



**CHANGING
THE STORY**

**PHASE 1
CRITICAL REVIEW**

CAMBODIA

Arts, Education and Reconciliation in Cambodia: Learning from the Anlong Veng Peace Tours

Critical Reflection and Review



Written by Peter Manning

Image: Students interviewing local residents in Anlong Veng.
Credit: Keo Theasrun, Documentation Center of Cambodia ,



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Summary

Nearly forty years after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea 'Khmer Rouge' (1975-1979) regime, efforts to redress and reckon with Cambodia's experiences of genocide and atrocity are ongoing. In three years, eight months and twenty days, 1.6 million died of hunger, disease or were executed as the Khmer Rouge sought to engineer a classless and ethnically purified society: money and private property were abolished, religion prohibited, and those associated with the 'bourgeois' former regime – including civil servants, teachers, and artists – were brutally purged. After the fall of the regime, Cambodia endured a further two decades of violent civil war and protracted political turbulence throughout an uneven peace process, throughout which Cambodia's successor regimes have variously employed the legacy of the Khmer Rouge as a source of legitimacy. Since the advent of peace in the late 1990s, Cambodia has wrestled with serious questions over how – and even if – to account for the experiences of the Khmer Rouge, though the ongoing prosecutions of the Khmer Rouge leadership at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia are now a lynchpin in a wider landscape of transitional justice initiatives. Today, while working in a politically sensitive climate and often challenging climate for advocacy and activist groups, Cambodian civil society organisations are key agents in the delivery of a rich variety of initiatives for engaging Khmer Rouge history. These range from therapeutic, civic, and pedagogical interventions, but often draw heavily on arts-based approaches, as they seek to redress, commemorate, and ameliorate experiences of the regime.

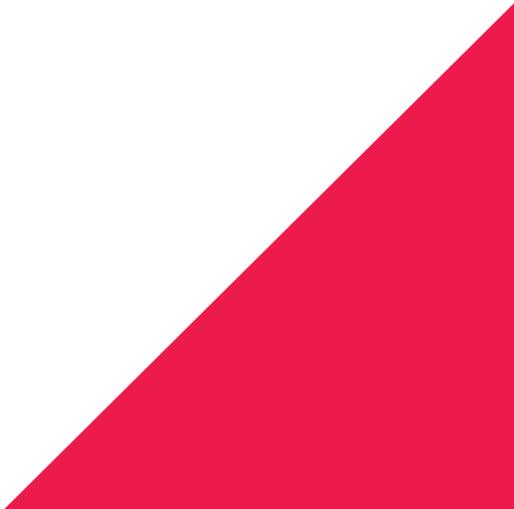
As part of Changing the Story's Phase One activities in Cambodia, this critical review and project reflection explores the use of arts within attempts to redress and remember experiences of the Khmer Rouge, with a particular focus on the varying participatory and educational methods employed therein. We necessarily and deliberately employ a broad definition of 'participation' in order to sensitise readers to the variety of ways participation has been integrated and mobilised in the work of both state and civil society led initiatives. The critical review then turns to reflect on the work of Changing the Story through our collaboration with the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). Specifically, we seek to draw lessons from the introduction of participatory filmmaking approaches to DC-Cam's Anlong Veng Peace Tours initiatives from April to December 2018.

These exercises were intended to enhance genocide education among young Cambodians through engagements with a still stigmatised former Khmer Rouge community. In particular, as the centrepiece of our “proof of concept” exercise, we have sought to ground and unpack the value of intergenerational dialogue as a tool for reconciliation. We propose that *intergenerational dialogue enables reconciliation as young people take ownership of difficult histories, future violence is deterred, relationships across communities and generations are encouraged, and the experiences of survivors are acknowledged and dignified.*

