

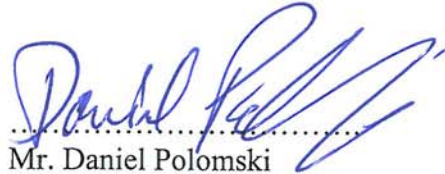
**REFUSAL OR (RE-)CONSTRUCTION:
THE CURRENT STATUS OF COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE
AMONG URBAN CAMBODIAN YOUTH**

DANIEL POLOMSKI

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (HUMAN RIGHTS)
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2016**

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AMONG URBAN CAMBODIAN YOUTH**




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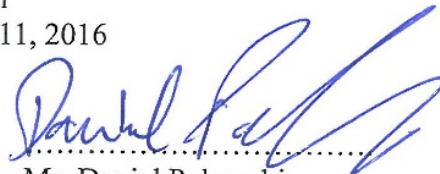


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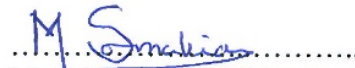
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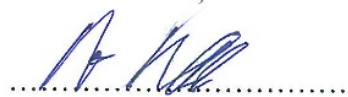
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Daniel Polomski

REFUSAL OR (RE-)CONSTRUCTION: THE CURRENT STATUS OF COLLECTIVE
REMEMBRANCE AMONG URBAN CAMBODIAN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to advance the understanding of post-conflict generations' realities with regard to the design of transitional justice mechanisms and efforts of collective remembrance in the aftermath of mass atrocities.

The study aimed to include voices of the Cambodian youth into the academic discourse, and was therefore designed in terms of a constructivist grounded theory. Hence, the field was approached only through an initial interest in the question of why individual Cambodian students respond differently to transitional justice mechanisms, such as the so-called Khmer Rouge Tribunal, and without a hypothesis. In order to provide the scope, the (auto-) genocide, as well as approaches to transitional justice and debates around remembrance in Cambodia were discussed. Within this framework, the data brought into light four obstacles to remembrance. In addition, various mixed signals around remembrance were revealed as closely connected to the obstacles. Lastly, the data unfolded that the Cambodian youth were aware of a contested collective remembrance that was used by the current government as a strategy to gain political leverage. Taking such findings into account the study argued that the Cambodian youth were refusing the recent form of top down remembrance, as practiced by the government and taught in schools, in favor of a bottom up construction of collective remembrance. Such a construction is negotiated by means that are inclusive, acknowledging rights-holding, and which are open to questioning. The main findings of the thesis were established on the basis of an inductive and qualitative, three-stage process of semi-structured interviews among (n=20) respondents. The convenience sample included Cambodian university students and young professionals between 18 and 26 years of age, who were based in Phnom Penh during the research. The interviews were recorded and digital transcripts were analyzed based on grounded theory methods.

This study showed that acts of indifference among the Cambodian youth towards the Khmer Rouge Tribunal were not only expressions of their rejection of national constructions of remembrance, but also their refusal to acknowledge international constructions in the form of transitional justice mechanisms.

KEY WORDS: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE / REMEMBRANCE / KHMER ROUGE / POST-
CONFLICT YOUTH / EXTRAORDINARY CHAMBERS IN THE COURTS OF
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85 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

In March 2015, while attending a court session of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)¹ in the context of a field trip to the capital, Phnom Penh, I observed that several Cambodian students on a university excursion to the KRT (explain) fell asleep or used their mobile phones during the hearings in Case 002/02. This was a striking experience to witness, as I imagined the interest of Cambodia's post-genocide generation would be much higher than my own.

Transitional justice (TJ) mechanisms focus on the needs of survivors and victims of mass atrocities, and are somewhat boring spectacles, but this lack of focus neglected that post-conflict generations suffer from the imminent effects of past atrocities. In the case of Cambodia under the rule of the Khmer Rouge (KR), the complete devastation of educational and religious infrastructure, forced marriages, disruption of families, and involuntary resettlements are only a few of the gross human rights violations. In order to advance peace-building and conflict transformation, the academic discourse should therefore consider the needs of post-conflict generations when designing TJ.

In his essay on "Why the Khmer Rouge Tribunal Matters to the Cambodian Community: Justice for the Future, Not the Victims" Youk Chhang identifies a Cambodian society that is divided over the KRT and its relevance for the people (Chhang n.d.). Although the relevance for survivors and their entanglement with the KRT is a well-researched field, Chhang points towards the importance of the next generations' beliefs and interests, connecting these with the politicization of Cambodia's youth. He claims, "while they are not politicized, the children of Democratic Kampuchea's (Cambodian) survivors are a burgeoning part of the population, and their beliefs and expectations must be taken into account" (ibid.). Judging from the

¹In the following the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (KRT).

observation made regarding the KRT visit, a motivation to assess this claim and conduct research to explain individual responses to TJ mechanisms among the post-conflict generation in Cambodia was found.

While already on the ground and in the process of conducting extensive qualitative, semi-structured interviews, the field slowly opened up, stirring me away from reaffirming a Cambodian youth that is not politicized. It became obvious that the Cambodian youth is far more politicized than Chhang supposed them to be, and I found that it would do injustice to especially the urban, highly educated youth to label them in such a way, as almost every respondent expressed engagement with Cambodia's transitional agenda in one way or another. Further more, primary research showed that there was a difference between not being politicized and depoliticized. The crucial factor was agency. With regard to the post-conflict youth it seemed that they were reporting to make active choices, rather than "just" not being interested in politics.

The key question this thesis poses, is whether falling asleep while observing cases that involve charges of crimes against humanity and genocide against a previous generation of your own countrymen and women might be an active choice of refusal. This refusal affects the essence of TJ – remembrance and reconciliation. Drawing heavily from data, the thesis' focus shifts from an assessment of the post-conflict generation's degree of entanglement with the KRT, to a reassessment of what Rieff calls the human rights movement's contemporary "article of faith" (Rieff 2016a) – citing George Santayana's words "that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (ibid.).

The main findings of the thesis were established on the basis of an inductive and qualitative, three-stage process of semi-structured interviews with a preliminary analysis of the findings after each step. I conducted those interviews among (n=20) respondents. The sampling was based on my own ratio and therefore a convenience sample. Respondents were Cambodian university students and young professionals aged between 18 and 26 years old, who were living in Phnom Penh during the research. Additionally, they had to be fluent in English to minimize misinterpretations and ensure a more accurate enquiry.

In the first stage, the questions focused on the respondents' connection and their feelings to Cambodia's Khmer Rouge history in general and the KRT as the main mechanism of TJ in particular.

Guided by the data, the focus shifted during the second stage. The questions at this stage were connected to collective remembrance and followed on from dynamics revealed in the first stage.

As a third step, I questioned two experts about their responses on the findings, in order to be able to contextualize my findings within the broader field. Through a mix of initial coding and memo-writing, which was initially based on constructivist grounded theory methods, the following main research findings were formalized.

The data identified four obstacles to remembrance, which have a direct impact on remembrance in Cambodia. Firstly, the education system is incapable of delivering a formal Khmer Rouge education that lives up to the standards of the students. Informal education, as for example provided by family members, does not uphold to these standards either, and is in fact provoking inter-generation conflicts around remembrance. The internalization of fears and its negative impact on the perception of remembrance was identified as a third obstacle, and the special factor of Khmer versus Khmer violence marks the fourth obstacle.

The aspect of Khmer versus Khmer violence proved to be the biggest hurdle to remembrance, as it provokes a mutual (initial) disbelief of the country's history. In addition, the data revealed mixed signals around remembrance that are closely connected to the obstacles. The nature of such differences is mainly concerned with individual feelings and preferences with regard to certain topics, especially suspicion of biased individual narratives, diverse judgments on justice, a disconnection and disappointment with the KRT, indifference towards memorial sites, and religious beliefs. Lastly, the data showed that the Cambodian youth is largely aware of a contested collective remembrance, which is used by the current government as a strategy to gain political leverage.

Hence, this thesis argues that parts of the Cambodian youth are rejecting the collective remembrance of the Khmer Rouge, and such refusal is neither random nor overarching. The refusal pertains to the collective remembrance as it is instructed

through formal and informal education in present day Cambodia, with the youth specifically refusing to accept remembrance that is administered by the government or deemed biased in any form. The findings have shown a high concern for biased narratives among the respondents. Based on such skepticism of what I call obstacles to remembrance and the resulting mixed signals around remembrance, it is believed that the Cambodian youth has started their own collective remembrance project, leading to the second argument, that the officially administered collective remembrance is not only rejected, but is increasingly being challenged. The findings have shown that especially through the influence of the human rights movement and the awareness of rights-holding, spaces are created, in which the Cambodian youth is engaging in a construction of remembrance that recognizes them as rights-holders and reconciles the society in doing so. In those spaces the youth is constantly required to make choices and prove agency, and these choices, the outcomes of which can incorrectly lead to someone being given the label of not being political, are highly political choices in the context of the construction of a collective remembrance.

Whereas individual thresholds for choices can differ, there is a common denominator among the youth, who are united by their desire to build a better future for the whole Cambodian society. Lastly, I argue that based on the many different choices involved in such a bottom up construction of collective remembrance, the status quo of remembrance in Cambodia is an ongoing process, the outcome of which is yet to be decided upon.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

This thesis seeks to explore how urban, young, well-educated Cambodians grasp Cambodia's genocidal history and the country's transitional agenda from a post-conflict society to a peaceful society. With regard to the hybrid (including international and national judges and lawyers) KRT and its purpose to combine retributive with reparative justice, it will be asked what the post-conflict youth will receive from the trials and whether there are any personal gains for them to acquire. Answers to such questions are of particular importance for the field of transitional justice because they concern issues that so far have only marginally been touched upon by the literature on

and the study of the field. Although “the views of affected populations should play a major role in TJ choices“ (Thoms et al. 2008: 7), to this point, there are very few studies that are concerned to answer such questions and issues with regards to the youth of affected countries, whereas there is already a large body of research on transitional justice mechanisms and their impacts on the Cambodian society, such studies mainly focus on survivors and victims.

In this discourse, the post-conflict generation remains largely underrepresented. For example, in one of the few studies that takes those generations into account, only 13.8% of the respondents in a random sample of 1000 Cambodian adults were between 18-25 years (Pham et al 2011: 18). Literature commonly agrees upon the importance of local actors in the transitional process, yet, as stated by Fischer “ultimately, it is they who will decide how to come to terms with the past and build relationships for the future“ (Fischer 2011: 424). In the case of the Cambodian population, which according to a 2008 census², has approximately two thirds of the population below the age of 30, “they who will decide” without a doubt refers to the Cambodian youth.

It is in this context that the post-conflict generations become increasingly important, and their underrepresentation in research does not take into account that the direct survivors and victims, as agents of change, will soon lose their relevance for the transitional process due to their advanced years. There is no doubt that in this situation the youth as future agents of societal change should be in the focus of academic research, yet it is unknown whether the youth population will be “convinced of the impacts of transitional justice and be in possession of the necessary analytical skills to make these sorts of judgments“ (Duggan 2010: 324). While Fischer states that there is hardly any evidence on the implications of transitional justice mechanisms on “victims, perpetrators and society as a whole“ (Fischer 2011: 414), with regards to the global context, additionally, there is even less knowledge on the perceptions and mindsets of the post-conflict youth with regard to collective remembrance in Cambodia. Most problematically is the assertion that “the apparent preoccupation with institutional design and system-level effects has arguably resulted in too little concern for assessing

² See: United Nations Statistics Division 2016.

- based on rigorous primary empirical research - the extent to which these processes affect people on the ground“ (Backer 2004: 30).

Through an explicit focus including local voices into the academic discourse around transitional justice and remembrance, which prominently features the respondents' voices, this thesis will enhance the understanding of local stakeholder's realities and add to the identified research..

Although observations of KRT court sessions served as the starting point for this research project, the data collection and analysis did not exclusively focus on the KRT as a mechanism of TJ, but also took issues into account beyond questions of TJ (for example, a (dis-)connection with Cambodia's overall history of genocide, the quality of schools and teachers, or individual family histories et cetera). During the course of the data gathering my particular interest developed to be connected with individual and collective remembrance. At this point it has to be stressed that the terms 'history' and 'remembrance' (of acts of mass atrocities), although being interdependent, are not being used synonymously by the respondents of this study.

Cambodian youths are subjected to various efforts of remembrance from birth; be it their parents sharing personal experiences, history classes in school, outreach campaigns from the KRT or the annual, highly institutionalized (and inevitable) commemorations of the so-called Victory Day and Paris Peace Agreement Day. As a consequence, young Cambodians developed a critical mindset that separates well-established and institutionalized historical accounts from efforts of (collective) remembrance, which in contrast could be influenced to serve the interests of various stakeholders. An acknowledgement of these differences raises several questions. Do all those efforts inevitably bring along a collective memory? Are they all equally effective efforts? And, should the post-conflict youth remember at all cost? If so, what speaks in favor of it? And if not, what are the main reasons for such a point of view? Those are the kind of questions that will form the basis for investigation in this thesis.

This investigation will attempt to reveal what is happening in a society where young people take part in highly politicized events such as the recent Black

Monday protests³ (and even put themselves at risk of being detained by authorities), but fall asleep on visits to the KRT.

In affirmation of Wisker's summary of the constructivist paradigm "that human beings construct knowledge and meaning from experience and from relationships between things, people, events" (2008: 69), this thesis will argue that the post-conflict youth constructs a form of collective remembrance that does not rely on official accounts, and is established on grounds of inter-personal relationships with family members, teachers and experiences with institutions like the educational system, memorial sights or the KRT. Their efforts of remembrance are critical to disseminated collective remembrance, as provided by the international community (through the KRT) and the Cambodian government (through their politically used accounts of Democratic Kampuchea (DK)). What I found is a bottom up remembrance project that has no clear direction or ultimate goal, but rather adapts to present day agendas of the post conflict youth.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research Design

The methodology of this study is guided by a constructivist version of grounded theory (GT). The earliest and most basic definition of grounded theory as "the discovery of theory from data" can be found in Glaser and Strauss' foundational work "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research" (1967: 1). In relying on GT methods this research project will be inductive and qualitative in nature. While it is acknowledged that inductive, qualitative research can be criticized for being anecdotal and carried out too casually and unsystematically (Mason 2002: 1), its capacity to explore the social world, respondent's individual mindsets, interactions of

³ On Monday, May, 9, 2016 human rights activist and advocacy groups carried out a protest in front of the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) in Phnom Penh. The protest followed the arrest of four rights workers and an election official. The groups decided to clad in black as a symbol for their rights, which would be slowly dying through recent repressive government actions. In the aftermath of the protest eight human rights activists were arrested. The government branded the protest as urban rebellion and insisted to ban future protest in which people would clad in unified colors in order to prevent so-called color revolutions. (see: Peter and Sokhean 2016, Sokhean and Sovuthy 2016, Palatino 2016)

social process and the meanings that they establish (ibid.), holds it to be the most suitable approach to this study. Wisker argues that qualitative, interpretive-based research is most likely to be a suitable approach, if the research, as it is in this case, is concerned with “capturing people’s opinions, feelings and practice, their experience and the kind of atmosphere and context in which they act and respond“ (2008: 191f).

This thesis, and the data collection and analysis within, will be based on a constructive version of GT, relying on the studies from Charmaz’, who is a second-generation grounded theorist (Ralph et al. 2015: 4), and is considered to serve as the foundation of many constructivist studies to follow. Her main work “Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis” (2006), draws from Strauss and Corbin’s relativist ontological position, which proposes that there is no definite truth to obtain from the analysis of data (Mills et al. 2006: 3). Although this work will provide the majority of the methodological framework, it also considers Glaser and Strauss’ “The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research” (1967), which can be considered as the constitutional work for GT. By arguing that “grounded theory will be more successful than theories logically deduced from *a priori* assumptions“ (ibid: 6), Glaser and Strauss prepared the ground for many inductive studies to follow. Another important work in the context of this research project, “Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: Applications for Advancing Social Justice Studies” (2005), also authored by Charmaz, provides not only an overview over the development of a constructivist GT, but also offers an example of how to apply grounded theory methodology (GTM) in various fields with the purpose of “advancing qualitative research in the 21st century” (2005: 507).

