors frequently experience strong emotional reactions to the Museum. Focus group discussions with students who had visited TSM described such reactions, ranging from speechlessness and being overwhelmed by feelings of sadness, pity, anger and shame, to physical unease. Those few FGD participants who visited TSM on their own initiative indicated that they had had no opportunities for sharing their experience with others, neither peers nor family, let alone to ask for explanations of what they had seen. One FGD participant reported that after her visit her mother had agreed to visit the Museum, but had been deeply shocked by what she had seen. No further discussions on the Museum, the KR or the reasons for the atrocities had yet taken place in her family.

[104] Retrieved from: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/cambodia/phnom-penh/sights/museum/tuol-sleng-museum.
[105] ECCC Press Release of 04 January 2012.

Participants in the research who had been prepared for the visit in advance, and those who had sought to acquire historical facts acknowledged that without reading about S-21 or being accompanied by a tour guide it would be hard to understand anything in the Museum. By way of example, the hundreds of photographs showing the faces of Cambodians in mostly black clothes largely inculcate a sense of depression through their oppressive silence and implicit accusatory intimations, but do not serve as an aid to understand who the prisoners were, why they were brought to S-21 or indeed who was responsible for their murder. Even tour guides appear to have little accurate information on this. Thus, the dominant impression of the majority of FGD participants was that the Museum is depressing, providing clarity on the brutality and inhumanity suffered by Cambodians, but that this torture was hardly comprehensible. Lacking any visible reference to the KR history or any attempt to put S-21 into the historic context, most students were unable to deduce anything from their visit other than shock, isolation and the instinct to avoid further engaging with the memories being presented. In this respect, whilst participants felt that TSM is a place for remembering and commemorating victims, it is not a place for gaining broader historical insights and understanding of what had happened in their country. Some students make the inference that the main purpose of the Museum was consequently to show how prisoners were tortured in order to arouse pity for the victims and maintain anger against the KR.

A final interesting proposition was raised by the FGD participants who decided to visit TSM. For many, the initial motivation was to see the place where Cambodians had been sadistically tortured to verify if the horrible stories they had heard were true, with particular interest in the torture instruments and pictures that survivors have drawn. It appeared from discussions on this issue that among young people TSM even 'enjoys' a mythical reputation as a bloodcurdling sacrosanct and spiritual place, where the ghosts of murdered prisoners survive. Morbid interest appeared therefore to motivate visits.

4.3.2. Representation of Roles/Identities

The feedback of the students and the discussions with tour guides clearly reflect that the Museum is still fulfilling its function of demonising the KR, particularly through arousing an emotional response. Little attempt is made to use TSM as an impressive or convincing tool or entry point for tackling questions of the KR regime and for coming to terms with this chapter of Cambodia's recent past.

Most remarkable is that within the museum there is no single hint of who exactly the perpetrators were and what ideology and 'rationale' was behind such systematic murder. Still, the ECCC does put S-21 into a historic context and identify the perpetrators. The former deputy and chairman of S-21, Kaing Guek Eav alias 'Duch', was recently convicted of crimes against humanity including extermination, torture and enslavement, with the identity of the S-21 security guards and interrogators now known and basic information such as how S-21 had functioned and its organisational structure described in the proceedings.[106]However, none of this information or anything analogous is found at the Museum. Rather ambiguously, visitors are not made aware that the overwhelming majority of the prisoners tortured and executed at S-21 were KR cadres of various levels, half of them military cadres. Given this lack of information, few visitors without a more detailed understanding of S-21 might be aware that S-21 was a special prison, "unique in the network of security centres given its direct link to the Central Committee and its role in the detention and execution of CPK cadres"[107] and that it was run "along hierarchical lines [with] established reporting systems at all levels to ensure that…orders were carried out immediately and precisely".[108]

Of course, providing such historic accurateness of excessive purges and killings within KR cadres would undermine the long-cultivated narrative according to which a handful of sinister KR murdered a mass of uninvolved innocent population. S-21 clearly reflects that an increasing paranoia of permanently hunting and 'smashing' the enemy, that did not exclude KR ranks, swept throughout the country with the consequence of absurd mass executions in which thousands of willing collaborators played their part. Explaining S-21 and embedding this murderous machine into the historic context would highlight the full and real dimension of what had happened in Cambodia at that time. It would make more understandable why these people had been brought to S-21 and it would especially reveal who played what kind of role in making it possible and committing these mass killings not only of uninvolved civilians but also among the KR ranks. Indeed, cadres of the highest level in the KR, along with their entire families and subordinated networks were exterminated, a decisive aspect of the historic truth that Cambodians are obviously unable (or unwilling?) to confront.

According to Hiegel and Landrac (1992), "[r]epresenting the KR as an homogenous group of indoctrinated fanatics, the incarnation of absolute evil, responsible for all the unhappiness of the Khmer people is a reductive vision of a

[106] Summary of Appeal Judgement, Case File 001/18-07-2007/ECCC/SC (KAING Guek Eav), Supreme Court Chamber, 3 February 2012.
[107] ECCC (2010:45)
[108] ECCC (2010:52)

complex phenomenon but one which a good many people find satisfying."[109] Slipping into mythical images and "mythico-histories"[110]may relieve the maltreated nation from undertaking a painful self-reflection and taking certain self-responsibility for the incredible events at that time. It enables a situation wherein not too many questions are asked and also continues cultivating passive victimhood, a legacy of the 1980s in which this was official policy in order to ensure international recognition for the mass crimes committed by a 'genocidal clique' that although toppled still occupied a seat at the UN. However, this tendency to leave historic truths unaddressed holds dangerous implications. For one, it allows perpetrators, including the thousands of former collaborators and informants who were not necessarily formal cadres within the KR ranks, to easily continue to avoid any personal responsibility for their deeds, for example by admitting their involvement and telling the truth in front of the community. Moreover, it means that essential facts and the truth about the past are each suppressed, leading to a certain obfuscation of the reality that was played out and the potential that essential elements remain unaddressed. Opinions have also gained weight, especially among subsequent generations born long after the events, that the mass crimes were committed by foreigners, particularly the Vietnamese. Clearly it is far more comfortable to reason that the already-resented Vietnamese were the creators of the atrocities than trying to comprehend the idea of "Khmer killing Khmer".[111]

Nonetheless, these obscured memories or 'truths' have smouldered for some years, fuelled in recent times by the comments of Nuon Chea, the second important KR leader after Pol Pot and currently on trial at the ECCC. On the first day of his hearing, Nuon Chea blamed Vietnam for the crimes with which he and the other defendants are charged, stating that the KR are wrongly accused: "Everything was under the control of Vietnam, from the Hanoi headquarters, from the Ho Chi Minh headquarters […] These crimes; war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide were not [by] Cambodian people, it was Vietnam who killed Cambodians." Continuing further, Nuon Chea spoke directly to younger Cambodians in his demagogic exclamation that he had worked for the good of the nation: "I do not want the next generation to misunderstand the history […] I do not want them to think that the KR are bad people, are criminals. Nothing is true about that."[112] Apart from distorting history, such statements have the additional explosive effect of reinforcing anti-Vietnamese resentment and prejudice among Cambodians that are often utilised by various groups for political purposes, particularly during election periods to mobilise votes.