We have retained two priorities throughout this critical review and project evaluation, as well as throughout the development of our proof of concept prior to our own practical work with young people alongside DC-Cam on the Peace Tours. Firstly, we remind ourselves of Changing the Story’s commitment to interdisciplinary enquiry, and in doing so recognise that arts-based civil society interventions occur and are shaped in specific social, cultural and political contexts. We seek to highlight the relationships between different forms of political, legal, pedagogical, and aesthetic interventions, and to better historicize the changing landscape of Cambodian arts practice that is mobilised in the name of redressing experiences of the Khmer Rouge. Yet in doing so, we retain a commitment to listening to and learning from the priorities, needs and creative examples of Cambodian civil society organisations, and amplifying the lessons thereupon. We aim refrain from reducing aesthetic content purely to questions of hierarchy, politics and power wholesale. As we hope to show in our final section, as we discuss and explore the filmmaking products of young people attending the Peace Tours, questions of power and context should not be seen to invalidate the value and creative contributions delivered in the name of memory and reconciliation.

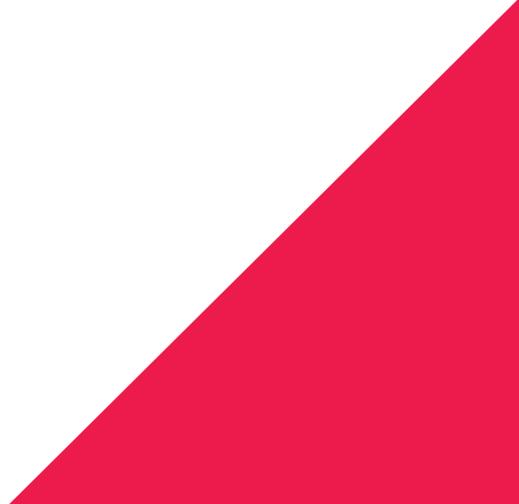
Several key lessons can be gleaned from our work:

- The landscape of existing arts-based civil society practice that seeks to engage and ameliorate Cambodia’s difficult history offers a wealth of lessons to draw upon. Attendant to this, the concepts and language we employ should be locally grounded and emergent, sensitised to both cultural and political context. At the same time, we must recognise that the concepts, language, and practices of reconciliation, justice, and memory can mean different things to different groups even within the same contexts and milieus

- Intergenerational dialogue facilitates reconciliation in Cambodia by empowering young people to take ownership of the history of the regime. Intergenerational dialogue should remain a priority because younger generations often have limited knowledge of the regime, a consequence of the political sensitivity of Khmer Rouge history and limitations in its delivery in the public school curriculum. Intergenerational dialogue therefore helps acknowledge and dignify the experiences of survivors.
 - Intergenerational dialogue is also able to build bridges across divided communities. Participatory initiatives within stigmatized communities can aid reconciliation as it acknowledges neglected often shared experiences of suffering and encourages mutual empathy.
 - Our lessons can be mobilised across contexts and cases. Participatory filmmaking with and for young people has value by supporting intergenerational dialogue in two ways. The act of participatory filmmaking across generations itself builds relationships, can act as a form of truth-seeking, and can destigmatise marginal groups. Secondly, the products of participatory filmmaking can instigate further dialogue as they are mobilised as reconciliatory texts in communities and classrooms beyond, especially as young people take ownership in the production of historical knowledge and are empowered to 'multiply' it.
 - In Cambodia, questions of reconciliation remain finely poised and requisite care and caution is needed, especially when centring the narratives and stories of some stigmatized groups. While participatory filmmaking is valuable in the creative freedom it affords, young people must be equipped with appropriate preparation and a critical awareness of the issues at hand in order to minimise the possibility that creative content is insufficiently critical of the narratives it attends to.
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Part One –

Arts, education and reconciliation after the Khmer Rouge



1. Background: Arts, memory and the role of the state after the Khmer Rouge

The Khmer Rouge were overthrown on 7th January 1979, ending one of the gravest episodes of genocide and crimes against humanity of the 20th Century. The new 'People's Republic of Kampuchea' (PRK) government faced the challenge of near complete economic and social reconstruction in the aftermath of Khmer Rouge rule. The Khmer Rouge had destroyed the basic apparatus of the state and the new government faced significant challenges, including widespread food shortages, the prospect of a protracted civil war with remnants of the Khmer Rouge, and international isolation within the bifurcated cold war political landscape. In this context, the new PRK government launched a range of initiatives – with varying forms of participatory art at work – intended to enhance domestic and international legitimacy, promoting themselves as 'saviours' from the 'genocidal' Khmer Rouge. These initiatives were central to the presentation of both a narrative and iconography of the Cambodian genocide that remains influential today and is continuous within ongoing state sponsored claims for 'national reconciliation', even forty years following Khmer Rouge rule. We track this story to because it shows key points of departure informing the contemporary landscape of participatory arts as they respond to questions of redress and memory, as well as to highlight ongoing constraints for arts-based interventions today as they engage an inescapably politicised period of Cambodian history.