GTM is defined as “a set of flexible analytical guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development” (ibid.). This approach provides opportunity to include the voices of the individual respondents into the academic discourse. Making voices heard and keeping the respondents tone is one of Charmaz’ major concerns while developing the constructivist approach to grounded theory, as Mills et al. states that “Charmaz has striven to maintain the participants’ presence throughout” (2006: 7). Accordingly, throughout this study the voices of the respondents are prominently featured in many of the chapters and subchapters. The

study draws from their experiences and considers them as experts. In order to streamline the flow of reading, quotes that are attributed to respondents were edited with regard to grammar and linguistic fillers.

The initial focus of research was concerned with the reasons that leave students in post-conflict settings entangled with or feeling apathy towards such mechanisms, and why students in post-genocide Cambodia suffer from apathy during their attendance of court sessions. In accordance, the research was designed around research objectives such as the explorations of biographical differences, and their implications for individual responses to the involvement in transitional justice mechanisms, as well as the analysis of post-conflict generation's responses to transitional justice mechanisms in present day Cambodia. The research questions that gave the impetus to this study were "In what terms do individual Cambodian students respond to transitional justice mechanisms such as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal?" and "Why do individual Cambodian students respond differently to transitional justice mechanisms such as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal?".

As the title suggests, those research objectives and questions were diverted from throughout the course of research. Based on the findings and the overall qualitative research approach of this study, this study moved ahead from the initial research question in favor of what Charmaz highlights as some advantages of qualitative over quantitative studies; researchers "can add new pieces to the research puzzle or conjure entire new puzzles-*while we gather data*-and that can even occur late in the analysis" (2006: 14). This study commenced with only a limited set of assumptions, and as such expected outcomes or even a hypothesis were not a concern.

Data, gathered and analyzed by GTM, results "in an analytic interpretation of participants' worlds and of the processes constituting how these worlds are constructed"(Charmaz 2005: 508). The diversion from the initial focus included following up on how the students are constructing their world in present day Cambodia. An analysis of the data showed individual respondent's mindsets and constructed categories that either lead to the refusal or acceptance of a disseminated collective remembrance. In addition, the focus was not only on commonalities, but also states notable differences among respondents.

Charmaz notes that “a study of 25 interviews may suffice for certain small projects” (2006: 114), the sample size of (n=20) respondents in this study, together with interview questions constructed with regard to Charmaz’ call for “open-ended, non-judgmental questions“ (ibid: 26), provide a database that is sufficient for the limited scope of this research project.

Focusing on almost exclusively Cambodian citizens as respondents was crucial for this study. Whereas externals might provide positive input for the transitional agenda in general, it is the local stakeholders that have to decide how to reconcile their past, present and future (Fischer 2011: 424).

1.3.2 Sampling and Study Site

Sampling

The sampling for the study was based on the researchers ratio and is therefore a convenience sampling. For this reason the sample cannot be considered as a representative one. It was decided upon Cambodian university students and young professionals between 18 and 26 years of age, living in Phnom Penh during the research. As the interviews were conducted by the researcher in person, another criterion was the respondents’ fluency in English. Although this criterion brought additional limitations, as will be outlined below, it was nevertheless a necessary criterion, as the researcher neither speaks Khmer, nor was funding available that could have been used in order to conduct interviews by proxies in Khmer and later being translated into English.

Study site

The research took place in and around Cambodia’s capital Phnom Penh for two reasons. First, it was assumed that Phnom Penh would provide access to the greatest variety of respondents in an otherwise small and very specific cohort, as it is Cambodia’s main hub for formal (university) education. Secondly, it provided the possibility to undertake further observations and/or interviews at the KRT, which is located in the outskirts of Phnom Penh.

Accordingly, almost all interviews took place in Phnom Penh, with one interview with a student respondent conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, as it was not possible to conduct the interview in person otherwise. In addition, the expert interview with Prof. John Ciorciari was conducted via Skype.

1.3.3 Instrumentalization and Study Population

Instrumentalization

The data collection tool for the intended research was designed as a simple set of open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview setting. The questions were directly connected with the research objectives and the wording left room for wide ranging answers, which allowed respondents to be unlimited in answering the questions. The reasoning behind a semi-structured setup was twofold.

First, semi-structured interviews generate data that is, due to the predetermined set of fixed questions, comparable. This instance streamlines the data analysis and makes it more accessible. And secondly, the open-ended character of the interviews left room to chase dynamics within the interviews and alter or add additional questions as needed (Wisker 2008: 194-95). This motivated the respondents in cases where they encountered problems to answer the main question in detail.

First Stage – Opening the Field

The semi-structured first stage interview consisted of two sets of questions.⁴ The first set was concerned with the respondents' connection and their feelings to Cambodia's Khmer Rouge history in general and the KRT as the main mechanism of TJ in particular. Furthermore, it investigated if those feelings changed over time. Several necessary preliminary assumptions were made. Those assumptions were reflected in a second set of questions that were concerned with predetermined categories. This set of questions helped to gather data about the respondents' overall transitional experiences. In addition, those categories were predetermined upon in order to avoid unnecessary information. In accordance with Charmaz, several concepts were developed that evolved while reflecting over the guiding interest.

Charmaz introduced such interest-led concepts as "*points of departure* to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to interviewees, and to think analytically about that data" (2006: 17). The questions focused mainly on the concepts of family, education and traumatic experiences within the respondents' families.

⁴ See: Appendix A First Stage Question.

Second Stage – Follow-Up

A preliminary analysis of the data provided opportunities for further study away from the initial research interest, which focused heavily on the KRT, towards questions that were connected to collective remembrance. Instead of making further use of the initial questions, follow-up questions were designed to with respect to the dynamics that the first stage revealed.⁵ Such questions were concerned with specific findings from the first stage, where the respondents were confronted with and asked about their personal evaluations. The wording of the questions included respondent's quotes of the first stage, the main purpose of which was to enhance the terminology and further advance the data around such crystalized findings.

Third Stage – De-Briefing

The third stage provided an external perspective on the research findings. After contacting various stakeholders of Cambodia's transition, an interview with *Prof. John Ciorciari*, associate professor and director of the International Policy Center at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan and *So Farina*, head of the Documentation Center of Cambodia's (DC-Cam) Cham Oral History Project was arranged. Both experts were confronted with re-occurring themes of the first two stages and questioned about their responses on the findings. In both cases their input was substantial, as it either confirmed or questioned the findings to date.

Study Population

In total (n=20) respondents were interviewed. During the first step of the data collection (n=10) respondents were interviewed. Out of those ten initial interviews, only nine were able to be included into the study, as the quality of the audio recording did not make a transcription possible. In the second phase of the data collection eight follow-up interviews were conducted. Out of those only seven interviews were analyzed for the study, as one respondent was intoxicated during the interview and for this reason excluded from the analysis. During the last step of the data collection two expert interviews were conducted. Concerning the gender ratio of the study population, thirteen respondents identified themselves as female, and seven identified as male. The analysis

⁵ See: Appendix B Second Stage Question.

of the the data did not reveal any substantial differences with regard to the identification as either female or male.

1.3.4 Data Collection

The Interview

The interviews with student respondents took place in locations suggested by each individual student. In order to give the respondents a sense of security and agency, they were explicitly welcomed to set a location and time accordance with their preferences.

Before the interview, the respondents were welcomed and invited to to ask any questions they had. This provided the respondents with a comforting and secure feeling necessary for revealing interviews. Following those talks, the respondents were made familiar with the Respondent Information Sheet and Form of Informed and Voluntary Consent to Participate in Research and in cases where no additional question came up, the interviews started directly afterwards.

With the exemption of the expert interview with Prof. John Ciorciari, all interviews were conducted in person and audio recordings were generated. Whenever the respondent had to break, for various reasons, the recordings were paused.

Research Ethics and Informed Consent

Throughout the research project, transparency was taken seriously. During all communications during the research, there was no use of deception. Acknowledging potential fears to take part in the study, it was clearly communicated that the participation is voluntary. Ensuring informed consent and the protection of identities and data were of major concern.⁶ Access to the data and documents was restricted to the principal investigator with the exemption of the main advisor on a need-to-know basis. Respondents were informed about the possibility to quit the interview and/or to withdraw their overall consent to take part in the study at all times without providing any reason, but prior to the final examination. With regard to sensitive data, anonymity was offered and respondents will only be referred to as “R.(x)” throughout the thesis. “(x)” indicating a randomly assigned number in order to assign quotes to respondents.

⁶ See: Appendix C Respondent Information Sheet and Appendix D Form of Voluntary and Informed Consent.

In addition, it was guaranteed that the collected data and study documents will be destroyed after the final examination, unless the respondents give their consent to use the data for possible follow-up research projects and that all study data and documents will be stored within locked locations.

Living up to these ethical procedures, the study's risks (such as institutional and respondents unwillingness to cooperation because of fear to provide assistance) were minimized to a degree that highlights its benefits.

1.3.5 Organizing the Data

After each step of the three stages of data collection, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and digitalized as verbatim reports. For the transcription NCH Software's Express Scribe Transcription Software was used, which is available as a freeware for non-commercial, home use. All of the transcripts were implemented into ATLAS.ti, which is a qualitative data analysis program. Using ATLAS.ti, an initial coding on the basis of Charmaz was performed in order to move "beyond concrete statements in the data to making analytical interpretations" (2006: 43)⁷. Once the initial interviews are conducted, she suggests to "do coding and thus label bits of data according to what they indicate" (ibid: 12). Through coding, which is defined as "categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (ibid: 43), it would become feasible to analytically process the information. Through such an analytical processing of data, I was able to crystalize certain meanings and individual actions in the data after each stage; such crystalized codes would be the foundation of the whole analysis (ibid: 45). Charmaz suggests to write "extended notes called memos" (ibid: 12) in a next step, as such memos help to compare the data and progress data gathering if new topics emerge (ibid: 12). After the initial coding using ATLAS.ti hand-written memos were entered to enable links from different codes to be visualized, which provided the main argument of this thesis.

⁷ For an example of the initial coding see: Appendix E Example of Initial Coding.

1.3.6 Limitations

The scope of a Master's thesis brings necessary limitations for this study. It is highly unlikely to conduct the research among a representative sample of the overall cohort of Cambodian students due to three factors, explicitly the mode of sampling, the sampling criteria, and the study site. Taking these factors into account the cohort for this study is remarkably small.

Firstly, it is acknowledged that convenience sampling brings along limitations, as it clearly renders the sample without a representative character of all Cambodian students, but rather a "biased" sample of peers, as existing contacts to Cambodian students served as a starting point in order to access possible respondents. Within the context of the study such bias was not be understood as problematic, but rather as an additional sampling criterion; the biased sample of urban, English speaking peers, potentially studying at private universities will shift the focus of the study towards students of the (upper) middle class. Those upper middle class students are of focal interest, as they are considered the leading agents of change in Cambodia's near future. In addition, such a limited scoping of the study has the advantage of crystalizing meanings and significantly enhance the data. To ensure some objectivity, several respondents from rural Cambodia who had resettled and study in Phnom Penh on the basis of individual scholarship opportunities and come from low-income families were sourced, and their experiences helped to offer a more detailed picture.

In addition to the mode of sampling, the focus on students that were willing and able to take part in a study that makes use of English as the mode of communication further decreases the overall size of the cohort. The language component of the Respondent Information Sheet and the Form of Informed and Voluntary Consent to Participate, were authored in English. Initially, it was intended to author the documents in Khmer, but given the fact that one of the study's main sampling criteria was a fluency in English and providing that the respondents possess the ability to go through an interview situation of about 30 to 60 minutes in English, it was assumed that they would also be able to fully understand all information as provided within the two documents; the interview situation in the field confirmed this assumption.

A third limitation was the focus on Phnom Penh as the study site, as this focus excluded possible differences between rural and urban populations.

Due to these factors, this research project will only offer explanations for a very limited, specific population of the Cambodian society. It will not raise a claim of understanding and explaining the phenomenon as a whole; rather, it perceives itself as a starting point for future comparative studies on the national and international level. In addition, it has to be acknowledged that “causal relationships are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish“ (Duggan 2010: 327), but also that the exploration of the research problem, with constructivist GTM as a starting point, will only be able to offer explanation(s) for the particular context of the study.

1.4 Summary of Chapters

This chapter has introduced the research topic, direction, and methodology. This section will outline how the main argument will be communicated through the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter 2 will provide the context of the thesis, split into two parts. Firstly, it will give a brief overview over the historical context in which the Cambodian genocide took place, and secondly will introduce into the field of TJ and its terminology, as well as recent discussions related to the role that ‘remembrance’ plays for TJ in general.

Chapter 3 will highlight research findings that are considered to be *obstacles to remembrance*, which make it difficult for the Cambodian youth to take the collective remembrance, for granted and offer incentives to challenge such collective memory.

Drawing from the findings in chapter 3, chapter 4 advances the discussion and illuminates mixed signals regarding the importance of active remembrance. Such signals touch upon various dimensions that serve as the basis of the decision making process.

Chapter 5 investigates further how the official disseminated collective remembrance in Cambodia is used as a political strategy and, in a second step, adds details to the status quo of collective remembrance among the respondents with regard to the findings of the two previous chapters. Lastly, Chapter 6 will offer concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXTUALIZING REMEMBRANCE AND GENOCIDE IN CAMBODIA

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter will contextualize the thesis by firstly providing a brief history of the Cambodian tragedy. Post-colonial Cambodian history is complex and highly interwoven with the regions history, World War 2, the Vietnam War and Cold War politics. Although the rise of the KR is closely connected with those developments after Cambodia's independence in 1953, it is only of minor importance for this thesis' focus on the Cambodian youth. Accordingly, there will only be a brief overview of the events around the fall of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975 and the Vietnamese intervention on January 7, 1979.

Following the discussion of the historical background, the necessity of TJ with regard to the historical context in Cambodia will be discussed. After establishing an understanding of the goals of TJ and its key vocabulary, as well as introducing the ECCC as the main mechanism of TJ in Cambodia, the importance of remembrance in post-conflict settings and its connection with remembrance in Cambodia will be investigated. The discussion of such debates in the context of TJ is essential, as it touches upon many of the research findings, and therefore, an understanding of the debates needs to be established before progressing to the results and analysis.

2.2 The Cambodian Tragedy

2.2.1 Pre-Democratic Kampuchea Period

Cambodia's political landscape after the end of French colonial rule in 1953 featured the successive rules of Prince Norodom Sihanouk (1955-1970), Marshal Lon

Nol (1970-1975) and the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) (1975-1979), which many years later became infamous as the Khmer Rouge.

Between 1955 and 1970 the politics in Cambodia were “(...) characterized by Sihanouk’s monopoly of political power and (...)”, due to the Vietnam War, “(...) the emergence of Cambodia onto the international stage” (Chandler 2008: 231). Prince Sihanouk, who “abdicated on 2 March 1955 in favour of his father, Prince Norodom Suramarit“ (Tarling 1992: 399) in order to maintain the monarchy by linking it to the people (ibid.), won the first free elections in 1955. Sihanouk’s power slowly began to decrease during the mid 1960’s¹, and reached his turning point with the rise of the CPK and its inauguration of an armed struggle for power in 1968 (see Chandler 2008: 247), in which the CPK gained control of approximately 20% of Cambodia’s territory by 1970 (ibid.). In the same year, while Sihanouk was in Paris for his annual vacation, he was “overthrown by pro U.S. generals and civilians with possible U.S. backing“ (Lockard 2009: 162).