4.3.3. Truth-Telling

Compared with the effects a Museum can have in illustrating historic facts and embedding them into the particular historic context to contribute to building publicly-acknowledged, fair and accurate memories, TSM makes quite a poor impression. As briefly described above, the random scattering of certain objects within the premises of the former prison and the lack of an apparently clear concept behind how the exhibits relate to one another or to historic events is visible. The dominant message in each of the buildings appears to simply be that torture was committed within S-21, attempting to arouse dismay and pity for the anonymous victims, symbolised through the dozens of rows of black and white photographs of the prisoners. There is no hint of who the prisoners were, from where they came and why they were brought to S-21, their personal backgrounds and especially why their torture and murder had been possible at all, although the museum keeps thousands of records of 'confessions', prisoner lists and other documents of that time.

Explanations of anything displayed in the Museum solely rest on the (Museum's or external) tour guides, making information provided to visitors fragmented and heavily influenced by subjective knowledge, personal motivations and individual viewpoints. Sporadic feedback from foreigners who were interested in learning more about the background and reasons for the mass killings suggests that the quality of information provided is poor, particularly with respect to historical accuracy and detailed knowledge beyond the standard rhetoric. Some found the narratives merely sensationalist, simply focusing on the suffering of the innocent under the hands of the savage.[113] Clearly, this will not contribute to any meaningful truth-telling or enrichment of the memory and discourse of this period.

The students in the FGD, who often have not even taken a tour guide, voiced similar shortcomings in the historical comprehensibility of what the Museum displays. Their own knowledge on the KR period came exclusively from reading some books, partly translations from English, or Khmer books written by Cambodians living in exile since the 1980s, and from YRDP workshops. Certain FGD participants indicated that they sometimes felt confused over conflicting information when acquiring knowledge from different sources and unable to decipher what they should and should not believe and what might be historical truths or demagogic distortions, particularly concerning those bearing responsibility. TSM has not aided the search for or provided the answers to such questions. In all of the FGD, even with those students showing impressive levels of knowledge and great commitment to tackling questions of the country's recent history, participants were unable to analyse what they had encountered at TSM and how they

[109] Cited in Chandler (2000:9)
[110] Malkki (1995)
[111] Sanders (2006:80)
[112] VOA News, 22.11.2011 and 05.12.2011
[113] Sanders (2006:53)

should interpret the information. The dominant message from the Museum that stuck in the minds of participants was that of torture; the Museum did not stimulate reflection or understanding of the truth behind this practice, responsibilities or explanations accounting for the violence. Instead, the excessive emotional demands without explanation may even contribute to rejection among Cambodians of the (un)believability of the prospect that Cambodians were able to kill their fellow citizens.

The Museum's omission and failure to embed S-21 into the historical context also excludes any possibility for clarifying widespread distorted historical understandings about the DK regime, especially the fact that there were more complex differentiations between people than the simplified narrative presented. Revealing the character and functioning of the KR regime and connecting it to the historical events of the civil war before it came formally into power would enable Cambodians, especially subsequent generations, to better understand why so many people participated in the functioning of the system. It would contribute to an understanding that most people during the regime fell victim to the extremely harsh living conditions, overwork and untreated illness, rather than to premeditated execution.

Through both the distortion of the truth and the silencing of key facts, TSM is rather serving the reinforcement of a standardised narrative, told in a standardised way, which standardises collective memories to a few characteristics or proclamations that are perceived to be the most impressive or the most important about the KR period. Fieldwork from 2005 shows that KR survivors have indeed now standardised their KR narratives into thematics, including starvation, execution without mercy and forced labour, instead of recalling their memories in a chronological order, starting from the moment the KR took power and ending with the moment they were liberated by the Vietnamese. Memories are thus related theme by theme, with the result that their narratives are fragmentary.[114]

Presenting victims of mass violence detached from the human face behind the terror and without considering the circumstances and motivations that led to these atrocities will lead to incomprehensibility among visitors, especially those lacking background knowledge, as it is the case for most KR survivors and younger generations of Cambodians. Consequently, new myths are created, sustained and reinforced, the sharpness of reality being distorted. For some, the little truth that is to be found may even be rejected as too unbelievable.

4.3.4. Addressing Future Generations

Symptomatic of the last two decades of Cambodia's attempts to come to terms with the KR past, TSM does not have any specific approach to connect young people to the memories of the survivor generation. Nor does it at least attempt to arouse their interest in what happened to their parents and grandparents with an eye on ensuring the non-recurrence of the atrocities.

As described above, for young people a visit to the Museum is a rather depressing experience and a heavy emotional strain that does not help them to better understand the historical events and what led to the mass murder at S-21 or elsewhere in the country. There was much indication that young people feel little motivation to visit the Museum because of its widespread reputation of a frightening, horrific place where ghosts are present. Public schools have not included visits in their history curricula – nor, in fact, visits to any other memory initiative or sites outside of Phnom Penh – which obviously ties with the failure to teach KR history more generally within schools. With attention directed to other, more present challenges, the Cambodian youth is little sensitised to looking back or even seeking redress for crimes committed against the people of their country nearly thirty years ago.

The little that Cambodian youth do know about the mass killings and the Pol Pot regime stems mostly from survivors directly, from their parents and grandparents or sometimes neighbours and people from the community. This kind of information, however, is not given in a systematic way and is most often prompted by specific moments or informal occasions, particularly when children are being chastised for bad behaviour. In this way, younger generations are provided with the same fragmentary information as the survivor generation, recalled in a similarly thematic manner, without a historically sound context. In addition, parents' motives for telling their stories often give children the impression that these stories merely serve as fables to correct their behaviour, being exaggerated or even untrue. As a result, young people scarcely feel that history – and truths – are being affirmed, feeling more commonly that they know extremely little about the KR period. Inevitably, KR policy or the political motives behind the mass killings remain a mystery to them.

Although TSM could potentially stand as a highly convincing and legitimate authority that authenticates a historical understanding and truths about the KR period, being a place for providing basic information to young people that relates to and embeds the narratives of the survivor generation into the historical context, it in no way capitalises on this potential at the present time. No specific workshops, seminars or materials are provided through which young people might be introduced to the exhibitions at the Museum or encouraged to engage further with the KR history. No qualified pedagogues are employed by the Museum who could guide youth groups or school classes through the

[114] Sanders (2006:51)

Museum's compound, discussing their thoughts, impressions and questions according to the levels of knowledge, specific interests and needs that they have. Current tour guides not only lack pedagogical qualifications, they also lack any formal training, providing information to youth groups in the same standardised, sensational manner that every visitor receives. A few of these guides have even been working at TSM since the early 1980s, though originally not as guides since visitors were limited. However, after the 1991 peace agreement and 1993 elections, times and demands changed with the growing number of foreign tourists. In catering for this dramatic increase in demand little attention has been paid to the local audience, who are now somewhat neglected.