Memorialisation and museum conservation were key techniques in the PRK's attempts to establish its legitimacy. After the Khmer Rouge were ousted in 1979, PRK forces quickly discovered the Tuol Sleng 'S-21' torture and interrogation site built within a former high school in southern Phnom Penh, at which some 14,000 perished (Chandler 1999). The site was discovered as it had been abandoned: blood stained the floors of cells; corpses remained shackled to beds; and documents containing forced confessions littered the site. The PRK quickly exhibited the site for international journalists and delegates as proof of the genocide, converting it into a museum in 1980, and displaying the 'primary artefacts' of genocide (Hughes 2003a; Williams 2004), such as torture instruments, shackles, and cages. One survivor of S-21, Vann Nath, had been an artist prior to the Khmer Rouge regime. Vann Nath was spared at S-21 specifically on the basis of his artistic talent, enlisted by the KR to paint portraits and sculpt busts of Pol Pot.

After the regime, Vann Nath was tasked with painting oil canvass depictions of the violence he had witnessed at S-21, which were added to displays at the museum. Vann Nath also assisted tours of domestic and international visitors at the site, offering testimony of his experiences under the regime there. In other words, Vann Nath's artistic abilities were reenlisted in the service of a state sponsored reading of genocide, performed in situ to his experiences of atrocity.

Tuol Sleng embodies the fraught relationship between arts, heritage sites, commemoration and politics. The core representational messages at work at the Tuol Sleng Museum, from its initial curation to present uses, have anchored a set of claims about responsibility for the Cambodian genocide. These messages locate responsibility for the genocide at the hands of the Khmer Rouge leadership – or Pol Pot Ieng Sary clique – while largely obfuscating and exculpating the role of lower-level perpetrators, a core plank of the PRK's reconciliatory initiatives through the 1980s and 1990s; as we will show, the latter omission remains a key site for civil society led reconciliatory initiatives today. Conversely, the PRK narrative coalesced around the image of 'national' victimhood as a generalised and flattened category. This economy of blame and victimhood was central to key political and legal initiatives, such as the 1979 Peoples Revolutionary Tribunal or state sponsored amnesty programs for lower level KR, but also the aesthetic representation of the genocide throughout the PRK era and since. Tuol Sleng Museum was updated to include 'primary' portrait photographs of those victims at the site – many of whom were former KR – developed from the archived film of the regime itself. These portraits were displayed anonymously, without reference to age, gender, or even context or cause of arrest and execution and, notably, a later exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1997 of a selection of the portrait photographs attracted fierce criticism for appropriating copyright and ownership of the experiences of anonymous victimhood (Hughes 2003b). The PRK initiated similar memorialisation drives across the country in 1983, instructing local authorities to disinter, chemically treat and display mass human remains anonymously in large wooden cases at 81 mass grave sites nationwide. With the gradual liberalisation of religion in the late 1980s, these remains were often removed from boxes and re-displayed inside Buddhist stupas within temple compounds. South of Phnom Penh, at the Cheoung Ek 'killing fields' mass grave site, human skulls were collected for display, before transfer to a large, ornate stupa in 1988.

The site is now Cambodia's principal memorial to its experience of the Khmer Rouge and has become constitutive of the iconography of both Cambodian as well as international experiences of genocide (Hughes 2005).