On March 17, 1970, then prime minister, Lon Nol was urged at gunpoint to “sign a declaration supporting a vote against the prince scheduled for the following day in the National Assembly“ (Chandler 2008: 249), with the outcome of a coup d’état replacing Sihanouk as head of state the next day. Although the Khmer Republic, as it was officially named in October 1970, “survived for four more years, largely because of U.S. military and economic assistance and heavy bombing“ (ibid: 252), it had lost majority control over Cambodia by 1972 to the Communists, who were fighting “one of the bitterest struggles by a left-wing group to gain power in all of recent Southeast Asian history” (Osborne 2013: 314). Over the next years the CPK tightened its control over Cambodia, until Phnom Penh fell into the hands of the KR on the morning of April 17, 1975 (see Chandler 2008: 252-254).

2.2.2 Democratic Kampuchea

A Socialist Agrarian Utopia

The regime that took power from Lon Nol on that day was later known as Democratic Kampuchea (DK) (Chandler 2008: 255). Tarling argued that the fall of Lon

¹ For a detailed discussion of these factors see Chandler 2008: 233-249.

Nol “marked an important phase in the development of political structures in Cambodia“, as it was “Pol Pot's aim to uproot society and reconstitute anew the existing political structures“ (Tarling 1992: 401); or with Pol Pot’s own words the plan was to “building socialism without a model.” (cited in Chandler 2008: 256). Such a socialist ideology offered no space for money or private property, religion, formal school education and even the traditional Khmer culture (see Khamboly 2007: 2). Khamboly summarizes that during the period of the Democratic Kampuchea, which was created by the CPK in 1976, “everyone was deprived of their basic rights” (ibid.). Following military struggles between DK and Vietnam that took place since mid-December 1977, the Vietnamese launched their final attack on Christmas Day 1978, capturing an abandoned Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979 (Chandler 2008: 272-74).

Unfolding the Utopia

Over the lifespan of the DK period an estimated number of between 1.671 and 1.871 million people or 21 to 24 percent of Cambodia’s population of 1975 died as a result of widespread human rights abuses (Kiernan 2003: 586-587).

Based on the KR’s utopia of a *socialism without a model*, millions of people were evicted from the cities and forced to work in rural areas only hours after Phnom Penh fell into the hands of the Communists (see Chandler 2008: 256-57). In the aftermath of these evictions, the KR made the Cambodian people suffer through “overworking people, neglecting or mistreating the sick” (Chandler 2008: 259), “through starvation, forced labor, as well as executions“ (Sriram et al. 2010: 203). The KR, in contrast to other genocidal regimes, were not afraid to kill its own people to restructure the society.

2.2.3 Post-Democratic Kampuchea

Although the Vietnamese invasion was able to capture Phnom Penh, most of the KR leaders were able to flee to the Thai border areas, where they “reestablished their forces in Thai territory, aided by China and Thailand” (Khamboly 2007: 3). Chandler acts on the assumption that until the 1990s “tens of thousands of Khmer, particularly young people, were still prepared to give their lives (...)” for the CPK, most of the Cambodians nevertheless “(...) welcomed the Vietnamese invasion” (Chandler 2008: 275-76). The United Nations gave the resistance movement against communist,

which the remaining KR forces ironically joined, a seat in its General Assembly and recognized DK as the international representative of Cambodia (see Khamboly 2007: 3). What followed was years of civil war between different factions, under the influence of Cold War politics, which lasted until the Paris Peace Accords in 1991, where it was decided that the United Nations would gain transitional authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Chandler concludes, “in a sense Cambodian history between 1965 and 1993, if not beyond, was orchestrated from southern Vietnam and from such faraway cities as Hanoi, Washington, and Beijing” (Chandler 2008: 236).

2.3 Transitional Justice

2.3.1 Approaches to Transitional Justice and Responses to Mass Atrocities

Olsen stated “transitional justice mechanisms are the major policy innovation of the late twentieth century to reduce human rights violations and strengthen democracy” (Olsen et al. 2010: 981) in the aftermath of large-scale human rights violations, such as crimes against humanity and genocide. As a tool to maintain peace, transitional justice can be defined as “justice associated with periods of political change, characterized by legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes“ (Teitel 2003: 69) or as Bickford offers “a field of activity and inquiry focused on how societies address legacies of past human rights abuses, mass atrocity (...) in order to build a more democratic, just, or peaceful future“ (Bickford 2004: 1045). Whereas Teitel’s definition focuses on judicial responses as justice, Bickford’s definition provides flexibility to how transitional justice can be designed. Regardless of this difference, these definitions propose a more democratic, just, or peaceful future.

McGonigle stated that in this context “post-conflict societies must often ask what form of post-conflict justice they wish to pursue“ (2009: 128).and following on Martha Minow highlighted that the form of post-conflict justice is not only a question that concerns societies, but that it is also deeply concerned with individual preferences.

Survivors of violence often ache for retribution against identifiable perpetrators, and for public acknowledgement of what happened. Some want financial redress; psychological or spiritual healing seems crucial to others. Some survivors, and their fellow citizens, place higher priorities on moving ahead with life, building or rebuilding trust across previously divided groups, and establishing or strengthening democratic institutions. (Minow 1998: 4)

Minow's approaches to justice, whether at individual or societal level, lie in between the antipodes *vengeance and forgiveness*, and provide possible directions for individuals and nations to come to terms with the past (ibid: 21). In the field of TJ, one can differentiate between approaches of retributive, restorative and reparative justice, and the differentiation is important to understand the special character of the KRT, and as such the differences will be discussed.

The concept of retributive justice is closely connected with the rule of law, as "no one is above or outside the law, and no one should be legally condemned or sanctioned outside legal procedures" (ibid: 25) - not even the perpetrators of mass atrocities. Walen (2015) finds that retributive justice is committed to the following principles.

- (1) That those who commit certain kinds of wrongful acts, paradigmatically serious crimes, morally deserve to suffer a proportionate punishment;
- (2) That it is intrinsically morally good—good without reference to any other goods that might arise—if some legitimate punisher gives them the punishment they deserve; and
- (3) That it is morally impermissible intentionally to punish the innocent or to inflict disproportionately large punishments on wrongdoers. (Walen 2015)

Although retributive justice is certainly a common approach, the concept is often subject to criticism, as it is considered that legal proceedings do not serve the purpose of reconciliation, since "reconstruction of a relationship, seeking to heal the accused, or indeed, healing the rest of the community, are not the goals" (Minow 1998: 25), Minow also criticizes on the basis of their "retroactivity" (charges under norms that had not been previously announced), their "politicization" (politics undermining the ideals of impartiality and universal norms) and their "selectivity" (limited target of

prosecutions) (ibid: 30). McGonigle adds that “trials take a long time to complete and require a large amount of resources“ and that they are “typically not an ideal place for victims to tell their stories“ (2009: 129), since the accused is the main concern, rather than the victim. It is for this reason that trials in the aftermath of mass atrocities never appear to be able to establish an all-embracing historical truth (Minow 1998: 47). Despite this, there is nevertheless a tendency to equalize global justice with international criminal law², but are there alternatives to retributive justice.

In contrast to retributive justice, it is more complicated to define restorative justice, as Zernova & Wright state “that it can be argued that the attempt to develop precise definitions and unifying visions of restorative justice is problematic” (2007: 95). Hence, for this work Bazemore and Walgrave’s initial, broad definition as “every action that is primarily oriented toward doing justice by repairing the harm that has been caused by a crime” (1999: 48) is sufficient. McGonigle describes the advantage of such a broad approach as it connects to the truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs). Indeed, “the capability of collecting a broader range of ‘truth’ than trials because, rather than focusing on the individual guilt of an accused, TRCs look at wider patterns of crimes” (2009: 132). Minow also focuses on the benefits in comparison to trials, for “unlike punishment, which imposes a penalty or injury for a violation, restorative justice seeks to repair the injustice, to make up for it, and to effect corrective changes in the record, in relationships, and in future behavior” (1998: 91). In contrast to trials, restorative justice is to a lesser degree concerned with the rule-of-law, rather it emphasizes the “humanity of both offenders and victims“ and “seeks repair of social connections and peace rather than retribution against the offenders“ (ibid.). The collected data suggests that post-conflict generations acknowledge the fact that the question of victimhood is not always easy to answer, with the expert interview with staff from DC-Cam revealing

Here we have grey area between victim and perpetrator, because Khmer, (...), they are either victim or, or both, victim and perpetrator or former Khmer Rouge cadres, because for former Khmer Rouge

² See: Nouwen and Werner 2015.

cadres, they also claim they were also victims, because they lost family, relatives, and then suffered in some way (...). (So Farina – expert interview)

Restorative justice bears benefits that retributive justice cannot provide. The retributive focus on the offenders might reinforce anger and victimization, whereas “reparative approaches instead aim to help victims move beyond anger and a sense of powerlessness“ (Minow 1998: 91). Also, restorative justice is closely connected with reparative justice, as its goal is “to empower individuals and communities to take control of their own lives” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1997, cited in: *ibid*: 93). Minow elaborates this into three distinct categories of reparative justice - reparations, restitution, and apologies. All three categories are presented as incorporating promises and problems, but whereas “each deserves consideration“ (*ibid*: 117), Minow remains skeptical about the long-term benefits of reparative justice, since “reparations fall short of repairing victims or social relationships after violence”, and advocates for a “return to a symbolic dimension“, since “most victims of crime rate their needs to know what happened and why more highly than their desires for compensation or restitution“ (*ibid*: 103). The collected data shows that this is not only the fact among the victims and survivors, but also among the post-conflict generations. R.5 asks in the context of genocide education “What happened? Why? So we did not really know that from the school” (R.5).

What is common for all of the discussed approaches is the fact that they, based on the nature of TJ, focus on the victims and survivors, rather than on post-conflict generations, which provides the scope for this project to study how such generations process the legacies of the mass atrocities. Although the reasons for an increasing concern with post-conflict generations are manifold, the generally young age of the Cambodian society makes research among those generations even more important, because “ultimately, it is they who will decide how to come to terms with the past and build relationships for the future“ (Fischer 2011: 424).

2.3.2 The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia – The Main Mechanism of Transitional Justice in Cambodia

The stated observations of the KRT form the start point for this study, and it will be a recurring theme in many of the research findings with regard to remembrance. Therefore, it is good practice to introduce it as the main mechanism of transitional justice in Cambodia.

After more than seven years of negotiations an agreement between the Cambodian government and the UN came into effect in 2003 (Rush & Simic 2014: 48). Article 1 of the Agreement limits its jurisdiction to the “senior leaders“ and “those who were most responsible (...) during the period from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979“ (Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia 2003). Sriram et al. state that although the ECCC is constituted within the Cambodian legal system it nevertheless includes domestic and international judges (2010: 204); the Court is therefore described as a *hybrid court*. The model of *hybrid courts* “emerged in the late 1990s, largely to address perceived shortcomings of the International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR) and International Criminal Court (ICC)“ (Ciorciari & Heindel 2014: 370). The Cambodian Government insisted on a hybrid court, since in doing so “their own nationals [would] be involved in prosecuting the atrocities“ (Werner & Rudy 2010: 307).

The KRT differs from other hybrid tribunals in important ways. McGonicle stresses two important differences, namely the “broad focus on national reconciliation and the role of victims in the proceedings, including their right to claim moral and collective reparations“ (2009: 128). These differences can be described as “experimental features“ (Ciorciari & Heindel 2014: 371), which are subject to a lively academic debate.

With regards to the previous discussion of retributive and restorative justice, in the case of Cambodia a trial (the ECCC) and a TRC were not established as parallel institutions, but within the mandate of one institution (McGonigle 2009: 133). This is an interesting combination, as “the ECCC has incorporated important elements commonly associated with TRCs, such as a focus on greater participation by victims and on national reconciliation, to the extent that the Court’s focus has expanded beyond that of a traditional criminal tribunal“ (ibid: 135). Ciorciari and Heindel highlight “an

innovative scheme for victims to participate as civil parties in the criminal proceedings“ (2014: 372) as one of the bespoke experimental features, which is important and also subject to the common criticism that is brought forth while discussing the KRT.

With regard to these theoretical thoughts on the context of post-conflict society’s design choices of TJ, Ciorciari and Heindel state that:

One of the main arguments in favor of in-country hybrid tribunals is that they facilitate robust victim participation. Victims can more easily observe or participate in the proceedings, which offer them an opportunity to engage in truth-telling, contribute to the search for justice, and otherwise seek empowerment and a degree of personal and collective reconciliation. (ibid: 420)

In the original scheme, the ECCC provided victims with the possibility to enter the criminal proceedings as civil parties with “near-equal participatory rights as the Prosecution and the Defense“ (Werner & Rudy 2010: 301); a novelty to international or ad-hoc tribunals, as “anyone with a prima facie reason to be classified as a victim can be represented in cases as a Civil Party“ (Ainley 2014: 129). After the final judgment of the first case³, and because it was subject to substantial criticism, the initial scheme was changed in order to streamline the proceedings.⁴

A further issue in relation to the theoretical findings is the disappointment of the victims with regard to granted reparations. Ainley states that “there is no provision for the ECCC to award reparations to individuals, but there is scope to award collective or ‘moral’ reparations“ (ibid: 140-141). Numerous types of moral reparations were suggested by civil parties, but the Appeals Chamber “ruled that the Court had no jurisdiction to grant requests for reparation that would require the Cambodian authorities to act to provide the reparatory measures“ (ibid: 142).

Lastly, there is a constant financial instability, since “the ECCC’s funding architecture, which creates separate channels to finance each side of the Court, has

³ Against Kaing Guek Eav alias Duch, former Chairman of the Khmer Rouge S-21 Security Center (see: Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia 2015).

⁴ See: Werner and Rudy 2010: 301, 306 and McGonigle 2009: 139.

rendered it vulnerable to underfunding“ (Ciorciari & Heindel 2014: 418), which has led to continuous financial struggles, primarily on the Cambodian side with regards to covering employees’ payments. Although the UN, as well as the Cambodian government assured their commitment to fund the Court, Ciorciari and Heindel state they see “little reason to expect that this will put an end to the Court’s funding challenges“ (ibid: 419).

It is on these grounds when Ciorciari and Heindel summarized that “there is widespread agreement among legal analysts and human rights lawyers that *in toto*, the ECCC is not a model to be cloned“ (ibid: 437). Yet the UN calls for strategies which “must be holistic, incorporating integrated attention to individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or an appropriately conceived combination thereof” (United Nations Rule of Law 2004: paragraph 26). Whether such a call for strategies is mirrored or acknowledged by the Cambodian youth is discussed in Chapter 4 with close regard to the research findings. As this chapter is contextualizing the thesis, I will now turn to the debates around remembrance in the field of TJ.

2.4 Debates around Remembrance

As the the goal of this thesis is the establishment of an understanding of the Cambodian youth’s agency in constructing remembrance, it is necessary to understand the concept of remembrance prior to further investigating the data. A recent debate on *www.ictj.com* discusses the importance of remembrance and reconciliation for the field of TJ. Triggered by Rieff (2016a), the debate seeks answers to the question “Does collective remembrance of a troubled past impede reconciliation?” (Mersky 2016). As shown in the upcoming chapters, while not necessarily having to navigate themselves through the antipodes of *vengeance and forgetting*, this is nevertheless also a pressing question for the Cambodian youth.