Generally, on the part of the Museum there is obviously no sense or appreciation of the variety of visitors' backgrounds and interests, determined by different previous experiences, different levels of knowledge and different information needs according to age and socio-educational backgrounds. Not every visitor might be essentially interested in the torture methods themselves, some rather seeking explanations of the motivations behind that torture. Direct survivors will certainly have a different approach to a Museum visit than Cambodians born after these events or indeed foreigners. As one anthropologist perspicaciously put it: "What could the children of the survivors relate to? The stories they draw from are incomplete, provided in bits and pieces, limited to the concreteness of conditions of life, and even this knowledge is superficial."[115] By merely confronting visitors with scenes of horror and providing lessons only about torture methods applied at S-21, TSM in its current shape is far from being a place where future generations are encouraged to explore questions of the past and discover answers to the incomprehensible. Instead, it evokes feelings of shame about their nation's history and an overly hasty readiness among them to absorb the comforting idea that it was not Cambodians but Vietnamese who were responsible for the mass killings and the terrible pain their parents or grandparents suffered during KR regime.

4.3.5. Conclusions

Although the political circumstances in Cambodia have considerably changed in terms of pursuing an official policy of reintegrating former KR into Cambodian society since the 1991 peace agreement, 1993 elections and, since 2006, criminal proceedings against the most responsible KR cadres, the Tuol Sleng Museum still fulfils the primary purpose of demonising the KR by simply banking on arousing extreme emotions.

The most important underlying purpose of TSM still seems to be to make sure that a powerful justification of Vietnamese support in overthrowing the KR regime in 1979 is preserved, against fierce efforts by the political opposition to paint the events of the recent past in their colours. The Museum's silent argumentation through the pictures and display of torture instruments is still that the absurd mass slaughter by the KR necessitated an urgent intervention from outside to bring it to a halt. Helplessly exposed to mass violence, torture and merciless prosecution, the Cambodian people themselves did not have any means to revolt and shake off the regime. Cultivating this victimhood until today, the Museum appears to have never considered moving beyond this perspective of 'liberation' versus 'invasion'. While it has undertaken some physical maintenance work, especially during the last decade with support of UNESCO, content-related issues remained untouched.

As symptomatic of Cambodian society in its attempts to come to terms with the mass crimes of the KR, TSM lacks any reference to the human face behind the terror. When recalling these times, KR survivors usually avoid talking about perpetrators,[116] which is exactly the same avoidance that the Museum utilises. Even 'Duch', the notorious S-21 chairman, and his prison accomplices who are now well-known after the ECCC proceedings, are not explicitly mentioned in the Museum's exhibition, let alone any comments on their motives and circumstances in which they acted. So long as the local perpetrators of the DK remain unexposed, the KR narratives will lack a human face and will remain perceived as incomprehensible, even mythical, by subsequent generations. The void created by this absence will, according to Sanders (2006), be filled with alternatives, which is precisely what can be observed in the apportionment of blame to the Vietnamese.

While the historically unexplained, symbolic, even mythologising appearance of TSM might have a certain appeal to foreigners as an appropriate place for mourning and contemplation, for locals it represents a more sinister place to be avoided. This is clearly reflected in the highly unbalanced proportion of foreign and domestic visitors. Even the mass touring of thousands of villagers organised by the ECCC cannot obscure the fact that for most locals the visit of TSM is a painful mental strain rather than an illuminating event or soothing experience of devout commemoration of the KR victims. However, as long as there is a continued inflow of foreign tourists bringing impressive amounts of money per day (compared, for example, to the meagre budget of the Ministry of Culture responsible for the Museum) there will be little incentive to increase the local audience who are not obliged to pay entrance fees.

It should be noted with concern that there seems to have been no discussion or conceptual decisions among the relevant Museum and Ministry officials concerning what specific profile TSM should develop given the profound

[115] Sanders (2006:76-77)
[116] Sanders (2006:57)

socio-political changes in Cambodia over the last two decades. Particularly as the number of persons who, as survivors, have direct memories and thus somehow an emotional comprehension of TSM becomes ever smaller, this failure becomes further problematic. For all those Cambodians born after the KR regime comprehension of the past is intangible and for them, as long as they do not know what and why it happened, it is hard, even impossible, to connect with what TSM is expressing. Questions thus arise as to the fundamental purpose of the Museum and whether it is indeed the intention to sustain it as merely an attraction for bringing tourist revenue, without taking into account any specific needs and requirements of the local audience. On the other hand, the question arises whether the Museum should instead become a place where KR survivors and subsequent generations find explanations, consolation and opportunities for mourning. A certain balance between being a memorial *and* providing information-oriented elements thus comes to the fore, though it remains important to develop respective ideas and concepts and, if possible, even to discuss them in public.

Shaping TSM into a museum from which Cambodians in particular can benefit would open up a variety of possibilities to encourage young people to engage with their history and to provide these generations with a historical orientation for understanding the violence with a views to preventing their recurrence. At present, obscuring the truth – by design or default – does little to attend to these very important considerations after violence. In this sense, TSM does little to address the culture of silence in Cambodia, even contributing to its persistence when examined from the standpoint of younger generations.

5. Conclusions on the Role of Memory Initiatives in Cambodia

As described in the case studies above, fieldwork impressively demonstrates that after decades of silence the recent memory initiatives of both civil society organisations have significantly contributed to slowly getting rural Cambodians engaged in addressing their violent past. Although focusing on different target groups - ICfC primarily working with the survivor generation and YFP particularly with young people - both projects helped to enhance the capacity and confidence of rural Cambodians in actively memorialising their experiences and to make the past relevant to subsequent generations. Under careful facilitation, adjusted to the specific community needs and dynamics and by building significant trust within the communities, villagers responded positively to the initiatives, came into dialogue beyond the privacy of their families and developed their own ideas about what and how to commemorate based on their local resources. These processes strengthened their sense of community and began building important entry points for more actively dealing with the past. Project participants indicated the cathartic benefits of having shared their painful memories within the community, especially to those born long after the atrocities, whilst at the same time the individual negative emotions usually aroused when digging up the past were noted to have significantly diminished. This process has enabled people to overcome their silence, constructively deal with what happened and increase their motivation to seek more understanding of the events of the KR period.