Tuol Sleng, Cheoung Ek, and provincial mass grave sites became the focus of a third commemorative activity deployed by the PRK implicating 'participatory' approaches, albeit again of a 'top-down' or state sponsored form. Directed and organised by provincial and local authorities on behalf of the PRK government, 'Tivea Chang Khmang' or the 'Day of Anger' was observed on 20 May annually at mass grave and memorial sites, and sites of forced labour, killing and torture throughout the 1980s (Hughes 2000). Local authorities instructed local schools, hospitals and provincial centres to produce placards and banners denouncing the crimes of the 'genocidal' Pol Pot regime. As Buddhism was reintroduced in the late 1980s, the Day of Anger ceremonies began to incorporate religion rites, such as prayer, wreath laying, and religious offerings to the dead (Hughes 2000: 40).

Survivors were invited to testify about their experiences and express their anger toward the Khmer Rouge, enmeshing deeply personal stories within the public performance of a unified, state sponsored narration of the need to remain vigilant to prevent the return of the regime. Notably, Hughes (2000) and Ledgerwood (1997) observe in respect to the curation of Tuol Sleng Museum and May 20th commemorations that the representations of Khmer Rouge violence resonated with the experiences of many survivors, despite the highly politicised, propagandist, and often coercive forms of participation at work.

Two important observations are apparent at this juncture. Firstly, the Cambodian state deployed varying forms of arts-led intervention, often involving 'participatory' forms that left small margin for refusal or dissent in their observance at the time. To this extent, we can see how the PRK government used arts – and participatory methods – within a raft of state-building initiatives that reproduced a singular account of the violence of the Khmer Rouge. At the same time, we can recognise that the PRK's preferred narrative of the Khmer Rouge years, demanding vigilance against the return of the regime and blame for the Khmer Rouge leadership, at least rang true for many survivors. Secondly, across the PRK's state-building initiatives, we can see multiple relationships between legal, political, and arts-led responses to atrocities.

For example, Vann Nath's paintings of Khmer Rouge violence became political artefacts that were deployed to legitimate a state narrative of blame, and in turn served as forms of evidence prefiguring contemporary transitional justice interventions. The Tuol Sleng Museum and Cheong Ek mass grave sites have deeply political histories. They have been employed as forensic evidential sites of legal concern, and today stand as major tourist attractions. Similarly, as we can see from the controversy created around the curation of the portrait photos of those interred and murdered at S-21 – artefacts of dead – and the way they have been 'consumed', politically, legally and aesthetically, the ability of art to work and travel with different meanings for different groups raises thorny questions about ownership that are still present in the contemporary landscape of arts interventions in Cambodia.

2. The landscape of contemporary arts, education and transitional justice

The contemporary landscape of participatory arts – as it is deployed to engage Cambodia's difficult heritage – is both constrained and enabled by the history of the state-sponsored 'top-down' story of national reconciliation. On the one hand, the 'top down' narrative of Cambodia's genocide is still present, reproduced and rearticulated particularly by the prosecutions of former Khmer Rouge leaders at the UN-sponsored Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The ECCC is the 'centrepiece' of Cambodia's transitional justice efforts and therefore has both immediate and indirect consequences for the kinds of arts-based interventions at play in Cambodia. On the other, a longstanding failure to properly acknowledge, or engage with, more complex and granular histories and experiences of the Khmer Rouge – a problem directly ensuing from the state-sponsored narrative of 'national reconciliation' – has left clear and fruitful terrain for arts based approaches to apprehend questions of memory and reconciliation. In particular, the challenges of fostering intergenerational dialogue, the acknowledgement of particular harms – such as gender-based violence and the experiences of ethnic minorities – have been broached as important areas of reconciliatory practice. Moreover the role of 'lower-level' Khmer Rouge, who still live alongside or within communities that probably suffered at their hands – but are themselves often also 'complex victims' who may have both perpetrated and suffered violence (Bernath 2015; Bouris 2007) – is pronounced as a key site of reconciliation.

In this context, initiatives in the arts, including participatory arts, have grown over the past decades as the limits of existing and conventional political and legal attempts to redress and acknowledge Cambodia's genocide have become starker. At the same time, as we will show, we must understand these initiatives in their direct and indirect relationships to both the history of 'national reconciliation' and the establishment of the ECCC as anchoring points of a wider discursive terrain that permits, enables and constrains arts-based approaches to memory, reconciliation and redress.