In order to follow the discussion, it is mandatory to establish an understanding of the two concepts. Firstly, collective remembrance refers to an act of public recollection. It is the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public. The ‘public’ is the group that produces, expresses, and consumes it. What they create

is not a cluster of individual memories; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Collective memory is constructed through the action of groups and individuals in the light of day. Passive memory – understood as the personal recollections of a silent individual – is not collective memory, though the way we talk about our own memories is socially bounded. When people enter the public domain, and comment about the past – their own personal past, their family past, their national past, and so on – they bring with them images and gestures derived from their broader social experience. As Maurice Halbwachs put it, their memory is ‘socially framed’. When people come together to remember, they enter a domain beyond that of individual memory. (Winter 1999: 6) Reconciliation, is defined by Karen Brounéus as

a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgement of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace. (Brounéus 2009)

Both concepts highlight an interactive process, in which individual ‘recollections’ or ‘acknowledgements’ – experiences – are shared and create extended understanding beyond the boundaries of the individual. In case of collective remembrance the domain of individual memory is extended and in case of reconciliation beyond the healing of the individual. The question remains, do individual efforts of remembrance through a process that interacts with other individual’s memories inevitably lead to a sustained peace in post-conflict societies?

In her opening remarks on the debate Mersky (2016) opens the space for a discussion of an *imperative to remember* (Rieff 2016a) and the *duty to remember* (de Greiff 2016). In this context, she also raises further questions such as “Who decides whether to remember or forget, and does that make a difference?” and “Is there a difference between forgetting and denial — or when does forgetting become denial?”. This study suggests that such questions are directly linked to the internal struggles among the Cambodian youth. R.4 generalizes

We understand that there were bad things happening to our nation in the history, but we know that its all gone. So we just want to do something better for our country in the future. Actually there is nothing we can do about it anymore in a way. (R.4)

Hence, the two positions around an imperative and a duty to remember will be elaborated up

Arguing against the imperative to remember

David Rieff 's (2016a) standpoint in this debate is clear. He finds “the argument that it is always both an ethical and a political imperative to remember does not actually hold water either ethically or politically.” He challenges the imperative to remember in his recently published work (Rieff 2016b) “In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and its Ironies”, by asking “whether in some places and at some moments in history what has ensured the health of societies and individuals alike has been not their capacity for remembering but their ability to forget?”

The reason for Rieff's argument is argued through historical examples of remembrance, especially the conflicts in Northern Ireland and in the Balkans. In these settings, one could witness how “remembrance has provided the toxic adhesive that was needed to cement old grudges and conflicting martyrologies, (...) for generations, if not for centuries” (ibid.). Adding that “in the fullness of time eventually everything will be forgotten”, Rieff accepts remembrance only as a means to an end and not an end in itself, and therefore refers to it as a on strategy rather than a moral imperative (Rieff 2016a). In being a means to end it can be used in various ways, which leaves remembrance vulnerable to impeding reconciliation, which is why he rejects this, stating

(...) View that to remember serves the interests of peace and helps in the creation of an atrocity- and torture-rejecting public culture. (...) But there are also conflicts and societies where memory does not mitigate but rather serves as a goad to horror. (Rieff 2016a)

That is extensively discussed by Visoka (2016) in his article “Arrested Truth: Transitional Justice and the Politics of Remembrance in Kosove”. In accordance with Rieff, Visoka also finds that the documentation of war crimes (remembrance) “was used by different actors for different purposes” (Visoka 2016: 2), which stresses the claim that remembrance could merely be a strategy, a means to an end. And indeed, Visoka asserts, ”mono-ethnic practices of remembrance in post-conflict Kosovo have

contributed to the monopolization of the space and the rights for remembering the past“ (Visoka 2016: 9).

So if remembrance is a strategy, than it eventually becomes important who holds the agency to employ such a strategy, and for what purpose. Such an observation leaves Rieff (2016a) with the dilemma “the problem is that who is to say who will determine when a community is abusing memory and when it is rightly appealing to it?”– or to pick an example from the Cambodian case, is the “Victory Day” righteously celebrated as such by Cambodia’s ruling party as an end in itself or is the yearly celebration merely a strategy and abusing collective memory? The points raised here explicitly ask the question if remembering is always the right thing to do in modern day Cambodia.

Arguing for the duty to remember

Conversely, Pablo de Greiff, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-recurrence, argued with regard to remembrance being merely a strategy in the fullness of time that “failing to acknowledge violations of the past, far from fostering reconciliation, is an invitation to instrumentalize the past” (de Greiff 2016). In other words, whereas Rieff suggests a possibility that the concept of remembrance can be used as a strategy, de Greiff goes as far as to say failing to acknowledge, or willfully forgetting, would almost inevitably lead to instrumentalization.

De Greiff therefore shifts the focus away from the question whether remembrance or forgetting is disadvantageous towards the importance of acknowledging past wrong-doings in its specific contexts. He states that “the discussion, therefore, cannot be about whether they (societies) will remember, but about whether the abuses will receive public recognition or not” (de Greiff 2016). Also, he criticizes Rieff’s argument of violence originating from remembrance, as in the cases of Northern Ireland and the Balkans, on grounds of being at an “excessively broad level of generality” (de Greiff 2016), although he adds that “plainly there can be acts of collective remembrance that impede social reconciliation”. He nevertheless clarifies that “those with dubious political intentions do not have a monopoly on the strategic deployment of the past (...)” (de Greiff 2016). In other words, Rieff’s point of departure

is on a too general level. The way Rieff argues against the imperative to remember blanks out key points, including

The question does not depend in most cases on individual memories but on the transmission of far more elaborate constructs that depend on a certain logic, the question of whether acts of remembrance help or hinder social reconciliation depends on examining the method for “producing” them. (de Greiff 2016)

For de Greiff, remembrance is a product that is constructed in specific contexts, by specific methods and derives from the (public) awareness that someone’s rights were violated. The most important characteristics that prevent recurring acts of violence are its public recognition (in the sense of an all-embracing societal recognition) of a rights violation, and the reliability of methods to produce accounts of past atrocities.⁵ For de Greiff the answer to the question of whether collective remembrance impedes reconciliation depends on whether measures are taken to construct a historical account that is “meant to provide recognition to victims (not merely as victims, but primarily as rights-holders), in order to foster civic trust, to strengthen the rule of law, and to promote reconciliation” (de Greiff 2016). He summarizes the duty to remember by claiming that

The point of transitional justice truth telling (...), at the national level can be put in terms of the effort to establish the conditions under which different groups can be considered to be equal members of a shared political community. (ibid)

For the purpose of this thesis it will therefore be crucial throughout the remaining chapters to outline whether the Cambodian youth can be considered as equal members of Cambodia’s political community.

⁵ See de Greiff 2016.

A further key factor is what can be called the ambivalence of remembrance in Cambodia. This last section will serve as the prerequisite to the research findings, which will reveal that the rather theoretical discussion of remembrance is mirrored by the data and the Cambodian youth in the field.

2.5 The Ambivalence of Remembrance in the Cambodia

Remembrance, away from theory, may be ambivalently received in Cambodia. Anecdotally, it is common, and the question remains, whether ambivalence is not only prevalent among the Cambodian youth, but also among professionals.

For example, one of the leading historians on Cambodia, David Chandler, opens the chapter “Revolution in Cambodia”, which covers the Democratic Kampuchea and the Khmer Rouge regime, of his essential “A History of Cambodia” with the words

It is uncertain whether historians of Cambodia a hundred years from now will devote as much space to the country’s brief revolutionary period as to the much longer, more complex, and more mysterious Angkorean era. For nearly all mature Cambodians in the early twenty first century, however, the three years, eight months and twenty days that followed the capture of Phnom Penh in April 1975 were a traumatic and unforgettable period. (Chandler 2008: 255)

Chandler confronts us with the factor of time and speculates about a shift in what historians will consider most striking about Cambodian history in a hundred years from now. As prioritized as the KR regime, with regard to not only Cambodian history, might be among scholars of various fields as of now, there might be a point in time where the memory of crimes like genocide and crimes against humanity loses significance. Rieff calls this the “temporal outer limits of a society’s capacity for remembrance, commemoration, celebration, and mourning” (Rieff 2016b: 130). In the case of Cambodia, the data revealed ambivalence between remembrance and forgetting that suggests that the temporal outer limits mark a point in time, which is closer than we

might expect. Having been asked about the importance of the KRT for the Cambodian youth, R.1 replied

It is important for us, but in terms of talking about it,... Not many students talk about it, because most of the younger generation have not been through the regime. They didn't suffer directly from the regime. They did not pay a lot of attention (to the Khmer Rouge history and the court proceedings). They are feeling bad for the regime, but they want to go on and focus more on developing the country and growing themselves for the country. (R.1)

S/he indicates that besides “feeling bad for the regime” there is apparently not much interest for the Khmer Rouge history and the proceedings of the KRT among young Cambodians. As a reason for such a lack of interest s/he identifies the fact that “they have not been through the regime”. R.7 comes to a similar conclusion and goes as far as laughing about the idea of remembrance

Because I was born when my country received peace. So there was no more war, no more armed conflict. I do not know. They just said like ‘We kill.’. They killed people, who doesn't work. They killed knowledgeable people. Ah, just like, who cares? Yeah. (laughing) Seriously! (laughing). (R.7)

S/he explains her/his indifference based on the fact that present day Cambodia is in peace. The rhetorical question “Who cares?” in combination with laughter clearly indicates that the respondent does not feel any need to remember an event that s/he has not lived through on her/his own.

The indifference towards the Khmer Rouge history among the Cambodian youth is nevertheless contrasted by their empathy for the victims and survivors, as R.1B explains

For us, the next generation we do not really feel like stressed about that (the Khmer Rouge history), because we haven't come across that. But for the old people, they are really getting angry about that. They really matter with that problem. They want to punish those people and show that people have to get the end result back. (R.1B)

Although s/he also expresses the lack of personal experiences, s/he understands that history matters “for the old people”. In both statements, empathy for the victims and their longing for justice, as well as indifference based on the lack of personal experiences, are recurring themes. Together, these two points reveal anecdotal ambivalence around remembrance in Cambodia, not one hundred years after the end of the KR regime, but already after less than forty years.

As plausible as the argument of a lack of personal experiences with a genocidal regime might be, it is unlikely that this is the only reason for the youth to minimize their priorities of remembrance. Chapter 3 will therefore highlight other research findings titled “*obstacles to remembrance*”, which may make it difficult for the Cambodian youth to accept the collective remembrance, which they are subjected to for all their life, and offer incentives to challenge such collective memory.

CHAPTER III

OBSTACLES TO REMEMBRANCE

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 provided background information including a brief account of Cambodian history, Transitional Justice and recent debates around remembrance. This chapter will now focus on specific research findings, including a thorough analysis of what will be referred to as *obstacles to remembrance*.

The data revealed in total four issues that have a direct impact on remembrance in Cambodia, which are as follows. The first obstacle is concerned with Cambodia's educational system, primarily how young Cambodians learn about the Khmer Rouge history. The second obstacle is an inter-generation conflict between the parental generation and my respondents. The data also revealed that there is an institutionalization of fear that is shared by both, the parental generation and the respondents, forming a third obstacle. The fourth and last obstacle touches upon a unique factor of Khmer versus Khmer violence during the Khmer Rouge era. Taken all these obstacles into account, it is accepted that these obstacles impact on how young Cambodians engage with the concept of remembrance outlined in chapter 2.

3.2 The Education System

If they finished high school, they should know at least something about the Khmer Rouge.(R.3B)

What R.3B mentions here within the context of the Cambodian educational system, and with regard to Khmer Rouge education, is not literally straightforward, as it seems to be. R.3B implies two issues that impact on how young Cambodians learn about the KR history and therefore how they remember. Firstly, due to the focus on high

schools, it is questionable whether all students that are not attending high school are receiving any formal Khmer Rouge education at all. Secondly, will learning only a small amount about the Khmer Rouge be sufficient to remember in a way that prevents it from being a mere strategy, but reconciles the society?

As education is one of the most important factors it is necessary to investigate how education in Cambodia is perceived by the youth in general. R.1 mentions this prominently at the beginning of the very first interview. S/he states “education is the most important thing for the country in my opinion” (R.1). This view is mutually proposed by many of the respondents. R.4, for example, believes “that education is one of the important things. Everything starts from education” (R.4). Furthermore, it is acknowledged by R.2 that insufficient education around the KR history might lead to a decline in interest among their peers, which can result in an instance where “some of the young generation is not interested in the KR regime” (R.2). Clearly, this is an important factor, as R.8 admits that when s/he was in high school “I was not interested in history, because the class was so boring!” (R.8).

One of the main problems appears to be that history as a subject, in general and related to KR history in particular, as provided for this generation in schools “is not very deep in story” (R.2). Another respondent specifies ‘Not very deep in story’ as “like, when we study in the school, it is just only one half-hour session that is talking about the history of Cambodia and then just let it go” (R.1B). Both R.2 and R.1B point towards a lack of thorough, formal KR education. And in fact it is only recently that a compelling textbook has been used – “A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)” by Khamboly Dy (2007). Prof. Ciorciari mentioned in the expert interview that “certainly, once you get into primary and secondary age range, than there is a clear and confounding factor in Cambodia, which is that until recently there was almost no mention of the Khmer Rouge period in the schools” and Khamboly Dy asserts that “in 2002, Hun Sen ordered the withdrawal of all 12th grade social studies textbooks, which were not returned until May 2011” (Khamboly 2015: 166). Many respondents stated concern about not learning this period thoroughly enough, yet Khamboly Dy also found that the content of the government textbooks was “far too brief to ensure that young Cambodians understood what really happened at that time, or to allow for more critical thinking and

deep inquiry into the history” (ibid: 163). Such expert observations are mirrored in my data:

First in primary, then in secondary, and in high school there is not really... They don't really understand about the Khmer Rouge. There are only some assignments for them to read, but the teachers in the high schools do not mainly focus on the Khmer Rouge. (R.3)

This refers back to the initial questions raised by R.1. It appears that in primary and secondary schools the student generation now in their early 20s did not receive any KR education at all and only insufficiently during their high school years. R.8 clarifies “I started to know about the (Khmer Rouge) history when I was in high school. (...) But it is not much!” (R.8).

Reports differ on when, how and to what extent students learn or desire to learn about the Khmer Rouge period in school. A possible factor for such contradictions and the difference in quality and amount of KR education could also be differences in public and private education. R.1 finds that a public university “probably has more restrictions to the topic” (R.1). A thought that is verified by R.5B, as s/he was attending a public school “and if we come in the round council meeting, then the guard in the school is going to ask ‘What are you talking about? Is it related to politics?’ and then they will break our meeting” (R.5B).

Other factors in formal education include political influences, which might evoke just as many critical views, as (biased) teachers do, or the quality of the teachers. R.3 stated that most problematic was that teachers mainly drew from their personal experiences

The quality of the teachers is not so good, because they, with regard to the Khmer Rouge, just know from the experiences that other people were talking about. All teachers, they just know experiences and they do not know much about the history. (R.3)

Teachers that rely on their personal experiences face even more challenges when it comes to being judged by students. R.8B provided a critical account of the teachers

Our teachers, they do not really know well. They just tell us their own experiences. Not what is written in the books. So if they are biased..., if they just support the movement of the Khmer Rouge or the current government, they will just tell us something that is not neutral. (R.8B)

Interestingly, another respondent uses the suspicion of bias to justify the lack of proper KR education “I think that (bias) is one of the reasons why in this time most people are trying to exclude it (Khmer Rouge education), because they are trying to reach a really non-biased, untainted analysis” (R.3B). Biased experiences, not only of educators, but also family members and friends, and the suspicion of bias is analyzed in chapter 4. In summary, being critical is an active choice that every student can make, and in doing so, they are both expressing their agency in the educational process and also for the collective remembrance.