At the same time, clear differences among the project participants became visible concerning attitudes to memorialisation. Survivors living in rural areas responded markedly and generally positive to activities focusing on mourning, commemoration and initiatives for the public acknowledgement of their suffering. Whilst they developed remarkable commitment to establish, maintain and use their local memory initiatives in the community for regular commemoration ceremonies, they appeared rather hesitant to enter into open discussions of why the events had happened, how those persons with responsibility should be held accountable, or why so many fellow Cambodians had collaborated with the regime instead of resisting the atrocities. By contrast, younger Cambodians who had become engaged in dealing with questions of the past apparently tended more towards moving beyond mourning and simply knowing what happened to instead seek explanations for these atrocities. This became particularly evident during the FGD with university students in Phnom Penh.

Finding plausible answers to these questions would certainly imply a painful self-critical process of reflection for the survivor generation, something which many survivors are obviously not yet capable and willing to embark upon. This has perhaps much to do with the different roles and identities that people assumed during the conflict and which are not specifically addressed or considered by the initiatives that have been researched. The mix of different degrees of participation or involvement in the civil war and the KR regime (such as the differences between 'base people' and 'new people') and the uncertainty of who is indeed a 'victim', may each inhibit project participants from examining and revealing their very concrete personal experiences, therefore moving beyond the officially-acknowledged, standard narrative of blaming the 'Other', the KR as such. This inhibition has considerable impact on truth seeking and the degrees of silence that still exist in Cambodia.

5.1. Memory Initiatives and the Representation of Different Roles and Identities

Significant unease or uncertainty exists in Cambodian society about how to deal with the possibility of being both victim and perpetrator at the same time since suffering and guilt are obviously incompatible. This may explain why it is completely 'forgotten' among the Cambodian public that most of the S-21 victims who are commemorated in the Tuol Sleng Museum were actually KR cadres, or at least members of the system, reaching from the lowest levels up to the highest level of persons implicated in crimes but who later became victims of torture, abuse and executions.[117] Many questions thus arise. Should a distinction be made between these persons and 'true' or 'innocent' victims? Should there be a distinction between perpetrators who murdered simply by following orders for fear of their own execution for refusing and those zealously committed to the KR ideology? Is it possible to identify the motivation of each perpetrator, and how far does responsibility extend? Where do those persons who contributed to the murdering of others by casting suspicion on them in an attempt to save their own life fit in terms of responsibility? Are these people victims or perpetrators, and should they be subject to criminal proceedings? These questions indicate the silence and impunity about the past that exist in Cambodia, particularly since the digging up of the past is a relatively new phenomenon, somewhat counter to entrenched socio-cultural and political ideas. Memory initiatives, themselves part of what is only a nascent culture of memorialisation, struggle with and come to represent these very questions and the ambiguities that they present in Cambodia.

Of course, not every former KR was automatically a perpetrator and perpetrators have not necessarily been formal members of the KR structure. The demonisation of the KR, as it is still cultivated at TSM, considerably obstructs any

[117] Even one of the prominent few S-21 survivors was active in the ranks of the KR from 1971 until his arrest in 1977.

discussion on this problem in a differentiating manner and creates an atmosphere of suspicion, subliminal fear and wholesale condemnation. It is certainly not a coincidence that 49% of the 2010 survey respondents still stated that they feel uncomfortable living with former KR in the same household or in the same community[118]even without it being proven that these people were indeed involved in specific killings.

So far, no memory initiative in Cambodia has examined these questions, with initiatives instead more or less perpetuating the prevailing narrative and standard picture of simply blaming the stigmatised KR as such. Whilst both of CSO projects that were researched indeed succeeded in encouraging survivors to talk openly about their personal sufferings of the past, in connecting survivors with younger generations and in invigorating communities to regularly commemorate their loved ones who died during the DK regime, they have not considered openly addressing the fact that project participants may have had very different roles and identities, and thus different degrees of entanglement, during the period that they try to deal with in their initiatives. Both projects take it almost for granted that their participants are 'innocent victims' *per se* without knowing exactly what their individual stories and roles had been and without considering that there might be significant differences in viewing and remembering the past between survivors who were 'base people' in rural areas and survivors who were 'new people' mostly with an urban background. Even among former KR themselves experiences and memories appear to differ considerably. Although the term 'Khmer Rouge' has meanwhile congealed into an entrenched hazy stereotype, they have never been the homogenous group that the truism suggests. Even KR cadres suffered under their own regime (as TSM clearly illustrates) and lived in constant fear of being 'purged' because of accusations against their commitment to the cause and not every one of them supported the growing murderous radicalism, particularly those in the lower ranks who joined the KR movement before 1975 but later saw no chance to escape. Many also lost relatives. It remains wholly unexplored to what extent participation in the murderous system was a matter of basic survival, the acting out of feelings of (ideologically instigated) revenge, or opportunism by those seeking to climb the hierarchy.

The memory initiatives that have been researched similarly pay very little attention to these uncertainties and potential nuances in the truth about the KR period (perhaps considering such details as beyond their competence). Even when sometimes working with groups mainly consisting of former KR, such as in Koh Krâlâr, these aspects of the past are not dealt with.

By ignoring these differences in roles and identities and accepting the common narrative without clarifying details of the local events and considering the differences between 'victims', the initiatives tend to rather perpetuate the effect that many survivors, especially those who had been co-opted after the collapse of the DK regime into the new regime, still try to maintain a low profile or even prefer to remain silent by simply resorting to passive victimhood. This obviously prevents a critical, honest and factual reflection of the mass atrocities that had happened in their localities. Too painful is the emotional acceptance of having been a willing or silent tool for such an extreme inhuman regime and the burden that many survivors may be at least indirectly complicit in the mass violence, not merely a few KR cadres. The prevailing wholesale condemnation of all who are more or less associated with this regime makes it indeed difficult and somewhat acts to prevent survivors from a more critical examination and honest reflection on their roles and involvement in the conflict.

An additional factor, perhaps even a decisive underlying reason for the widespread reluctance to engage survivors in such discussions, is the considerable fear within communities that beginning a detailed reconstruction of local events with an open analysis of who had been involved in the atrocities, to what extent, and why, would immediately lead to the outbreak of revenge attacks. This argument is specifically maintained by the authorities. It is difficult to surmise whether this would indeed be the case after so many years and the permanent (quite successful) efforts of keeping communities quiet based on the official reconciliation and pacification policy of the government.

Within this context of silence, the influence of Buddhist concepts of reconciliation and the strong desire within communities to avoid open confrontation should not be underestimated. A common response in coping with harm and injustice in Cambodia is the individual isolation of the offenders by avoiding any personal contacts with them, often with the consequence of their complete exclusion from any social life in the community, a fate that today low-ranking KR and their families in villages are often faced with. It seems that for some this indeed represents the harshest punishment even though they have never been formally called to account. For reintegrating them back into the community it is expected that these persons should confess and openly regret their wrongdoings, while taking efforts to compensate their past deeds through good deeds in the present. The FGD indicated that in contrast to a strong wish and expectation for open confessions and apologies, survivors appear to place less importance on specific individual retribution. Rather, official acknowledgment of their suffering and public confessions from those perceived responsible appear to be most important, while a meticulous investigation of the past would not be really necessary. Again, the FGD have only provided some indications and little is still known about the real needs of survivors in terms of coming to terms with the past. In addition, the question remains open as to who in the villages

[118]HRC Berkeley (2011:33)

should 'confess' and apologise. The handful of ostracised KR cadres remains in contrast to the many persons who more or less collaborated, but who continue to entrench themselves behind passive victimhood.