2.1 The role of arts, education and civil society in prefiguring the ECCC

In the years prior to the establishment of the ECCC in 2006, CSOs mobilised a range of arts-based approaches in anticipation of the work of the court, particularly as a means of 'translating' and communicating legal knowledge to a public audience. The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), an organisation central to efforts to document the crimes of the Khmer Rouge since its establishment in 1995, developed a range of arts-led participatory outreach approaches, based on public consultations, that showed Cambodian audiences preferred receiving information about the ECCC through arts media, including storytelling, film and theatre. In 2007, DC-Cam oversaw the writing and production of a one-act 30 minute play, *Searching for the Truth*, performed by student volunteers from the Royal University of Phnom Penh's Fine Arts School. *Searching for the Truth* was intended to disseminate information about the ECCC and convey basic legal principles to Cambodians living in rural areas. It also introduced larger themes, such as the general principles of fair trials, reconciliation, and discussion of the societal implications of the Tribunal, before encouraging dialogue and question-and-answer sessions after the performances. In other words, it suggested that the arts could be harnessed as an effective, if instrumental, medium for the translation of other disciplinary claims over experiences of atrocity.

Arts-led interventions in the years prior to the establishment of the ECCC had also started to engage thorny outstanding questions around explanations of violence under the Khmer Rouge that the prevailing state sponsored narrative had obfuscated. In other words, arts could be seen to respond to a wider public appetite to better understand the regime prior to the establishment of the court.

The director Rithy Pan, himself a survivor of the regime, produced a corpus of critically acclaimed films exploring questions of perpetration and the legacies of the Khmer Rouge, several of which included challenging forms of subject participation. In *Bophana: A Cambodian Tragedy* (1996), Rithy Pan drew on the first-hand forced confessions of victims interred under the regime at S-21 to weave the narrative of a couple, Ly Sitha and Hout Bophana, and their experiences under the Khmer Rouge. Here, Rithy Pan can be seen to deploy the primary artefacts of atrocity to narrate the story of those that can no longer speak. Sitha had joined the revolution prior to the Khmer Rouge accession to power, separating the pair, only to be reunited with Bophana following the mass evacuations that marked the early days of the regime. The couple's love letters would become incriminating evidence during internal purges and both Sitha and Bophana would be tortured and executed at S-21. In *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003), Rithy Pan adopted a different tack, reuniting two survivors of S-21, Vann Nath and Chum Mey, with former Khmer Rouge guards at the site in a documentary format. Vann Nath and Chum Mey probe the guards for their reflections and memories of their time at S-21, querying the guards' self-identification as 'victims' who acted under duress. The film proceeds to darken, as the guards begin to re-enact the routine schedules and duties of their work at S-21, the coercive nature of the confessions they would elicit, escalating to in situ testimony of killing at the Cheoung Ek mass grave site. At one point, Chum Mey asks Vann Nath about his views on 'reconciliation' and the need to 'bury the resentment'. Vann Nath's reply is cutting: 'Until now has anyone said this past action was wrong? [...] Has anyone begged for forgiveness? Have you heard that from the lips of senior leaders or the underlings? [...] They don't even say it was wrong!' *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* – employing a participatory approach to the extent it was led by the questions of S-21 victims themselves – offers both a glimpse of what dialogue between victim and perpetrator might offer, but also the productive possibilities of a politics of 'refusal', where victims are afforded the space and agency to demand more than prevailing 'top down' political variants of reconciliation and foreclosure dictate.

2.2 Challenges of participatory approaches

Arts-led attempts to represent and engage experiences of the Khmer Rouge regime can therefore be seen to both prefigure the work of the ECCC – complementing conceptions of national reconciliation that pivot on the denunciation of the Khmer Rouge leadership and the exculpation of lower-level perpetrators – as well as working at their limits to challenge them. After the ECCC was established and commenced work in 2006, the limitations of a narrowly judicial response to the experience of the Khmer Rouge years became quickly apparent: only a handful of leaders would be tried for their roles overseeing a limited number of crime sites and wider contextual questions about why violence was perpetrated, the culpability of lower level perpetrators, and the challenges of reconciling communities would remain outstanding. CSOs would quickly begin to address these challenges, often utilising arts-led and participatory-arts approaches in doing so. At the same time, such initiatives remained inescapably within the orbit of the ECCC, often justified as exercises that could generate greater public interest in the court proceedings.