The lack of a thorough KR education combined with the respondents critical stance on education contrasts their desire to learn more. R.7B expresses that “we really want to know what, the stuff..., like, what they did during the Khmer Rouge. They (the students) want to know clearly” (R.7B). Such desire seems to be ever increasing with a higher degree of education. “I can say if they (the students) can get higher education, talk to a lot of people and get different perspectives, I think that it will be the time that they can have more motivation and support to do so” (R.4B). Interestingly, such desire to learn is contrasted by a presumed overflow of information, as some students “heard about it (the Khmer Rouge history) all the time. Everywhere (laughing)” (R.5). This overflow of knowledge and learning is used as an explanation by R.6 for the limited degree to which the Cambodian youth learns about the Khmer Rouge in school. S/he summarizes “in high school, actually, they (the teachers) will not... They teach history in high school, but they are not focusing much on that”, because the “young generation know what happen during that time. So we (the students) do not have to focus much on it. There is nothing we change. Like we know, it is better or not” (R.6).

The factors of respondents becoming disinterested through a lack of teaching, a perception of bias in education, while still desiring to learn more, leads to the preliminary conclusion that the respondents actively refuse to engage with the flawed, formal KR education offered by Cambodian Schools. Adding R.6's comments that learning about the KR or not does not empower nor change history implies that under the different educational circumstances it is a reasonable choice not to learn only limited parts of the history. This leaves the respondents vulnerable to the authority's politicization of history and a biased institutionalization of knowledge, and hence to forgetting. The criticism is justified, as Khamboly Dy found a political agenda with regard to the KR education, as "in 2000s, teaching genocide in Cambodian classrooms encountered a new set of political marginalization, this time by the government's policies toward peace and reconciliation at the expense of justice and memory" (Khamboly 2015: 295).

3.3 Inter-Generation Conflict

So therefore, you actually can see the difference. (R.9)

Besides the formal education system, there are other obstructions that also have the potential to serve as *obstacles to remembrance*, which are fueled by the respondent's skepticism towards any form of dissemination of knowledge about the KR and remembrance. R.9 speaks rather vaguely about differences seen by post-conflict generations when s/he expressed that thought while talking about her/his mom's experiences with starvation and begging in the KR period. The data indicates that there are divisions of various types (or 'differences' in the words of the respondent) inherent in the Cambodian society, which proves to be *obstacles to remembrance*.

The clearest division in the Cambodian society related to the KR history is the difference between those who lived through the period and those born after the country was liberated, manifesting itself in an inter-generational conflict about individual experiences. There are the victims and survivors of the KR era and conversely

the young generation that has not directly suffered from the KR and “who actually enjoy that privilege of peace” (R.3B).

The most apparent form of this division is the way people give value to daily life activities. Activities such as eating, leisure time etc. are given much higher value by the old generation, whereas the young generation take these for granted. This is most apparent within the family, as R.5 states “and also, they are always comparing. When we do not eat the food and then they say ‘Oh in my generation, during the Khmer Rouge regime, we had nothing to eat’ (laughing). Something like that they are always mentioning” (R.5). But there are other institutions next to the nuclear family where such a division in generations becomes obvious, as the same respondent also remarks “the teachers keep talking about the Khmer Rouge regime. They keep comparing our generation to their generation” (R.5). Being subject to such an ongoing comparison in family and school has a direct impact on how the Cambodian youth relates to the KR history. Being asked about how s/he feels about the comparison of her/his parents’ generation and her/his own, R.6 admits “sometimes I feel angry with her. I just do not feel good when she compares” (R.6). The data suggests that such a feeling is common among the youth, as R.8B remembers

When I was young, I was just like 5 or 6 years old, they used this kind of thing. It is not about telling me history, but about threatening me. Like, obeying something and it is kind of very cruel to do something like that. (R.8B)

Crucial at this point for the research problem, is not the individual respondent’s feeling when being subject to a inter-generation comparison, but to what actions such a comparison and the attached feelings lead to. Being asked why s/he would not feel good about such a comparison, s/he highlights the fact that “it passed already” only to conclude, “so they (the parents), you (everyone else), have to forget it” (R.6). R.8B comes to an almost similar conclusion with regard to her/his feeling towards being threatened by comparisons, as “kids hate to listen to rules (...). But when you threaten me, I just ignore it. Actually, it was not the matter that I did not believe (the Khmer Rouge history), but I just ignored it, because I did not want to listen to the rules” (R.8B).

The above-mentioned accounts from the students show how Cambodian children are subjected to their parents' individual accounts from early childhood, which has important ramifications for their conception of remembrance. Those ramifications manifest themselves through the reported inter-generational conflict, which leads to some students attaching negative feelings to their parents' use of the history as an educational measure. These include reacting with a call to either ignore what their parents told them or willfully forgetting what happened. Again, it is important when making such calls or demands, the respondents express action and agency so that they are making active decisions to be ignorant or forget. A finding revealed in the education system discussion that is important again is what many respondents articulate as "disbelief" when they first heard about the Khmer Rouge (see chapter 4.2).

3.4 Internalization of Fears

If you would ask any of the elder generation (about a possible return of the Khmer Rouge), they would think that it could happen any day of the week. (R.9)

R.9 suggests another topic present throughout most of the interviews – fear. In contrast to the inter-generational conflict around individual experiences with the KR regime, fear seems to be a feeling that is mutually shared by young Cambodians and their parents alike. Most of the respondents suffer from fear drawn from their (grand-)parent's traumatic experiences and their fear that history might happen again. When R.9 specifies "if you would go ask any elders 'Is there a possibility of a second Khmer Rouge overtake?', hundred out of hundred would say 'yes'" (R.9). This fear has to be put into context with Kiernan's finding that the KR "exerted more power over its citizens than any state in world history. It controlled and directed their public and private lives more closely than government had ever done" (Kiernan 2005: 464). "They (the grandparents) are afraid of Khmer Rouge coming back is the only reason. (...) And that's why they prefer to stay silent rather than to speak up or vote for the people. (...) I think in my generation as well, because I used to think so" (R.4B). Such insecurity leaves a

remarkable impact on the youth. R.3B elaborates, “it is the influence that the younger generation receive from their parents. They got that fear that they had during the Khmer Rouge regime” (R.3B). In other words, young Khmer internalize their (grand-)parent’s fear. This in turn impacts their stance towards politics and the transitional agenda on the one hand, and remembrance on the other.

It’s like they do not want to talk about politics or they do not want to talk about the thinking about the government, about the Organization, about the Ongkan and that kind of stuff. If they talk about it, there will be bad results. And nothing ever changed. (R.3B)

There is clearly a political dimension in present day Cambodia that has an influence on remembrance and that political dimension takes the form of being scared of challenging authorities for the sake of peace. Interestingly, the comment *that nothing ever changed* is common, so to answer why remembering this clearly indicates that some students would rather not talk about the KR period and current political issues, as they believe that this will lead nowhere positive and offers the opportunity for this information to be used by a different thinking government.

R.1B supports this claim by stating that “people are thinking of that stuff and they are really scared about that”, and highlights, again, the fear saying “and if you and me are trying to raise up our voice very loud without thinking about our environment, we will be put in jail or we will face danger” (R.1B). This *fear* is more specified, as it is not portrayed as an abstract fear of future events, but a more specific fear of having to go to jail – fear of the authorities. Analyzing this line of thinking, R.3B concludes, “it is the influence of the history, which leads the younger generation to not think about politics. Not just because politicians use their, our history. Of course we are scared of talking about politics. It is just, we are just scared of talking about politics“ (R.3B).

That such fear is truly internalized becomes obvious when the fear turns into self-censorship. For R.6b ”I think that it is OK that we can't speak what we want, because, we, we do not want to polarize, we do not want to blame one another or something” (R.6b). The fact that s/he is aware where the fear comes from “the older

people. It is like my parents told me again and again ‘Do not mess with the politics’” (R.6B), but still is not questioning it, evokes an even stronger impression of internalization. Similarly, R.1B suggests that safety concerns that also lead to self-censorship - even among students that would like to be active members of civil society -, stating “even I am not really involved in any political protest, or political interest. I am just involved in activities that can secure my safety. This goes for me, and the youth that is involved with society” (R.1B).

Prof. Ciorciari mirrored these statements in his input. He stated that he finds that “it is also clearly true that in some instances government intimidation is a factor in young peoples’ decisions, whether or not to take up causes” (Ciorciari expert interview). A possible conclusion of such intimidation and actions that are accordingly taken by young Cambodians can be

The leaders (of protests) can run away to other countries, but for us as a follower, one will be subject to violence or put into jail. This is the problem that currently happens. We, as the academic students, chose not to do in that way. We chose to do it in a silent way, in an academic way. (R.1B)

Prof. Ciorciari speculates in this context

That it is socially uncomfortable for people to stake out clear political positions. Another possibility is that they are concerned about adopting positions that would put them at odds with the government, where they either seek future employment or where they have family connections or where they fear some sorts of adverse effects on their career or academic prospects. (Ciorciari expert interview)

Although such thoughts are not backed by thorough investigation, they raise the question of incentives to partaking in remembrance. In the case of many young, urban, educated Cambodians, it appears that there are no personal gains from remembrance, only disadvantages. Internalized fears in addition to intimidation by

authorities, when criticism towards politics has been publicly expressed, cause respondents to choose to be silent rather than raise their voices. Again, individual agency and an active decision, in combination with the lack of appropriate incentives to do otherwise, cause students to turn their back on the history.

3.5 The Auto-Genocide Dimension

The fourth relevant obstacle to remembrance is concerned with the singularity of the Cambodian mass atrocities. This subsection draws from the expert interview with Prof. Ciorciari and his extensive research among young Cambodians where he “heard many, many times the exact same narrative” (Ciorciari expert interview) to same information revealed in the collected data for this study.

Then we studied the KR and I remember that my first thought was ‘Unbelievable!’ and ‘How can they kill each other?’. They killed their own nationality. (R.2)

R.2 expresses how the specific act of killing their own people influences her/him in a way that causes her/him to second guess what s/he learned about the KR. Prof. Ciorciari describes this fourth obstacle to remembrance in the following terms “there is something about what I would refer to as an auto-genocide that appears to be particularly difficult for people to come to terms with on a personal level” (Ciorciari expert interview). And indeed R.6, representative for many of the respondents¹, asked rather desperately during the course of the interview

¹ “I can’t believe that the KR soldiers did that to the same people as the Cambodians. I do not believe that.”

(Respondent 3);

“And they are Cambodian! I would never ever believe that this would happen in my own country and there were many people suffering a lot in the past.”

(Respondent 8);

“How can the same race be killing... like the same group killing off themselves?”
(Respondent 9)

Why? Why did they have to do it with their own people? We are Khmer.
So why? Why they did they do this? Why did they do it to our people?
(R.6)

Several respondents were struggling with the fact that many of the victims of KR inflicted violence, be it directly through executions or indirectly through hard labor and starvation, were ethnically Khmer. As the section on *(Un-)trustworthy Narratives* in chapter 4 will also reveal, Khmer versus Khmer violence, in combination with limited formal Khmer Rouge education, has an remarkable impact on the judgments of the youth. This causes a situation in which “to a considerable extent, when young Khmer hear when parents tell the story, they simply find it implausible that the country would self-immolate in that fashion” (Ciorciari expert interview).

The auto-genocide dimension appears to be the first of the obstacles to remembrance that provokes no other action or agency besides challenging the established historical accounts of the KR era. This may appear as a form of ahistorical behavior at first sight, but is an expression of one of the most important research findings. Even more, to some experts the mistrust towards or challenging of established historical accounts is a healthy impulse, as So Farina finds “it shows that young people they are smart. They also want to make sure that there are different sources that they can believe. I mean reliable sources” (Farina expert interview). The tendency to second-guess the recent Cambodian collective remembrance of the KR, is the starting point of what Bagot-Jewitt calls “bottom up” acts of remembrance that are “driven from the heart of the community” (2011) and contrasted by state-centric acts of remembrance, such as the “Victory Day”. Healthy criticism and the challenging of the established order provoke mixed signals around remembrance. Such mixed signals are at the core of what will be discussed in chapter 4.

CHAPTER IV

MIXED SIGNALS AROUND REMEMBRANCE

4.1 Introduction

This thesis has discussed transitional justice and the aspect of remembrance in general, as well as the main obstacles to remembrance for young Cambodians in particular. Following on this chapter will now illuminate the mixed signals around remembrance. Such signals touch upon various topics that serve as the basis of the decision making process.

Chapter 2.4 provided theoretical input with regard to this question. At this point, I will connect the concepts remembrance and reconciliation with the respondent's voices by highlighting their preferences as revealed by the data. The nature of such mixed signals matches with the individual's feelings and preferences on certain topics, which are in turn related to the obstacles of remembrance. These range from mistrust or the suspicion of biased, individual narratives through to a disconnection and disappointment with the KRT, indifference towards memorial sites and to diverse judgments on the role of justice and religious beliefs.

4.2 (Un-)trustworthy Narratives and Real Evidence

I have to accept the truth, because it is what it is.(R.9)

R.9 expresses an imperative of accepting the truth that is common among many of the respondents and closely connected to the educational system as an obstacle to remembrance. This imperative draws from the impression of an unavoidable truth that affects every aspect of a young Cambodian's life growing up in transitioning Cambodia. But as the data suggest, for many respondents accepting the *truth* does not always refer to accepting an objective truth as proposed by the educational system, but

rather to a subjective truth as taught by parents, other family members and teachers/educators as representatives of the educational system. Although the KR era and the scale of the atrocities is well documented as an undeniable historical event, nearly all respondents admittedly distrusted their parents accounts at first encounter.

One factor for such tendency to mistrust was already detailed under chapter 3.2 – the fact that the respondents did not directly live through the KR and therefore do not have their own experiences “I was born in a very peaceful family. Was born in a very peaceful local society. So, if you come and tell me ‘People who are knowledgeable have to be killed!’ so can I believe that as boy? No, I do not believe that” (R.7). What matters here is that “it sounds like so different from us that we cannot believe it” (R.1B). Or with the words of R.9 “you know how to say ‘It doesn't matter until you come across it’? It is true, because if one has not experienced something, it is difficult for them to try and to relate their emotion or their feelings or their pain towards it” (R.9). As people that in contrast can relate their emotions, feelings or their pain towards it (the victims and survivors) “will be more emotional or feel stronger”, R.4B finds that it will be “very different when we came across it and when we just heard about it” (R.4B). Such observation causes the respondents to be skeptical about the accuracy of their family member’s experiences, as “sometimes people, when they say things, they do not say only the real, but also connect it to their feelings” (R.6B). And R.1B adds when parents and/or grandparents “talk to the next generation, somehow they might be exaggerate or just not really serious” (R.1B). Accounts of the KR era are even more untrustworthy in cases where the parents themselves lacked direct experiences and have not been living through it, which leaves their children not believing, “because there mommy, their parents were not being involved at that time” (R.5B).

The respondents felt even more suspicion towards the official historiography and express a lack of the whole picture. “In high school we learn about the story, but it is not the whole story” (R.8) and furthermore “We did not know how Pol Pot got the power. Like, what really was going on? What happened? Why? We did not really got to know that from the school” (R.5). Such a lack of the whole picture or a prevailing mystery about the KR rise to power results in the respondent’s relativizing historical events “I think and I feel like it is not because of Cambodia alone that, we can have the Khmer Rouge, because of the international engagement during that time” (R.5).

The suspicion of exaggerating or bias is even prevalent among respondents that were not struggling to believe what their family members told them.

At first, yeah, I believed it. But I also have the feeling that they were probably over exaggerating, because they talk about how they were running to the jungles and all the things to trying to escape. But then I realized, I came to a point, that their words are true, because facts have proven it (R.9).