5.2. Memory Initiatives and Truth-Telling

Many factors come into play when understanding why it is so difficult to break the entrenched narratives and truisms in Cambodia. These factors similarly complicate the encouragement of greater commitment within society for a deeper and differentiated reflection of the crimes of the past that happened at so many different locations throughout the country, under specific local circumstances and often under the responsibility of sub-level cadres, including village and commune chiefs. As discussed and illustrated by the case studies, the circumstances for addressing the conflict in its full dimension and overcoming the prevailing silence by revealing the truth are distinctly difficult in Cambodia. Although the ECCC, operating since 2006,has indeed brought the mass crimes of the DK regime back into public awareness, its impact on opening up space for more far-reaching efforts in dealing fairly and honestly with the past appears to be rather symbolic than genuinely profound.

Almost thirty years of civil war has led to considerable ossified rifts between different political groups and their supporters/sympathisers, manifested in entrenched stereotypes, myths and truisms against one other. As a result, history is often utilised for political purposes, with blame being assigned across these rifts for respective involvement in past crimes simply through vague insinuations without advancing concrete matter-of-fact discussions. High uncertainty exists among many Cambodians concerning how to deal with contrasting versions of history without similarly being dragged into politics. This prevents them from openly expressing their views or engaging in analytical reflections of the past, a frequent experience that CSOs (such as YFP) encounter when trying to encourage people into such commitment.

On the other hand, a constant policy of winning defectors from the other side by rewarding them with official positions in the army and administration and putting aside any prior involvement in criminal acts has fostered a mutual expedient silence about past roles and identities and any questions of responsibilities. There is considerable ambiguity in addressing this silence particularly as the traditional approaches to holding persons accountable in Cambodia are dependent and often contingent upon the positions and connections that the particular individual holds in this highly hierarchical society. Formal systems for accountability are often of less importance and overruled by entrenched informal structures based on personal relationships. In neutralising conflict and putting political opponents out of action, the power-holders in Cambodia have always left the option open to pursue various routes through which criminal prosecutions are suppressed in favour of other options or are used selectively whenever it appears opportune. Well-connected perpetrators may thus be protected from prosecution, whilst others may not. Nevertheless, the situation remains unpredictable, people once assured of reprieve later finding themselves suddenly openly accused. In such a climate, memorialisation as an approach to finding the truth and dealing openly with what happened is a highly uncertain – and not to say risky - endeavour.

The fact that countless incumbent government officials at all levels enjoyed close ties to the KR movement in some way significantly contributes to the prevailing culture of silence, suspicion and subliminal fear, as well as impunity. Former KR cadres are found back in all levels of the current government administration, including the police and army, some already since 1979, others through the amnesty and reintegration policy after the peace agreement. As long as the undifferentiated demonisation of the KR continues, a broader public discussion on the truth and individual responsibilities for mass crimes during the DK regime beyond the five top KR leaders currently at the ECCC is out of the question. Beginning to screen or vet public officials for their possible involvement in DK crimes with the consequence of at least removing them from state employment (lustration, vetting and purges) or perhaps beginning criminal prosecutions would probably have a destabilising effect on the whole administrative system and would invalidate the 'reintegration' (or rather KR inactivation) policy of the current government. It would also lead to demands for resignation of senior officials up to the prime minister's office, senate president and national assembly president. Because no formal exclusion of prosecution through the granting of amnesty for former KR exists in Cambodia, numerous factors (including a threatening potential) thus ensure that former KR cadres who have been co-opted into the new system remain loyal to the government, creating a context that will certainly not contribute to strengthening memory initiatives as truth-telling mechanisms.

The ECCC, with its focus on a few senior leaders and those most responsible from the DK regime, supports the traditional attitude in Cambodian society to always delegate responsibilities to higher levels, which makes it easy to push a critical self-reflection of one's own involvement to the side. The steep hierarchical society also rarely allows subordinates to explicitly name offenders higher in the hierarchy or those perceived as being responsible for wrongdoings by just giving orders, particularly when oneself had been part of their network or (be it deliberately or tacitly) collaborated with them.

5.3. Memory Initiatives and Future Generations

While survivors tend to be caught to a great extent in traditional patterns and are sometimes still considerably emotionally burdened by their direct involvement in these events, the YFP project in particular reflected the promising potential for subsequent generations to question the prevailing entrenched stereotypes and seek plausible, factual explanations for the atrocities that happened in the past. As described in the case study, the specific approach with which YFP is working to engage young people in history proves quite successful. Youth in Kraing Tachan and Somrong Knong have become an active part of the memorialisation efforts of their communities and made the KR history subject to discussion in their schools. Nevertheless, both investigated examples also made clear that there exists a certain gradation among young people in their commitment to local history and the effects it has.

The opportunities in terms of access to information or acquiring specific knowledge on the KR period are far fewer in rural areas than those opportunities in urban areas. Youth in Somrong Knong benefited to a great deal from its proximity to Battambang city with its increasingly modernised facilities, while young people in the more remote area of Kraing Tachan appeared to be much less connected to this growing knowledge infrastructure. For them there are also much fewer occasions for exchange with others and receiving new stimuli beyond the input of YFP. During the FGD, the young people in Kraing Tachan reflected an impressive commitment to the local memorial of their community, but still could say little about the background and reasons for why the atrocities in Kraing Tachan had happened, who was involved, to what extent and how the community is dealing with this legacy in terms of preventing such events from happening again. Young people in Somrong Knong who have been engaged in YFP's project for more than one year showed more in-depth knowledge that, according to their statements, they had also acquired through other sources than the YFP trainings. A few of them had even read the history textbook published by DC-Cam in 2007.[119]

In addition, rural youth appeared to have lesser individual freedom in terms of questioning inconsistencies or obscurities in survivors' accounts of local events because of being far more embedded into village dynamics with its consequent characteristics, local history and extended family networks than the university students interviewed in Phnom Penh. During the FGDs, the latter reflected amazing and impressive levels of historical knowledge as well as abilities to critically question publically presented facts, views and opinions. They have participated in the YRDP's YE-HPJ project, aiming at increasing their understanding about the ECCC and the KR regime, motivating them to discuss issues of the recent Cambodian history, to participate in the transitional justice process and to develop commitment for ensuring the non-recurrence of such events. Based on YRDP's general programme - training university students in personal development and non-violent conflict management, encouraging them to practice their skills in volunteer youth clubs, conduct critical debates and to engage fellow students in becoming active, self-confident and responsible citizens - the recently-created history project comprises similar components with strong reference to acquiring historical knowledge and debating these in the context of the ECCC.