One example of CSO sponsored participatory arts initiatives aiming to address questions of memory, trauma, reconciliation, and ECCC awareness, is seen in the production *Breaking the Silence*, that debuted in Phnom Penh in 2009. The play was conceived by the director Annemarie Prins and DC-Cam's Youk Chhang. DC-Cam embarked on the project with the understanding that survivors can find it difficult to talk about the past. In this sense, the performance was intended not only to represent and acknowledge a set of difficult experiences but also the challenges of reconciliation in the present, especially in regard to survivors' relationships with lower level Khmer Rouge that might still live in the communities that they harmed. For Prins, art can be mobilized to engage traumatic pasts, to instigate more open 'grassroots' dialogue as part of the process of reconciliation in Cambodia. With this in mind, the play employed a participatory method – drawing on real life stories of former Khmer Rouge members and victims who had taken part in interviews conducted by the DC-Cam – to inform seven vignettes that structure the play, such as a mother's ostracism of a son suspected of Khmer Rouge membership, or a gesture of contrition from a cadre for complicity in the death of a relative.

After its debut in Phnom Penh, *Breaking the Silence* was recorded for broadcast on national TV, and quickly commissioned for a national tour in 2010 and 2011 to engage a wider audience across Cambodia's provincial centres, often alongside or as part of ECCC outreach initiatives. As well as its extensive reach, the play generated positive feedback because it was thought to resonate with both survivors' and former Khmer Rouge experiences, offering a cue and platform for discussion and dialogue.

Participatory arts approaches became increasingly attractive to CSOs as a means to encourage engagement with experiences of the regime beyond the dominant categories and frameworks of memory anchored at the ECCC, which tended to be narrowly juridical or medically framed through an abstracted language of trauma that is less sensitive to the context and detail of people's experiences (Pugliese 2015). In late 2008, the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO), Kdei Karuna (KDK), the Khmer Institute for Democracy (KID) and an international film team led by Ella Pugliese initiated a collaborative participatory video project in a village named Thnol Lok. The film team initially gauged interest and willingness to participate in making a documentary exploring questions of memory and experiences of the Khmer Rouge to help foster a sense of acknowledgement and recognition of past atrocities in this particular setting. Residents were then trained, equipped and led the production of *We want (u) 2 know* in early 2009, with the film reaching audiences at theatres in Phnom Penh and several international film festivals. Pugliese has reflected on the challenges of devolving responsibility for the direction of video content, noting ways that participatory approaches can be taken in unanticipated or challenging directions. For example, several Thnol Lok residents were eager to 'reconstruct' and 're-enact' memories of 'crimes of the Khmer Rouge' (including recreating violence and execution), a tack that jarred with the expectations of the film crew. Pugliese made a decision to include only footage preempting, rather than recreating, violence, yet concludes that a participatory filmmaking approach, in traumatic contexts, necessarily involves surrendering notions of 'expertise' to those affected by the subject matter at hand (2015).

Stephanie Benzaquen has critically reflected on both the production and reception of *Breaking the Silence* and *We want (u) 2 know* (2012).

Benzaquen, parsing the invariable tension within representations of experiences that are both deeply personal and profoundly collective, notes that *Breaking the Silence* abstracts particular experiences for the purpose of accessibility to such an extent that it risks producing its own ‘archetypes of witnessing’, undermining the extent to which the play fulfils its participatory rationale (2012: 47). Indeed, the attendant question of who mediates and arbitrates the production of such representations is still very present in the participatory approaches at hand. Benzaquen queries the process behind the decision not to include the *We want (u) 2 know* footage that recreated scenes of execution by the Thnol Lok residents, noting that no dialogue or deliberation on the matter was included in the accompanying documentary on the process of producing the film. While it might be possible to read this as part of a western-led flattening of an attenuated Cambodian subject, Benzaquen is wary of such a reading. Instead, she suggests that both projects reflect ‘hybrid’ forms of ‘witnessing’ that obeys a similar logic to debates over localism and locality in transitional justice, and should therefore be understood as a contingent ‘particular phase of western engagement in the construction of Cambodian memory’ (2012: 50). In other words, each production should be treated as a moment of cross-cultural negotiation rather than an authentic expression of locality or, indeed, the imposition of western aesthetic tropes on Cambodian experiences.