At this point facts and their importance for the concept of remembrance will have to be discussed. What are the important facts that might bring students to not only accept a truth that they deem too subjective, biased, and exaggerated, but to remember an objective historical event, whose account is constructed by means as outlined by de Greiff in chapter 2.4.? Respondents call the facts that made them believe their parents' narratives '*real evidence*'. But being asked about what real evidence constitutes, the respondents only answered vaguely and with an apparent subtitle of suspicion, as in the cases of R.3B "what I think is that real evidence does not have to be something that is physical. Real evidence can come from the testimony of the victim. Even though there might be some biases" (R.3B) and R.7B "even like in the Court when only hearing the voices, they cannot believe. The real evidence is really important for us. We can understand more and it is clear". One of the few things the respondents can agree on is the importance of real evidence being more than an individual narrative of history – that is to say an individual memory. R.8B's speculation that "the real evidence for them is what the other people talk to them. Not only their parents" (R.8B) is also highlighted by R.1B, who finds "if more people come together and share that, (...), it is a little bit more confident for us to believe in it" (R.1B). In this context Prof. Ciorciari explains "only later in school or other venues if students encounter what they would consider authoritative evidence, they begin to believe and understand" (Ciorciari expert interview).

Nevertheless there is no universal agreement among the respondents that the lack of authoritative evidence, biased individual memories, and the lack of personal experiences with the genocidal regime are factors that inevitably lead to mistrust and a

disconnect with their country's history and therefore the refusal of remembrance. Some respondent clearly disagree with such a line of thought "I think it is not OK, because we have to think about the other feelings (even though they personally did not come across it)" (R.7B) and instead ask "it doesn't matter until we can see it? Look, history does not make... it does not work that way. Why would we write all this history?" (R.3B).

At this point it can be seen how mixed the signals about (un-)trustworthy narratives and remembrance are. As established previously, the respondents concur that (to them) real evidence has to be more than individual narratives. On this basis it is questionable, whether authoritative evidence can be provided by schools or other venues of formal education. As the analysis of the obstacles to remembrance has shown, the education system has problems, which in combination with the inter-generational conflicts and other obstacles to remembrance causes the youth to mistrust parental accounts and formal genocide education. Given the skepticism of victims' and survivors' narratives, it seems likely that mistrust will prevail as long as such institutions pursue remembrance in terms of narrating memories. I argue that the skepticism and mistrust develops into a situation where young Cambodians challenge these accounts, with a suspicion that is an active choice, and provides an example of their agency in the construction of remembrance¹. By negotiating their own terms on what is considered to be real or authoritative evidence, they are self-constructing a bottom up collective remembrance.

4.3 Justice

Because not only us that suffer we need that justice, but they, who committed the crimes, also need that. (R.6B)

Analyzing the data, it quickly became obvious that 'justice' is also a topic that needs to be discussed in the context of mixed signals to remembrance. In the quote

¹ See de Greiff's position as outlined in chapter 2.4.

above, R.6B states that justice is not a concept that can be applied only to one particular group of post-conflict societies. S/he highlights that it is imperative to find justice for victims and perpetrators alike. Although justice in such terms goes together with the concept of reconciliation², there is doubt among the respondents that all-embracing justice is feasible, as “there is, I think, there is no... they cannot find justice to all Cambodian people. Just for a few” (R.2). Although almost every respondent referred in one way or another to the concept of justice, none of them defined what they would consider as justice. And even when directly being asked to define justice, respondents were struggling to conceptualize it much more than to argue, “when you kill someone, you have to be punished” (R.7). Nevertheless, there were some commonplaces.

Most commonly respondents would define justice in terms of a judicial process. R.9 finds that “if the court system has to put these people to trial in order to seek justice for the people who (...) been through it and survived it, I think if that is what it takes, it should be carried out” (R.9). Accordingly, R.5 demands a just court,

They (the perpetrators) just live for a lifetime in jail or something like that. That is to find justice for them (the victims). And it is [important] not have corruption in that [court]. That is justice. (...) I want justice as a strong court. No corruption. (R.5B)

Another respondent added the notion of reconciliation to the judicial process “justice means that they can live together and that they can (...) agree with the judgment from the Court, which (...) will help them to make peace. For sure!” (R.3). “How necessary peace is to a country” was also acknowledged by R.1, who invoked the concept of remembrance, for s/he goes on “(...) people should look at this kind of... we should not repeat the same mistakes again” (R.1). R.9 summarizes the above-mentioned factors of justice as beneficial for survivors/victims and perpetrators alike

Justice would probably mean, although they are living in their last minutes of life, something like house arrest (...). It would not equalize

² As discussed in chapter 2.4.

what they have done, but it would to some extent (...) show them that their actions came back and bit them later on; for them to know what they have done and to realize what they have put people through. (R.9)

But there are also cases, where the definition of justice does not refer to reconciliation and remembrance, but to the inhibitions as discussed in the contexts of (un-)trustworthy narratives and suspicions of exaggeration, as well as the implausibility of Khmer versus Khmer violence. R.6B's definition, for example, is closely connected with discovering the truth, as s/he wants "to know who is the real leader and who created that structure that [let] everything become like that" (R.6B). In order to discover such a truth the obligation of justice therefore is to "collect all the ideas and (...) what really the truth is. The truth, is how bad the crime was. Like that. If it goes through that, I think its good" (R.6B). Or with the words of R.8B "the real thing is to discover. It is justice for me" (R.8B). This once more indicates how influential the education system as an obstacle and the resulting mixed signals around (un-)trustworthy narratives must be with regard to the socialization of young Cambodians. The data did not reveal specific hints on the reasons for how individual respondents define justice. The only thing that all respondents had in common was the fact that once asked about their definition, they did not refrain from answering; (as randomly this might have been) taking an active part in the negotiations of how to process past mass atrocities.

4.4 The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia – Mixed Responses to the Mechanism

How can we ensure the justice? (...) To be just like ‘OK, we have [the] Khmer Rouge Tribunal, [so] then the real things will be discovered soon’? That is just shit for me. (R.8B)

The KRT’s specific character has already been discussed in the background chapter. This paragraph focuses on the dimensions from R.8B’s initial quote, where s/he raises questions of justice, evidence that might be discovered and the uselessness, to put it mildly, of such efforts. During the discussion of the (un-)trustworthy narratives and the respondents’ concepts of justice, it was discovered that there is a close connection between justice and the (biased and exaggerated?) truth. Although the particular design of the KRT could in theory cater for the respondents’ needs to combine justice and truth, R.8B nevertheless comes to a devastating conclusion about the justice efforts provided by the KRT.

However, not all of the respondents were as negative about the KRT. As the individual definitions of justice put forward by the students show, they understand that judicial processes can provide a form of justice for at least some parts of the Cambodian society. Accordingly R.6B finds “if we not have the Tribunal, (...) they [would] still try to deliver justice to them. And (...) her brother lived or died for nothing” (R.6B), while R.5B acknowledges that in case the KRT “if it can (...)” operate with certain standards and “(...) when they have sentences and prosecution, it can (...) decrease or deduct some of their (the victims) [suffering] from them” (R.5B). On the contrary, it was also pointed out that some respondents defined justice in terms of discovering the real truth and that they doubt whether the KRT is able to deliver this. This leaves the KRT not only failing its main purpose of delivering justice, but also makes it useless for the respondents whose priority is discovering the truth.

A factor here appears to be how knowledge about the KRT is being passed on through the education system, as R.5 states “And maybe we really do not know much about what’s going on in the Court, and then we did not catch up like what is going on. I think we just did not get it. We did not [and] we do not know what is going on” (R.5).

This causes difficult outcomes as, for respondent 1B explains, “the way they (schools, universities) bring the students, which do not really know anything about it, and make them go there, it is just a destructive way. It is not a sustainable way when they go there and are bored” (R.1B). Such lack of knowledge combined with the students’ skepticism and mistrust, alongside and the KRT’s flaws, results in an attitude towards the KRT - among the students - that can probably best be described as ‘uselessness’.

As such, there is a common understanding that mirrors the KRT’s supposed ‘uselessness’ to some respondents, as “there will not be anything better between if we do it and if we do not do it. We will still be the same. It is not changing anything” (R.6), because “whatever the decision is, it does not make any change” (R.4). Reasons for not being able to make a change are the high age of the perpetrators, as “they are going to pass away anyway eventually” (R.9), and the fact that the Court is perceived as not being independent, for R.2 finds “it is not of much help. If it is like an independent Court, I will believe it” (R.2)³. R.1 summarizes “I think it is pretty dumb for people to really depend on the Court to find them justice” (R.1).

In contrast it is accepted that the KRT’s functions as an institution that preserves knowledge and should help to prevent future atrocities. “The *one* good function is that at least they still keep the history of the Khmer Rouge being told to the next generation” (R.8B). Which is, as peace was found to be important for the respondents, a highly ranked priority, “because no one want to repeat the history. That is why we want to teach the younger children to know about how bad it was” (R.8). Without the KRT putting the perpetrators on trial “most of the information will [be lost]. But if you are trying to do that (to trial them) it still reminds the youth, another youth” (R.1B). ‘Another youth’ in this context most likely refers to generations to come. But again, even as many respondents see the importance of having the tribunal in its function

³ The perception that the KRT is not independent stems from the fact that it is located within the Cambodian judicial system. It was already pointed out in chapter 2.3.2 that the Cambodian Government insisted on a hybrid court in order to involve their own nationals. Whereas in a national judicial system with low degrees of corruption and obedience to the rule of law the involvement of national staff might enhance the Courts legitimacy, in a system where such preconditions are not given, the hybrid character might do more harm than good. In practice the Cambodian Government asserts an essential influence on the KRT that threatens its impartiality. Therefore the young Cambodians are well aware of the fact, that as in the case of Kosovo “the truth [might fall] victim to the fragile peace, which has affected the politics of remembrance and documentation of war crimes” (Visoka 2016: 7).

to help prevent future atrocities, as “we should be doing something so that no one else would want to do the same things again,” (R.4), they instantly put this into individual perspectives, which for R.4 means “but for me, I believe nothing like this will happen again” (R.4). Even more importantly, the KRT might even damage the fragile peace-building process by putting more former KR leader on trial. It is believed that starting new cases would eventually lead to the disclosure of more sensitive data, which respondents fear would lead to investigations of mid-level leaders. This in turn might disrupt the reconciliation that has been happening on the village level for more than twenty years already

You can bring that evidence in order to bring forth more evidence for the trial of the top leader, but how about those who are living in the same village for how many..., they live or harmonize like 20 years. And you are just like ‘Ah, he is the killer!’ So what is the point? (R.7)

In consideration of all the publicly uttered criticism towards the KRT, it is legitimate to claim that the respondents at least question, if not deny the KRT’s capability of delivering justice. They nevertheless attribute the function of serving as a mechanism that preserves knowledge, and thereby helps to prevent future atrocities in Cambodia to it.

Interestingly, the youth is torn in between acknowledging the KRT’s efforts in finding justice for the victims and survivors and possibly preventing future atrocities, while at the same time being overly critical with the exact same concepts. Besides such mixed signals around remembrance through retributive justice mechanisms, it is also interesting how the respondents deny their own agency in the process. Their statements indicate that they did not receive enough knowledge about the KRT and therefore are bored with the proceedings, eventually disconnecting them from this approach of justice-seeking. From their statements, it can be proposed that they are deceiving themselves, as they could in fact educate themselves about the KRT, if they had an intrinsic motivation to do so. However, they have the opposite, so they are rather denying their own agency with regard to the KRT, which in other contexts is of highest importance to them. As such, it can be put forward that there is a hidden agenda that

forces them, against their own perception of the status quo, to make an active choice not to rely on the KRT.

It can be argued that the hidden agenda is closely connected to the top down structure of remembrance and the influence of the government, which they distrust. As a result, they are trying to negotiate and self-construct a bottom up collective remembrance, in an attempt to find their own way to deal with the past.

4.5 Memorial Sites

Although they come here (to memorial sites), they do not want to go, because sometimes they are busy. It is just like they are busy with studying and because of other things. They are scared.(R.5B)

There are many reasons why students would rather not go to memorial sites, and when asked about their willingness to visit memorial sites as places of remembrance, many respondents admitted their limited interest. R.5B identifies time limitations and feelings of being scared as two points among other things. Whereas that might be true to a certain extent, the data indicates the fact that the Cambodian youth is subject to formal and informal KR education for all their life as the main reason for not visiting in memorial sites. Students do not deem it necessary visit memorial sites, as “we already have a lot of knowledge and sometimes we see a lot at school” (R.4B). Or as another respondent frames it “because (...) we have heard about it since we were young. So there is no use to go there and see (...)” (R.8B). Accordingly, s/he theorizes that the not visiting those sites stems from “the theory of what is near you, you will not [be] interested in” (R.8B).

Another fact that is of relevance and influences the way people relate to the KR history is the factor of costs. For many students that would generally be interested in visiting memorial sites, it is not an activity that they are able to pay for; let alone the time to travel from the provinces to Phnom Penh. R.5B asserts, “if I'm talking with my friends in the province, first they do not have the ability to come to Phnom Penh to visit. One thing is money” (R.5B).

In addition, the Cambodian traditional beliefs and among such belief in ghosts is a factor that impacts the decision of whether to visit the memorial sites or not. R.8 admits, “I’m scared. I did not want to see all of those torture equipment and (sighs) skulls”. After a short moment s/he kept on going as if s/he had to clarify “I kind of believe in ghosts. That is why” (R.8). To sum up, it is “not an uplifting experience to visit Tuol Sleng, not an experience that speaks well of the country’s history, I imagine that it is painful” (Ciorciari expert interview). This imagination holds to be true. Asked about her/his experiences with memorial sites, R.3B elaborates that s/he is not interested to go there – and therefore not taking part in such an act of remembrance – “it is not because I do not care, it is just because I cannot take it. It is too..., too inhumane, too much for me” (R.3B). This is acknowledged by Farina So, who nevertheless highlights that in the long run memorial site visits could be a beneficial experience, as she stated “and then, the more you go, the more you learn. Because the first time may be a shocking experience, but then you go again and again” (Farina expert interview). This leads to the positive aspects that the respondents connected with the memorial sites.

While the prevalent mistrust towards the KR history among the Cambodian youth was discussed in the beginning of this chapter, memorial sites have the potential to serve as what many respondents hold for ‘real evidence’ - physical, non-biased evidence that delivers facts over emotions. R.2 admits that only “after I got to visit Khmer Rouge Toul Sleng Genocide Museum and Choeung Ek Genocide sites, I started to believe that they are existing” (R.2). Interesting in light of the discussion of the education system, and with regard to the above-mentioned lack of motivation to go visit memorial sites, is the fact that such willful neglect of their country’s history remains until entering university. “After I entered the university, I also saw a lot of evidence from the Khmer Rouge, like Tuol Sleng Museum (...) So I know that this existed in my country” (R.3).

Memorial sites as fact-based real evidence could have a strong impact on students if they were included into the curriculum as a school activity. Nevertheless, such an activity has to turn away from traditional methods of teaching and give educational agency to the students “when we go there as group, as a class within the school system it is more useful, because of the fact that we are not only learning it based on verbal, but we are also doing practical actions” (R.9).

Some respondents also said that they used to go to memorial sites only to accompany foreign friends. Although the data did not provide clear reasons for a willingness to join foreigners (in contrast to the lack of motivation to go alone or with Cambodian friends), it revealed that students benefit from their foreign friend's eagerness for knowledge "so for the foreigner, they just started in a book, or like a website. They really have a lot of questions. So we can get knowledge from their questions" (R.7B). Similarly to school group visits with a focus on *practical actions* over taught knowledge, the interactive engagement with foreign friends highlights the benefits of memorial site visits for the Cambodian youth.