The FGDs with participants of this project impressively reflected the strong need, desire and commitment among students to understand more about the persons currently on trial, why they were brought to trial, what happened during their rule and why these atrocities could happen under their responsibility. Whilst these students may not represent the majority of Cambodian youth, some reporting that it is difficult to get their peers interested and involved in respective discussions (mostly because of similar socio-political reasons as YFP experienced), their commitment nonetheless reveals an important and promising potential for making the KR past an issue for subsequent generations. Stimulated by the project and involved in a variety of activities for discovering and discussing these events, students have begun critically reflecting on sensitive questions such as how to deal with conflicting versions of history or how to find accurate historical facts and plausible explanations for the atrocities and mass violence. Although they are aware of the immense difficulty in addressing questions of 'perpetrator' and responsibilities in Cambodia, they indicated that it is of extreme importance for their generation to tackle these issues. "Only when we know who was involved in which way and to what extent, then we know whom to ask for explanation of why they did so and what has made them participate. And only then we will understand why things had happened like this."[120]

In venturing into this new ground, the students are taking the very first tentative steps towards revealing a dreadful past virtually unknown to them and a past that for many of them is often a confusing mix of shock, anger, disbelief and shame. In addition, FGD participants often signalled their extreme difficulties in trying to deal with the lack of accurate facts, inconsistencies of information and their high dependence on oral sources for getting to the core of the past events. They found it challenging to get survivors to talk in more detail beyond illustrating the extreme

[119] Most of the FGD participants in Somrong Knong were aware of this textbook but complained that teachers still do not use it in their classes.
[120] FGD, Phnom Penh, 17 February 2011

hardships of life, sometimes being met with gruff and irritated responses which immediately discouraged them from continuing to ask questions. However, participating in YRDP's project activities has evidently helped them to gradually develop more self-confidence and skills in mastering these challenges, though they realise that they are still at the very beginning, particularly as the commitment of YRDP staff in these questions is also relatively new.

Interestingly, the research demonstrates that most students participating in the FGD shared the prevailing attitude of YFP's and ICfC's project participants to avoid 'hunting perpetrators' by openly accusing those who have been involved in committing atrocities and mass killings. They clearly opted for searching for the truth without threatening survivors by legal persecution. Some were concerned that to do so would otherwise instigate the desire for revenge and lead to massive unrest within communities. Others explained that too many people had been involved, making it impossible to manage prosecutions and legal proceedings. The belief was also held that it would prevent most survivors from being open to tackling sensitive questions and explaining to younger generations what exactly had happened and how it came to be that so many were part of the system. The majority of FGD participants feared that the hunt for perpetrators would considerably undermine all reconciliation efforts because prosecutions would not help to rebuild broken relationships in the communities. It was suggested that perpetrators and their family members may need more than criminal convictions to accept their responsibility, with prosecutions perhaps even intensifying feelings of hatred and revenge,[121] while others would continue excluding them from communal life. There is obviously not only very little trust in the court system but also a continued strong tendency to seek compensation for the injustices suffered through non-judicial methods. These FGDs indicate that young Cambodians believe that bringing survivors, no matter what kind of role or identity they had during the conflict, and subsequent generations together to talk about and explain the local events to be more promising and sustainable for reconciliation. This would provide a framework for revealing the truth, with the potential result of achieving confessions, mutual acknowledgement, apology and forgiveness. It would equally provide young people with important opportunities to learn from the mistakes of the past and encourage them to develop commitment to efforts geared towards non-recurrence.

Again, it is difficult to assess the extent to which FGD participants politely reproduced the official narrative in front of outsiders in order to avoid openly opposing the pacification and reconciliation policy of the government and to what extent their statements fully represent their personal convictions. Still, they appeared generally quite critical and revealed that they have been working with very different sometimes even contradictory sources for seeking understanding about what and why these events had occurred. On the other hand, the extent to which students had already engaged in specific, deeper discussions of how Cambodian society should hold those responsible for these past crimes accountable beyond the framework of the ECCC was unclear, especially the issues of looking beyond the upper echelons to the other levels of responsibility. This question might still be too early for them since they have just begun to get an impression of what exactly took place more than thirty years ago. The same might be true for the memory initiatives that were researched given the inexperience of Cambodian civil society organisations as entrepreneurs of memory and their only very recent involvement with memorialisation.

5.4. A Culture of Silence and Impunity: Reflections on the Role of Memory Initiatives

It would be too simple to attribute the reluctance of Cambodian society in addressing questions of responsibilities for the mass atrocities during the KR period and in demanding to hold perpetrators accountable merely and exclusively to an overwhelming omnipotent pressure of a few current high-ranking government officials formerly more or less associated with the KR movement. Certainly, the official policy of demonisation of an 'abstract' group of KR, hand in hand with relentless efforts by senior leaders to silence their own involvement in the disastrous policies of the past, have to be considered as decisive factors in this culture of silence and impunity. But there is more than that. It corresponds with significant socio-cultural patterns and the way in which Cambodians usually deal with questions of responsibility more generally. Embedded in steep hierarchical structures and networks of patronage ties, Cambodians prefer to keep to informal norms of familiarity and trust, saving face[122] and personalised negotiations, involving the avoidance of openly pointing to wrongdoers and concrete (individualised) responsibilities. Doing so would not only compromise and endanger oneself, but would also entail a severe breach of etiquette, peace and the status quo, something that only powerful or potent beings would risk. Instead of challenging or offending powerful individuals most Cambodians more often attempt to gain protection from them by entering into relationships of personal dependency, even though these relationships are thus asymmetrical and unbalanced. Such relationships are not necessarily perceived negatively and represent a crucial means for gaining access to resources and increasing one's social status. In such a context personal backgrounds and the origins of resources allocated to clients are of

[121] According to the 2010 survey about perceptions of justice and the ECCC, 54% of the respondents are convinced that going to court means losing face (HRC Berkeley, 2011:30), a humiliation, especially for those sentenced, that is often repaid by subsequent informal retaliation against one's adversaries.
[122] To understand the exceptional importance of saving face for Cambodians see Hinton (2005:252-258).

little importance. The exchange of resources, services and benefits may be mixed with moral authority and genuine affection, particularly when kinship is involved, but it retains primarily an instrumental dimension. [123]

Ironically, nepotism and patronage was also a prominent feature of the DK regime, despite the Party Centre's official policy of eliminating traditional family structures and preaching egalitarianism. It was not only common for high-ranking KR cadres in Phnom Penh and the zones to place their relatives in key posts, but it was also rampant at almost all levels of socio-political organisation, including the grassroots level where village, commune and cooperative chiefs often gave preferential treatment to their own kin and inner circle of clients. Growing purges and mass executions were carried out primarily along such real or perceived networks, leading to the eradication of 'strings of traitors'[124]along with the cadres. Given the fact that so many ordinary people had been engaged in mass violence during the KR period, there is even a certain element of reciprocity in not breaking the silence for more than a few survivors. By not talking about individualised responsibilities all those having been more or less involved (often along patronage and network lines) may hope to increase their chances of going unpunished, while easily slipping into the more comfortable role of 'innocent victim'.