2.3 Shaping ‘proof of concept’: Intergenerational dialogue and reconciliation

Breaking the Silence and *We want (u) 2 know* can be read as responses to two problems. Firstly, the early phases of the ECCC prosecutions had quickly generated a tension between their prosecution of crimes at a narrow number of sites and events, and their attempt to produce generalisable representations of experiences of the Khmer Rouge for a public audience of ‘national’ victims in order to support a story of national renewal (Manning 2017). Secondly, in the wider landscape and history of state-sponsored discourses of national reconciliation, more detailed and granular forms of acknowledgement for experiences of the Khmer Rouge had been neglected. In this context, CSOs were concerned that gaps in knowledge, understanding and even belief between survivors of the regime and younger Cambodians could undermine Cambodia’s transitional justice and reconciliatory processes.

Both *Breaking the Silence* and *We want (u) 2 know* were mobilised with one eye on instigating dialogue between younger Cambodians and survivors, emblematic of a wider shift in CSO initiatives after the initial ECCC proceedings in 2009 that located intergenerational acknowledgement of the experience of the regime as a key site of reconciliatory practice. In this context, arts were often powerfully fused with educational interventions.

Participatory methods have been widely deployed in CSO initiatives promoting intergenerational dialogue. Youth for Peace (YFP), for example, initiated a series of workshops in 2009 under a programme titled 'Understand, Remember and Change', exploring issues of reconciliation and the need to learn about and understand the experiences of survivors to enhance critical thinking and citizenship values. The workshops were meant to stretch ideas of reconciliation beyond forgiveness (and forgetting) characteristic of state sponsored discourses of national reconciliation, instead encouraging participants to actively explore questions of reconciliation by searching for information themselves, reading, discussion, and listening to others about Khmer Rouge history. Study tours were also convened at key heritage and memorial sites in Phnom Penh, including Tuol Sleng and Cheong Ek, to promote historical awareness and education about the ECCC process. YFP also launched initiatives deploying participatory arts to develop intergenerational dialogue, training participants in painting and drama. For YFP, the targeted use of art work as a tool for expressing and representing participants' local histories offers a means to critically envision peace in the future (YFP 2011: 11). In this sense, the YFP initiatives can be read to illustrate the similarities of educational approaches that employ the principles of active learning and participatory arts approaches as each devolve responsibility of the creative process for young people to lead and take ownership of their history.

DC-Cam has also initiated a series of educational programmes working with young people, encouraging intergenerational dialogue as a means of enhancing reconciliation and peace-building. DC-Cam oversaw the production of a new textbook on the history of the Khmer Rouge, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea* (Dy 2007), for use in the public school system, and has continued to work on engaging younger people in human-rights and genocide-education programmes. DC-Cam have been particularly responsive to outstanding questions of reconciliation in respect of former Khmer Rouge communities, seeing value in understanding and de-stigmatising former lower-level members.

Such a position works with wider discourses of national reconciliation. Participatory tours to heritage and memorial sites have been critical in these educational initiatives, including the “Anlong Veng Peace Tours”, which became the focal point of Changing the Story’s proof of concept work, to which we will return.