Discussing the example of memorial sites, I was able to show mixed signals once again. There are many reasons for young Cambodians not to go, such as an already extensive knowledge on the topic (which they usually are suspicious of), fear of ghosts, as well as infrastructural issues such as costs and travels. On the other hand, I also showed that memorial site visits have the potential to serve as the much yearned for real evidence. This is especially true in cases where either an interaction between different individual Cambodians occurs or an external perspective provides impetus to increase knowledge. What was identified here is that young Cambodians are weighing the options of whether to visit the sites up. Again, it is an active decision and a sign of agency that the young generation possess and can use in constructing collective remembrance if they choose to do so, and if utilized, the benefits of visiting, and remembering, can outweigh the costs, real and emotional.

4.6 Buddhism

For the Buddhist way, it is to me..., I'm not extremely into that one. It is only [an] excuse of..., it is just an excuse of doing something (else).(R.1B)

When asked about the importance of Buddhism - the major religion in Cambodia - for the transitional justice agenda, R.1B expresses the view that in relying on religion people are only making excuses in order to avoid doing

something else. Some scholars nevertheless indicate that the Cambodian belief system has an impact on the process of reconciliation, as “it should also be noted that Buddhism today plays a central role in Cambodian discourses on ‘reconciliation’ propagated largely by powerful, urban actors and are nourished by western notions of forgiveness, acknowledgement, accountability, repentance, retribution and healing (Borneman 1997 cited in Kent 2003: 2). And although respondents affirm such indications, as “yeah, a lot of people also think that”, this view is not overarching, for R.4B goes on “I think (...) it is not right to say like ‘If you do bad, you will get something bad in the next life’. It is just something to calm down yourself” (R.4B). And indeed, a belief-lead approach to justice with *calming down* (the society) as an end, seems to be a viable choice for people that are afraid of disrupting peace due to further investigations by transitional justice mechanisms. “(...) If we raised it (the Khmer Rouge history) up again, they (the victims) [are] afraid that we can’t live in peace. So just forget it, because we already suffer[ed] and everything is already gone” (R.6B). Acceptance, and preserving the peaceful status quo are outcomes that Prof. Ciorciari considers as “dampening effects on social conflict in Cambodia” which would result from questions of Buddhism and the cycle of rebirth and related sort of believes (Ciorciari expert interview). He further expresses the idea that

The view that there were broader forces that would be giving people what they deserve [could] have taken some of the pressure of formal judicial processes or revenge attack or other means by which people could have a sense that the perpetrators had gotten their due (Ciorciari expert interview).

But although this might be true for the case of direct victims, it seems to be worthy of discussion among the Cambodian youth and how they would like to see the perpetrators being treated. Whereas R.6 finds that “in Cambodia we are Buddhists. So if they did bad things, they will get like bad things [back]. (...) And now they are old.

(...) If we were to put them in jail, it is so... How many years that they will be living in jail? So it is not changing much” (R.6), R.5B rather focuses on the judicial processes

If they wait until the new life phase, because this (cycle of rebirth) is the real justice, what will they (the victims) be able to see right now. Not the invisible thing that they do not see. So, even though we are Buddhist, but we want to know the real justice. (R.5B)

In order to find that *real justice* others also stress the importance of the “judicial body [that] would hold anyone that committed a crime responsible for their action” (R.3B), which is supplemented by the Buddhist teaching that “is like you forgive someone, if they (...) commit some sort of bad thing. You forgive them. So that forgiveness would allow.... I think the purpose is to allow the person to regain, redeem himself” (R.3B). The focus is being shifted away from either justice for the victims or a sentence for convicted perpetrators to a process of reciprocal reconciliation. It is for this reason that Prof. Ciorciari finds that the “belief that one’s behavior will then lead to rewards or punishment in the next life does seem to provide at least a partial sense of personal level reconciliation” and that this would also “translate into social behavior that I think one could also describe as reconciliation” (Ciorciari expert interview).

Buddhism appears to play an important role in the context of remembrance and reconciliation in Cambodia. As with the previous topics, I was able to point out several mixed signals around remembrance that became obvious even with regard to individual respondents. The reasons for such indecisive judgments on the importance of Buddhism are manifold. The respondents that are arguing in favor of a Buddhist contribution to the overall goal of reconciliation highlight that judicial process at this point of time would not do much more difference. In fact judicial proceedings might disrupt the peace, where it would be better to forget and give the perpetrators a chance of redeeming themselves. Others challenge those views, as Buddhism would only be an excuse. As such an approach to reconciliation based on Buddhism would lack the capacity to deliver justice to the victims. Those mixed signals indicate a negotiation in the realms of Buddhism and remembrance. The Cambodian youth is clearly debating the terms of remembrance in all aspects of live. Based on what I called a reciprocal

reconciliation, it seems that in case of the topic Buddhism, the Cambodian youth did not yet decide upon its worth related to the concept of remembrance.

4.7 Incentives for Remembrance

I always want more cloth and I just try to wonder why can people...., it is just like very serious, how can people have just only one cloth and little of rice and service everyday. Kind of something like that. How could my uncle die during that time? It is very interesting for me. That is why I try to receive more information. (R.8B)

Respondent 8B shares her/his motivation to further engage with the KR history. S/he points out that s/he actively seeks education on the genocide in order to answer questions that individual accounts of (probably) family members (she speaks about an uncle having passed away) left her with. This stands at odds to previous answers, as R.8B does not seem to have the same skepticism as her/his peers uttered before. This raises the question of where such a difference comes from. Only two respondents provided hints to answer this question and both referred to possible differences in individual Cambodian backgrounds. As both of them directly and vigorously talked about the differences among urban and rural Cambodians (, which for them goes along with being financially well-off or struggling), their voices had to be included into the thesis.

When R.8B was questioned regarding why s/he would not be subject to the common mistrust and skepticism towards individual accounts, which is prevalent among her/his peers, s/he argued that “because they (people living in Phnom Penh) are the advantaged people. And they do not understand how the disadvantaged people from the Khmer Rouge experienced [it]” (R.8B). Although this view is expressed too generally, as it obviously denies ‘advantaged’ people the same understanding of the situation of less-privileged Cambodians, it nevertheless reveals a crucial finding. By focusing on the KR experiences that the advantaged would not be able to understand, the respondent sought to establish a line of thinking in which remembrance becomes a burden to the

less-privileged and forgetting a luxury of the advantaged. This becomes obvious when s/he goes on

For the kids in the rural area, mostly they hear a lot from their parents and grandparents and so they feel like..., and they do not have enough food to eat. They *can* imagine about how difficult it is (to live under the Khmer Rouge)” (R.8B)

The respondent indirectly accuses young Cambodians in Phnom Penh that have enough food of not being able to imagine their parents suffering under the KR, revealing mixed signals to remembrance based on the division of urban and rural living conditions, and the connected impression that “the rich people (...) they may not care about what is really happening in their (the poor people’s) life. It may not affect them, because they do not really see it” (R.8B).

R.7B provides further substance to such a difference in urban and rural thinking, as s/he experienced such differences by herself/himself when s/he went to the rural area and “saw about it and not only in the health system, in the education system and other systems. Yes that relates to the peoples’ living, yeah. And the second one, they saw the action of the leader” (R.7B). Still being unclear about what actions of the leaders would be looking like, R.8B helps us understand that “[the] government just uses their power, their justice, like the Tribunal, something like the Tribunal or like the Court or something like that to threaten human rights defenders” (R.8b). It seems that TJ mechanisms are turned upside down at this point. In contrary to being mechanisms helping a disrupted country moving forward, the KRT leaves individuals feeling increasingly disadvantaged. This is due to the respondent’s impression that the (imagined?) luxury of forgetting, fueled by the KRT, prevents urgently needed promotion and protection of human rights in rural areas.

The proposed differences between urban and rural Cambodians and their capability of understanding suffering under the KR, indicates another mixed signal around remembrance. The claim that economical backgrounds would influence how much credibility young Cambodians give to individual narrations of history, brings us back to the start of this Chapter, adding the dimension of incentives to the concept of

remembrance. Clearly, incentives influence the choice of whether to remember or not, and R.7B and R.8B's voices indicate that the more personal gain an individual receives from remembrance, the likelier it is for this individual to actively engage in a bottom up remembrance project.

CHAPTER V

LIVING IN THE PRESENT – REMEMBRANCE AND PROGRESS

5.1 Introduction

To this point the background and context for this thesis was discussed in chapter 2. Against this background, I introduced *obstacles to remembrance* that require the respondents to make decisions on how to deal with the KR history of Cambodia. Subsequent topics that provoke mixed signals around remembrance were discovered, and it was emphasized that those mixed signals and the corresponding topics are interwoven with the obstacles to remembrance, as they also revealed choices that the respondents have to make while judging those signals. Those mixed signals are expressions of how young Cambodians are actively engaging and deciding on the means how to achieve a bottom up collective remembrance.

This chapter will investigate further how the established collective memory of the KR is politicized and why the Cambodian youth refuses to accept such a collective remembrance, as well as discussing the status quo of collective remembrance among the respondents with regard to the findings of the three foregoing chapters.

5.2 (Politicized) Historical Accounts and their Implications for Remembrance

Those who support the CPP¹ (...) they will have to look back, because they have to compare the country right now to the country in 1979.(R.7)

R.7's analysis of the recent political landscape in terms of remembrance and concludes that looking back is imperative for the supporters of the Hun Sen

¹ Cambodian People's Party (CPP)

administration in order to justify the regime's claims for political power. In doing so, s/he emphasizes the instance that the Cambodian youth feels increasingly critical towards the formal education provided by the Cambodian government, and the accounts of history that such formal education offers.

The political use of Khmer Rouge history in terms of remembrance as a means to an end, or as a strategy (Rieff) for political leverage and not as an end in itself, as such providing reconciliation for post-conflict societies, appears to be a common strategy for governments, as Visoka finds for the case of Kosovo

Invoking nationalist discourses of liberation, sacrifice, and heroism has enabled KLA-derivative parties to win elections and come to power. They also used narratives of the past to further consolidate their power, thereby becoming memory patrons in post-conflict Kosovo. (Visoka 2016: 7)

The practices that Visoka highlights are beneficial to only certain groups in a post-conflict society. Coming back to the initial quote, I argue that this is the case for Cambodia too. The Black Monday demonstrations in Phnom Penh earlier this year provide an example of invoking collective memory as a political strategy. In this event, the Hun Sen administration used the history to intimidate and invoke the internalized fears outlined in chapter 3.4 "because they also..., because the government always raises examples, raises cases, history about the Khmer Rouge" (R.7). And in fact a government spokesman connected being clad in black to the KR history and appealed to collective remembrance and internalized fears "Why [do] they choose that color to do that?" he said. 'It reminds the people [of] 1975, which took 2 million lives'" (cited in Peter and Sokhean 2016). Three days later Prime Minister Hun Sen further added "Please, the people who gave money or are printing shirts must be careful since we have identified you clearly,' Mr. Hun Sen said, explaining that authorities would not

allow freedom of expression to disrupt peace and stability” (cited in Sokhean and Sovuthy 2016).

Recalling de Greiff, this is a wrongdoing that does not touch the essence of remembering and reconciliation. He describes the path that would lead to a successful collective remembrance in terms of reconciliation as follows

(...) These measures are meant to provide recognition to victims (not merely as victims, but primarily as rights-holders), in order to foster civic trust, to strengthen the rule of law, and to promote reconciliation. (de Greiff 2016)

He emphasizes the importance of rights-holders. For the context of Cambodia, the above discussion found a climate of intimidation and internalized fear that made it difficult for the Cambodian youth to identify as rights-holders. In Kosovo, Visoka found that “the civil society-based documentation of human losses in Kosovo has taken place under the conditions of contested transitional justice and (...) efforts to control the politics of remembrance” (Visoka 2016: 2). Such a process is essentially what the urban Cambodian youth is skeptical of, which leads them to refuse buying into the established collective memory.

5.3 Refusal or Construction – the Status Quo of Remembrance

When the police do like on Monday, everyone started to change their profile² to wearing the black shirt. So it seems like they do not care. If the government does like that, if the military does like that, they (the Cambodian youth) still does some things to challenge [them].(R.5B)

Relating again to Cambodia’s Black Monday, it shows not only how the government uses the history as a strategy for intimidation, but also serves as an example

² The respondent is talking about the *Facebook* profile picture.

of the top down (strategically used) collective remembrance being increasingly challenged. Instead of giving into their parents' fears (which they report to have partly internalized) and obeying the government's call to stop wearing black, a protest on social media turned against exactly such evoking of fears. It was again an active choice of the Cambodian youth to refuse remembrance in terms of a denial of their rights.

That the recognition of rights-holding "that seek[s] to affirm the currency of rights, not just of one group but of all" (de Greiff 2016) is an important prerequisite to collective remembrance, and reconciliation has been pointed out in the previous paragraph. De Greiff, who argues in favor of such a construction, finds it highly important that the past would not just be constantly reproduced by "one-sided and incomplete" accounts, but instead with "with accounts that make it more difficult to instrumentalize the past in a way that increases, not decreases, the likelihood of repetition" (ibid.). Fueled by the students' healthy skepticism and the resulting challenge of top down narrations of history, the respondents are engaging in a construction of remembrance that eventually recognizes them as rights-holders and reconciles the society.

R.3B clearly indicates that Cambodia is currently in transition towards change and that this transition is closely connected to *a Khmer Rouge ghost* that will sooner or later vanish.

And what I'm saying here is that it is going to eventually change. (...) We get more courage to say what we want to say, to discuss what we want to discuss, because the..., the shadow, the fear, the Khmer Rouge ghost in our history will eventually subside. (R.3B)

The respondent touches on issues, such as internalized fears and the lack of an open space for discussion.

This appears to be reciprocal relationship. The less influence the Khmer Rouge ghost has, the more daring will the young generation become, which in turn decreases the influence of the Khmer Rouge ghost, opening up new opportunities for discussion. It will have an impact on the internalized fears, as the less the youth feels the possibility of disrupting the fragile peace by offering critical perspectives, the more

outspoken they will become. For this reciprocal relationship the human rights movement plays an important role

And I have one thing that is encouraging the young generation in Cambodia, I think it is really because of the foreigners also. The local, like other countries in the world. Because in EU or American, other countries, like Asian countries, they are encouraging the young generation to raise their speech, raise their rights, yeah. (R.7B)

R.7B raises some crucial points here. S/he speaks of encouragement, foreign influences and exercising one's rights. What is being expressed here as a finding that the young generation will increasingly become progressive due to foreign influences, contrasts what was discussed in the chapter on internalization of fears. Respondent 7B combines the above-said and concludes the status quo as

(...)The older [generation] say that they do not want to face that situation (civil war) again. They are really afraid, because, as I know, the young generation in Cambodia, now they change a lot, because they think they have their own rights. (R.7B)

Again, there is a focus on a process that indicates change with regard to realizing one's own rights, which in turn is a focal point in constructing a collective memory that is more than just a strategy. It would only be possible to change the country and in doing so depoliticize the historical accounts, by "make our politicians hear our (the youth's) voices", as R.3B keeps asking "if we ourselves suppress it, can we blame the government from not doing what we want?" (R.3B). Trying to bridge the internalized fears of a systematic abuse of power by authorities, the same respondent suggests that people "should express [their] ideas in a way that is not against the law, which does not incite riot, does not incite the disruption of order" (R.3B).