Little information could be gathered on how specifically survivors who had suffered the harshest treatment, extreme arbitrary discrimination, brutal humiliation and quasi enslavement by their fellow citizens (primarily people forcefully deported from the cities) and most likely not involved in mass killings, feel interested, motivated and able to tackle the question of calling their past tormentors or individuals they assume responsible for the killing of their relatives to account. Both CSO memory initiatives that were researched working in rural communities, have paid little to no attention so far to differentiated roles and identities, appearing to have mostly former 'base people' native to the particular area, their children, or even former KR in their projects. Also almost all university students participating in the FGD had rural family backgrounds and have only recently moved to Phnom Penh. During the FGD and interviews it was often mentioned that immediately after the fall of the DK regime almost all 'new people' had returned to their places of residence pre-1975, most likely the city from which they had been deported, or had even left Cambodia. On the other hand, it is of course not certain what the historical background of today's Phnom Penh inhabitants might be given the dramatic socio-economic changes in rebuilding the nation since the peace agreement and elections in 1993, especially in Phnom Penh itself. It is at least somehow surprising that virtually nothing is known about the extent to which city people, especially survivors living or young people having been born in the capital, are concerned with issues of the past or even involved in respective memory initiatives, although one might have assumed that the infrastructure in Phnom Penh would be much better, access to information easier and connection among each other much easier than for people in rural and remote areas.

Some may have seen the application to become a civil party to the ECCC as a safe way for realising their desire for retribution, but again, little is known even about these people since many details related to the cases at the ECCC are still kept confidential. According to information from the VSS, of the almost 4,000 approved civil parties in Case 002, the fewest came from Phnom Penh and, most surprisingly, the majority of them are obviously former KR. It seems that, as was visible in Case 001, the most active in pressing their cases are overseas Cambodians who escaped and have been living for decades in Western countries, such as France and the US. This indicates a considerable difference in their approach to these questions and possible gulf between memory practices. However, the present study is not in a position to discuss this aspect in more detail and must leave it to further research in the future. Interesting to note is that in the communities where the research took place, rural communities reported that since around 2002 more and more Phnom Penh-based people occasionally, specifically during Khmer New Year festivities and the ancestral worship celebrations, return home to their local memorial for commemorating relatives they believe to have been killed. Some even donate money to contribute to the maintenance of these local memorials, perhaps an important further entry point for the investigated memory initiatives in continuing their attempts to tackle the painful process of coming to terms with the unsolved past, especially with a view to younger generations.

Both the FGD with survivors and with young people indicated that punishment and redressing injustice in Cambodia must not necessarily include the use of the formal court system, traditional approaches being preferred that are inherent and deep-rooted in Cambodian society. It seems that there is a clear preference for restorative types of justice with a strong focus on confession, public acknowledgement of harm suffered, apologies and compensation of 'bad deeds' of the past by doing 'good deeds' in the present. The two researched CSO memory initiatives described in the case studies and the project working with university students are based on these traditional concepts of justice and moral practices of mutual understanding. Operating under difficult political circumstances and being aware of the specific socio-cultural aspects discussed above, they have carefully sought entry points for breaking the silence by respecting and using local capacities and resources. Their main focus has consequently been put on mourning, commemoration and fostering the ability to communicate the past, increasing knowledge among young people about what happened, thus connecting them to the memory of the survivor generation, and on motivating

[123] Hinton (2005:116)
[124] For more on patronage in relation to the KR regime see ibid., chapters 2 and 3.

subsequent generations to engage with the country's recent history. The success with which they have mobilised survivors and young people alike to engage in these activities reflects positively on their approach.

These efforts are also in accordance with the fundamental goal of both initiatives to contribute to genuine reconciliation, social reconstruction and reintegration. They are convinced that this is only possible if Cambodians develop a rational understanding of the mass atrocities and the underlying reasons for why they took place, which again can only be achieved when survivors speak out and reveal the truth about their personal involvement, when they reflect on their role, assume responsibility and explain their motivations and actions. By contrast, the dogmatic demonisation approach of the Tuol Sleng Museum is little fruitful in engaging Cambodians to come to terms with their violent past, to deal with questions of responsibilities and to foster public memory as a foundation for a more tolerant and peaceful future. Being merely confronted with scenes of horror and simply learning about torture methods applied at S-21, the Museum in its current shape is far from being a place where Cambodians are encouraged to ask constructive questions about the past and indeed where they can find answers to that which remains incomprehensible. Instead, the Museum's excessive emotional demands and its tendency to leave the historical truth unaddressed by focusing just on the agony itself, contributes rather to building mystical images and fertilising mythical truths, which bear the risky potential of provoking alternative memories that justify revenge and incite further conflict. It easily provides the swampy ground for being too quickly prepared to reject the unbelievable of "Khmer were able to kill Khmer" and to feel more comfortable to think of foreigners, particularly the resented Vietnamese, as the architects of the Cambodian atrocities.

Considering these distorting effects that the Museum has, particularly on the (mis)understandings of younger generations about the KR past, the fundamental question arises how it might provide better ways of learning from the past and in helping Cambodian society to confront its legacy more constructively, less controversially and without perpetuating entrenched hostilities.

Some final considerations should be made, derived from the field research but also from the wider examination of Cambodia's memorialisation landscape at large. Since decades of violence ended only recently both memorialisation and the tendency to raise critical questions about the past (as demonstrated) are in their infancy. Nevertheless, the fieldwork found that Cambodians are prepared and wish to remember the effects of the civil war before 1975 and after 1980. The extent to which memories of these periods are intertwined with memories of the 1970s was evident in the research. However, these memories are completely excluded from any discussions or memory initiatives about the past, contributing to both the silence around these events, impunity and a failure to understand the full dimensions of the violence that Cambodians have suffered. There is no doubt that the KR period was the peak of violence, but this period should not be isolated from its antecedents and aftermath, otherwise the historical context is lost. Isolating these crimes, as shown, has political origins particularly in the demonisation of the KR that continues to this day, but has become further entrenched by the jurisdiction of the ECCC, effectively leading to the silencing of huge chunks of historical context. Even the three phases of memorialisation detailed in the foregoing that do relate to the KR period are also not without significant challenges. The first phase, characterised by ideologically-based demonisation of the KR without historical context in the 1980s was followed by the period until the ECCC went into operation wherein history was utilised in power struggles. Following the opening of the ECCC in 2006, new impetus was given and space created for memorialisation – demonstrating interesting potential inter-connections between different forms of transitional justice. Impunity, seen through the lens of truth and justice, is clearly not challenged by the culture of silence that surrounds this wider historical context.

For those engaging with memory and memorialisation it is of fundamental importance to help create a social climate in which people feel safe to express different viewpoints, experiences and memories, and where others are willing to listen in a process of trying to comprehend the circumstances under which individuals acted. This would lay the path for public debates, accumulating differentiated and more accurate knowledge, and for enabling younger generations in particular to establish public memory as a foundation for a more tolerant and peaceful society. These processes may also gradually strengthen the ability and capacities of Cambodians to openly address questions of accountability for the past and to come to a constructive debate in society on how to tackle them.

6. Recommendations

Although the report provides important insights into current tendencies for memorialising mass atrocities in Cambodia and tries to discuss the underlying reasons for these tendencies, it is difficult to give omniscient and precise recommendations to each of the stakeholders on how to proceed in these processes.

It is true that the ECCC gave an important impetus to memory initiatives through which an encouraging diversity of memorialisation efforts could emerge, suggesting positive links between mechanisms for dealing with the past, space being opened by one to allow for another. However, the big question remains to what extent these efforts are sustainable as soon as the ECCC has closed its doors. It seems that foreign donors who have provided considerable support to civil society efforts over the last few years may become less interested and may even completely withdraw their interest with the close of the ECCC. In addition, as the research has illustrated, Cambodian society appears by far unprepared and unclear on their understanding of how far memorialisation efforts should go, what to include and how to deal with the blurred lines of the victim-perpetrator paradigm. Therefore, much greater public discussion on the importance, role and the potential of memorialisation for coming to terms with a violent past is needed. The silence surrounding truth and memories before and after the KR period also presents a significant question-mark in the future framework for dealing with impunity in Cambodia.

Focusing on the following aspects may provide a starting point for these processes:

- The research suggests that Cambodians deem that the restorative approach, which includes a strong focus on re-establishing broken relationships without necessarily legal prosecutions, may indeed represent the most promising way to come to terms with the past, given the complexity of the conflict and the continued difficult socio-political conditions. The two CSO case studies provide positive evidence in this regard.

- For strengthening processes directed to this purpose, efforts should attempt to create a social climate in which people feel safe to express different viewpoints, experiences and memories, and where others are willing to listen in a process of trying to comprehend the circumstances under which individuals acted. As suggested, this may open the path for public debates and greater pluralism in the memories that are expressed and which contribute to understanding the past in Cambodia, as well as critical reflections on levels of responsibility in the past.

- Shaping TSM into a museum which takes into account the specific needs and requirements of a local audience instead of being primarily targeted to foreign visitors would open up a variety of possibilities to encourage young people to get involved in history and provide them with a historical orientation for understanding and further preventing the crimes that occurred.

- Further important steps for memory initiatives in Cambodia may include efforts to strengthen truth-telling at various levels and specifically communal mechanisms for revealing local histories in more detail. Cambodia has a rich tradition of oral history which has certainly suffered from the traumatic shock of civil war and mass killings, but may be revived under careful facilitation of skilledexperts. The focus group discussions with survivors showed that a lot of detailed events remain as unexpressed memories, individual interviews proving conducive to the willing sharing of this rich information, even among former KR.
- Compiling and producing local material with different perspectives, views, interpretations, and displaying them, for example in local peace museums, will similarly contribute to paving the way for more tolerance, overcoming demonising stereotypes and more rational coping strategies for what happened, which in turn will significantly increase the prospects for genuine reconciliation processes.
- Desires for remembering violent events before and after the KR period should be further explored and should not be structurally excluded from memory initiatives.

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ANNEX - Overview of Focus Group Discussions and Individual Interviews

Takeo province

07.02.2011	***Kraing Tachan memorial*** (Kuh commune, Tramkok district) Interview 1 survivor (well-respected elder in the village, during DK regime barber of the local KR cadres) Interview commune chief and 2 cc members (Kuh commune) Interview monk of pagoda who has participated in YFP project
08.02.2011	***Kraing Tachan memorial*** (Kuh commune) **FGD** with survivors who have participated in YFP project (9 participants), among them 7 members of the Memory Committee of Kuh commune (including a Kraing Tachan village chief) **FGD** with youth who have participated in YFP project (8 participants, 16-18 years old, students of 10-12 grade)
09.02.2011	***Thnol Loak village*** (Prey Ampok commune, Kirivong district) Short conversation with Head Achar of the pagoda Interview commune chief & a representative of district authority (Kirivong district) Interview with Thnol Loak village chief not possible because he was at hospital
10.02.2011	***Thnol Loak village*** (Prey Ampok commune) **FGD** with survivors who have participated in ICfC project (10 participants) **FGD** with survivors who had participated in ICfC project & were not present in the morning FGD (7 participants)

Phnom Penh

17.02.2011	**FGD** with (YRDP) students who have not participated in the YRDP project (11 participants) **FGD** with students who have not participated in YRDP project (and partly not affiliated to YRDP) (11 participants)
19.02.2011	**FGD** with (YRDP) students who have participated in YRDP project (partly core members of the project) (11 participants) **FGD** with (YRDP) students who have participated in YRDP project (7 participants)

Battambang province

22.02.2011	***Kraing Svat village***, Chhnal Moan commune, Koh Krâlâr district Short conversation with village chief Interview with 1 elder (KR soldier during the DK regime, but after 1979 no KR activities anymore) **FGD** with survivors who have participated in ICfC project (8 participants)
23.02.2011	***Kraing Svat village***, Chhnal Moan commune, KohKrâlâr district **FGD** with survivors who have not participated in ICfC project (9 participants, mostly female) Interview with 1 commune council member (Chhnal Moan commune)
24.02.2011	***Somrong Knong pagoda,*** Somrong Knong commune, Banan district Visiting Vat Somrong Knong pagoda & commune Conversation with commune chief of Somrong Knong commune **FGD** with youth affiliated to YFP (half of them have participated in YFP activities, half of them quite new)
25.02.2011	***Somrong Knong pagoda,*** Somrong Knong commune, Banan district **FGD** with survivors who have participated in YFP project (most members of memory culture committee Interview with 1 elder (esp. rel. to the question of dissolving the memorial or not) Short interview with somebody from district department of culture
22.11.2011	Interview with 1 lead tour guide of TSM Interview with book seller at TSM Interview with 1 S-21 survivor at TSM
23.11.2011	Interview with 1 tour guide (working at TSM since 1979)

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Impunity Watch (IW) is a Netherlands-based, international non-profit organisation seeking to promote accountability for atrocities in countries emerging from a violent past. IW conducts systematic research into the root causes of impunity that includes the voices of affected communities to produce research-based policy advice on processes intended to enforce their rights to truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence. IW works closely with civil society organisations to increase their influence on the creation and implementation of related policies. IW runs 'Country Programmes' in Guatemala and Burundi and a 'Perspectives Programme' involving comparative research in multiple post-conflict countries on specific thematic aspects of impunity. The present Research Report is published as part of IW's Memorialisation Project, within the wider Perspectives Programme.

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