Further, the collected data revealed a motivation to push for change that is intrinsic in young Cambodians. One said, "if we do it by ourselves, we will do it in our own way. We do it, because we think 'Great!'. We do it, because we think 'It is

working!'. We do it, because we think 'It is great, because it is good for everyone!'" (R.3B). Accordingly, the credo of the present day Cambodian youth is "We have to move on!" (R.6). By further elaborating "move on here means we *do not* just forget the past and live in the presence with all we have, [but also] do not compare it with the past" (R.6), s/he highlights the main argument of this thesis. The Cambodian youth makes an active choice to live in the presence with all they have. But the term 'all they have' also includes the country's past, the importance of which the respondent underlines, as s/he affirms that the youth does *not just forget the past*. In combination with R.3B's motivated call for action to do something, because *it is good for everyone*, it becomes obvious that everyone's rights are being acknowledged. This can be construed as the youth's refusal of a top down collective remembrance that looks backward as a strategy, in favor of a construction of an inclusive collective memory that provides reconciliation and enables all societal groups to move forward. The status quo of remembrance in Cambodia is an ongoing process of constructing remembrance bottom up, and the outcome is yet to be decided upon by its main actors, the Cambodian youth.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Concluding Remarks

Starting with contextualizing this thesis within the Cambodian history and the field of transitional justice, the argument that the Cambodian youth is refusing the recent form of top down remembrance, as practiced by the government and taught in schools, in favor of a bottom up project of collective remembrance was developed. The longing for a collective remembrance that is constructed from the bottom up, leads back to the initial impetus for this thesis – the observation of students falling asleep or playing with their phones during a visit at the KRT. Such acts of indifference are an expression that the Cambodian youth does not only reject national constructions of remembrance, but also international constructions in the form of transitional justice mechanism. Although the factors for such a rejection are manifold and likely go beyond the scope of this thesis, they nevertheless highlight the importance of a re-evaluation of international mechanism of transitional.

The main argument was developed with regard to definitions of collective remembrance and reconciliation. Both focus on group efforts to produce a collective remembrance by mutually acknowledging past sufferings and changing destructive behaviors. In the case of Cambodia, it is shown that the youth is pushing for the construction of such a collective remembrance. Destructive behaviors, such as the use of collective remembrance as a strategy to gain political leverage, are being refused by the Cambodian youth. They are negotiating such a construction by means that are inclusive, acknowledging rights-holding, and which are open to questioning. Such negotiations take place in the realm of various obstacles to remembrance and provoke mixed signals among the youth itself.

As the analysis shows they are growing up in a context that demands them to constantly demonstrate their agency and make choices. They are mainly concerned with questions of whether to remember or to forget, if there are personal benefits to gain

or threats to one's safety arising from speaking up their minds, and whether to generally believe in what they are taught or to remain skeptical. Although individual students have different thresholds regarding those choices, they are nevertheless united by their mutual motivation to build a better life for not only themselves, but for past and future generations to come.

Due to the necessary limitations in scope of a thesis, the analysis of the data could only offer a glimpse into the complex reality of the construction of a collective remembrance among young Cambodians. Factors such as a non-representative sample, the focus on only Phnom Penh as a study site, the neglect of individual factors such as familiar backgrounds and peer pressures deserve further research. Such research might provide answers to open questions such as "Would less or no formal education serve as a catalyst to refusal of remembrance? Or to more remembrance?" Researching such questions could provide important insights in how to improve the tailoring and programming of bottom up remembrance projects.

There are still many ongoing issues in Cambodia's transition, but in the case that the Cambodian society makes use of its youth's enormous potential and motivation, it is possible to construct a collective memory that truly reconciles the people and enables removal of the Khmer Rouge ghost. The outcome might be uncertain at this point, but what is certain is that "we (the Cambodian youth) are trying to, for the next generation, we are trying to think of another, like... a new era coming" (R.1B). May this new era arrive quickly

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FIRST STAGE QUESTION

Q1:

Could you tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you first learned about Cambodia's history with regard to the Khmer Rouge?

Q2:

Have your thoughts and feelings changed over time? [If so,] why did they change?

Q3:

Could you describe your thoughts and feelings when thinking about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal?

Q4:

As you look back to your attendance of one of the court session, please tell me how you felt in that situation and whether your attendance changed your thoughts and feelings.

Q5:

While I was attending one of the court sessions, I observed that some students were falling asleep or playing with their phones. What do you think about this and why do you think this happened?

Q6:

Could you describe your family's story in relation to the Khmer Rouge?

Q7:

You might have heard about Germany's role in WW2. Personally I grew up among the third post-war generation. History classes through out my high school years have been coined by years of learning about the Holocaust and Germany's role in the war. How, if at all, do Cambodian's learn about the Khmer Rouge history in school? And could you tell me what you can recall about your personal thoughts and feeling while attending such history classes.

Q8:

Let me come back to my personal history again. At the end of WW2 my grandfather has been 13 years old. That means that he didn't have to actively take part in the war. Nevertheless, just a couple of months later, his mother lost her life in an accident with Russian soldiers. Without going to much into detail, this experience has had a major influence on my whole family's life. We already spoke about your families history with regard to the Khmer Rouge. Can you recall any such instances that had a coining impact on either your, family members, or the whole family's life?

APPENDIX B

SECOND STAGE QUESTION

Q1:

My research so far has shown that post-conflict generations need “real evidence“, i.e. memorial visits and TV documentations, in order to process acts of mass atrocities and the concept of genocide.

Can you please elaborate on what you think about this. In particular, what do you think could serve as “real evidence“ and how does such evidence differ from parent’s first hand experiences/testimonies?

Q2:

In my research I found that young Cambodians were more likely to visit memorial sites when their foreign friends asked them to join.

My question is, what do you think is the difference between a young Cambodian’s perception of the country’s history and a foreigner’s perception?

In particular, why do you think are foreigners more interested in visiting memorial sites than locals? How does being led to sites by or through a foreigner may influence their experience?

Q3:

“It doesn't matter until you come across it.“ *(one respondent's summary of the youth's feelings towards the Khmer Rouge legacy and recent politics).*

What do you think about this line of thinking with regard to Cambodia and/or mass atrocities and the concept of genocide in general? Please elaborate your thoughts on that.

Q4:

At this point I would like to introduce you to one of the respondents line of thinking. Take as long as you need to read and understand that. As a disclaimer, the respondent expressed a strong objection of the states unethical behavior during the Khmer Rouge era throughout the whole interview.

“I've been always wondering, would that time of Khmer Rouge be considered as successful or failure of state? Because the fact that, you know how state is identified as being a political structure, like strong political structure and then in independent economic aspects, all these things, characteristics of states. But would the Khmer Rouge leadership be considered as a successful one or as a failure one? Because it..., like if you analyze it in terms of economic... Khmer Rouge they do export things, like to China. I don't know if they gained basic things in return or not, but yeah they export rice, a massive amount of rice. And then also like the political relations. They tied relation with neighboring countries. So then I don't know if you would weigh this in terms of theoretical framework, it could be both. It could be considered as success or failure.“

What do you think of this line of thinking? Can you please elaborate your thoughts.

Q5:

It seems that young Cambodians connect a lack in reforms and development with the current political landscape. In my research I often came across the argument that the current government uses the Khmer Rouge history in order to sustain political power. Based on this argument, Cambodia’s post-conflict generation seems to be less interested in current politics (until a degree where they even lose faith in the opposition).

Why do you think that an understanding of how history is being politically used leads to less interest in politics, rather than an increased politicization (in order to facilitate the desired change)?

Q6:

In my research I came across the matter that many young Cambodians seem to be interested in the development of the country, while at the same time only being interested in current politics to a minor degree.

What are your thoughts on that observation?

What do you think is their “drive“ to seek for active participation in the country’s development process, while only being interested in the current politics to a minor degree (,while still asking for reforms and the development of the country)?

Q7:

Some people told me that it’s not important to trial the former perpetrators, because of the fact that Cambodians are mostly Buddhists and the perpetrators would eventually get what they deserved in the following life circles.

What do you think about that? What are the implications of such a perspective for Cambodians of different faith, i.e. Cambodians of Cham ethnicity?

APPENDIX C

RESPONDENT INFORMATION SHEET

Respondent Information Sheet

Dear prospective respondent,

my name is Daniel and I am a masters student at Mahidol University, Thailand. I am currently conducting research for my masters thesis at the Institute for Human Rights and Peace Studies. This information sheet is an invitation to participate in my study and seeks to provide a brief overview over the research project entitled:

**“The Relationship Between Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Generations:
*An Assessment of Apathy, Entanglement and the Urge to Move Forward in the
Context of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*”.**

The document at hand may contain information or statements that you might not understand. In any such case, please ask me to clarify any uncertainties and to give explanations until you fully understand all the information provided in this document. Please take as much time as you need in order to thoroughly process all the information and to decide whether you would like to participate in the research.

What is this research project about?

As a prospective respondent you may ask yourself what this research project will be about. The purpose of the research is to explore how individuals respond to international efforts that seek to rebuild post-conflict societies. Starting from observations that I made while attending a court session of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, I am particularly seeking to explain individual responses of post-conflict generations in nowadays Cambodia with regard to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. In the so-called field of transitional justice there is usually a focus on the survivors/victims of mass atrocities. In contrast, this study seeks to focus on the post-conflict generations and their responses to transitional justice mechanisms such as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

Generally speaking, I wish to include the voices of Cambodia’s young generations into the academic discourse around transitional justice in Cambodia.

What will you have to do/What will happen when you take part in the research project?

If you decide to participate in the research project, you will be interviewed with regard to the overall purpose of the research project. It will be a semi-structured interview with so-called open-ended question. You will be invited to talk openly about whatever comes to your mind while answering the questions. The interview will take about 30 to 60 minutes. There will be two parts of the interview. The first part will be concerned with five more general questions about the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, while the second part will ask three questions which are concerned with more specific issues around your educational and family background.

The interviews will be recorded and digitalized. The data that is gathered by the interviews will be analyzed and reviewed and the research findings shall be published in form of a masters thesis, as well as in a national/international journal.

Why have you been selected as a prospective respondent?

Most of the research in transitional justice is concerned with the direct victims and survivors of past crimes. In my work I want to include the younger generations into the discussion. I am looking for young, educated, and English speaking Cambodian students that are based in Phnom Penh. As the participating students will be asked about their experiences with transitional justice in Cambodia and their families background with regard to the countries history, it is also important that the respondents formerly attended at least one court

Form of Informed and Voluntary Consent to Participate in Research

Date..... /..... /.....

My name is..... agedyears old, now living at the address
no..... road/street..... sub-district.....
district..... province..... postal code.....
Tel. No..... Email.....

I herby give my full consent to participate as a respondent in the research project entitled:

**“The Relationship Between Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Generations:
An Assessment of Apathy, Entanglement and the Urge to Move Forward in the Context of the
Khmer Rouge Tribunal”.**

I also consent that the principal researcher may contact me in order to clarify questions that evolve during the overall research process, but after the initial interview was conducted.

I was informed about the project’s background, its procedures and the overall objectives of the research. In addition, the principal researcher informed me about the research project’s expected benefits and risks that may occur to the respondents throughout the research process. Prior to my consent, I was also informed about the measures that shall provide any harmful consequences with regard to my personal data, as well as measures to protect the study data and documents in general.

I thouroughly read the detailed statements in the information sheet, as provided by the principal researcher prior to my consent. I had the opportunity to ask questions prior to the research and potential uncertainties were clarified by the principal investigator to my fullest understanding.

I understand that I have the right to receive further information regarding the benefits and risks to participate as a respondent in this research project and that I have the right to withdraw my consent to participate at any point of time, but prior to the final examination, without any personal consequences in the future.

I am aware that access to study data and documents is restricted to the principal investigator and the thesis advisors on a need-to-know basis and that the principal researcher will protect my personal data by using pseudonyms for places/institutions and names. Furthermore, I was informed that all study data and documents will be stored within locked locations.

In case of further questions, please contact the principal researcher Daniel Polomski via email: daniel.polomski@gmail.com or mobile: +66907231343 at any point of time during the research.

This research project was approved by the Committee on the Research Ethics of the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. In case that you are not treated as indicated in this information sheet, you can contact the Chair of Institutional Review

Board of Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR-IRB) at the office of IPSR-IRB,
Research Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Phuttamonthon 4
Road, Salaya, Phuttamonthon, 73170 Nakhon Pathom. Tel 66-2-441-0201-4, Email
pripsrrib@mahidol.ac.th

I thoroughly understand the statements in the information sheet for the research
respondents and in this consent form. I hereby give my signature.

Signature

(.....)

Date

APPENDIX D

FORM OF INFORMED AND VOLUNTARY CONSENT

session of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and that they either live, used to live, or used to be in a close relationship with at least one of their grandparents.

What are the risks and benefits of participation in the research project?

As this research tries to explain individual responses to transitional justice mechanisms in nowadays Cambodia based on the respondents mindsets and attitudes, there won't be any major risks for you while participating in the research project.

It is guaranteed that your private information will be kept confidential and is protected by using pseudonyms for places/institutions and names. Private information and study data will not be subject to an individual disclosure, but will be included in the research report as part of the overall results. Individual information may be examined by groups of persons on a need-to-know basis e.g. the ethics committee, the thesis advisors. Furthermore, all study data and documents will be stored within locked locations and destroyed after the publication of the results.

Your participation in the study will mainly benefit the academic discourse around the field of transitional justice, as your responses in the interview will provide valuable information about your experiences and opinions. This data will help highlighting to what extent transitional justice mechanisms such as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal affect post-conflict generations. Herby, your participation in the study will not only help to close a gap in academic research, but ultimately improve the quality of mechanisms to rebuild post-conflict societies.

Your decision of whether to participate in the study will not affect your work/study in any way. You are absolutely free in your decision-making process. However, if you get some uneasiness or discomfort due to participating in the research project, I will happily answer all of your questions.

It is important to understand that you have the right to withdraw form the research project at anytime prior to final examination, subject to sufficient and reasonable notice being provided to me.

Should at any point of time during the research process relevant, additional information about the benefits and/or risks of this research project arise, I will inform you immediately and without concealment.

Participation in this study will not result in any costs for you; and you also acknowledge that there will not be any form of remuneration granted for taking part in the study.

This research project was approved by the Committee on the Research Ethics of the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University. In case that you are not treated as indicated in this information sheet, you can contact the Chair of Institutional Review Board of Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR-IRB) at the office of IPSR-IRB, Research Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Phuttamonthon 4 Road, Salaya, Phuttamonthon, 73170 Nakhon Pathom. Tel 66-2-441-0201-4, Email pripsr@mahidol.ac.th

Contact for further information

Please feel free to contact me at any point of time during the study, if you have any further questions, comments, or complaints about this research.

Daniel Polomski

Narachan Home, Room 1708
1, 3 Soi Chan2, Yak 3
Chan Road, Thung Wat Don, Sathon

10120 Bangkok, Thailand
Mobile: +66907231343
Email: daniel.polomski@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and interest in the study!

I hereby confirm that I thoroughly read the respondent information sheet and that I understand all the information as provided above.

Signature

(.....)

Date

APPENDIX E

EXAMPLE INITIAL CODING

The screenshot shows a document viewer interface for a file named "RAW Respondent 1.doc". The document content is mostly obscured by black redaction bars. Visible text includes:

- Redacted text at the top.
- Text: "So you think that still today you suffer from the civil war"
- Redacted text.
- Text: "Yeah that is really fortunate and like when did you actually hear the first time about that history like when was that in uni or in school or"
- Redacted text.
- Text: "school in Cambodia or like secondary or high school they don't teach a lot about the the regime."
- Redacted text.
- Text: "from them"

On the right side, there is a comment box with the following content:

- Quote: "school in Cambodia or like secondary or high school they don't teach a lot about the the regime"
- Text: "In Dokument RAW Respondent 1.doc ©"
- Section: "Kommentar"
- Text: "Lack of transfer of knowledge in secondary and high school"
- Section: "Status"
- Text: "Erstellt: 11. Juli 2016 Daniel Polomski"
- Text: "Geändert: 11. Juli 2016 Daniel Polomski"

BIOGRAPHY

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