The work of the Bophana Center also helpfully illustrates the relationships and translations between educational initiatives to foster memory and participatory arts-based practices. In 2015, the Bophana Center launched the ‘Acts of Memory’ program to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the capture of Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge, under the slogan ‘Learn the past, create the future’ (Bophana Center 2015). A public audience was invited to the opening ceremony to reflect upon the damage of the Khmer Rouge period and, in the process, to explore questions of identity, self-expression and community. In particular, the program aimed to engage young Cambodians on issues of memory through events and activities that seek to enhance historical understanding and to raise questions about how a society remembers, in order to move past atrocity. The student participants were trained how to use a recently developed educational mobile app that explored and explained Khmer Rouge history – approved by the Ministry of Education as a supplementary curriculum resource – and then were encouraged to talk with their older relatives about their learning as a starting point for dialogue. The students were also trained in filmmaking and interview techniques before being tasked with producing short films based on their conversations with older relatives. The program ran again in 2016 and 2017. For Bophana, ‘Acts of Memory’ attempts to record the experiences of survivors to acknowledge their memories but also to enhance the knowledge of young people and to help build better relations between them. As Keo Duong of the Bophana Center noted, ‘...many survivors feel their stories are told but not through themselves, but in other people.’ (Manning and Ser 2018a) Across these examples, we see the potential for arts and education to address questions of reconciliation in two ways. Arts and education are, here, enmeshed to cue and generate intergenerational dialogue that enables recognition of the experiences of survivors in the eyes of younger people, in order to confer dignity to memory. The translation of ‘knowledge’ of atrocities into the public ‘acknowledgment’ of suffering is an important step (Cohen 2013). Secondly, across these initiatives, we see more instrumental rationales indigenous to human-rights education at work: as younger people engage these processes, it is hoped that future violence will be deterred, citizenship values enhanced, and reconciliation nurtured.

2.4 ECCC reparations and participatory arts

There remains one final area bridging and bringing together participatory arts, education and the legal (as well as socio-political) processes at work at the ECCC. The ECCC is an innovative mechanism in the wider landscape of retributive transitional justice strategies because it affords victims groups, termed ‘civil parties’, the potential award of ‘collective and moral’ reparations (ECCC 2015: 23; see Killean 2018 for a full account of civil party victim participation at the ECCC). In initial ECCC proceedings, these included the compilation and publication of defendant apologies and the publication of the verdict. More recently, as the ECCC reparations process has been streamlined, several CSOs led victims groups in their development of reparation requests, including awards for commemorative and memorial activities, the provision of testimonial therapy and self-help groups, and the reform of the high school history curriculum. Today, in the latest ongoing case against former ‘senior leaders’ of the Khmer Rouge, CSO facilitated reparations requests notably include participatory arts-based initiatives.

One important example of the value of participatory arts in reparations awards is visible in the production and performance of *Pka Sla Krom Angkar*, (or “areca flowers”), a dance production based on the stories and experiences of those forcibly married under the Khmer Rouge. CSOs and victims groups had campaigned throughout the ECCC proceedings for the court to recognise forced marriage as a specific crime under the Khmer Rouge. Yet the ECCC has only recognised it as such under the most recent, ongoing proceedings in Case 002/02 against ‘senior leaders’. Drawing on oral histories compiled by the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation that detailed the experiences of victims forced marriage, a consortium of CSOs and the Khmer Arts Academy worked in coordination with concerned civil parties to write and produce *Pka Sla* (TPO 2017: 2). The production was first performed alongside youth exhibitions on forced marriage, before touring the country in provincial centres. A performance of *Pka Sla* was also broadcast on national television later in 2017. Civil parties have requested further backing for future performances of *Pka Sla* as an ECCC reparation in the hope that the production can help the wider community of victims of forced marriage and gender based violence (Heinrich Boll Stiftung 2017).

Pka Sla was initiated with two aims in mind. Firstly, Cambodia's past efforts to redress and reconcile with the crimes of the Khmer Rouge had largely omitted experiences of forced marriage, even as the legacies of the practice are still present today in relationships and families that have chosen to remain together despite their coerced origins. In this sense, the production offered a way of acknowledging the specificity of harms arising from such experiences as key sites of justice and reconciliation in their own rights. Secondly, Pka Sla also spoke to broader human rights issues in the present. Sotheary Yim, a clinical psychologist involved in victim support during consultations in planning Pka Sla, pointed out that the production was 'thinking of the future. It's not just a mechanism of the court because that is just a civil party reparation. But what can we learn from this history, for the youth, through dialogue [...] Students at conferences believe that sexual abuse is their fault. If we don't come together and criticise those ideas, it will keep happening.' (Manning and Ser 2018b) In other words, confronting the gendered dynamics of violence under the Khmer Rouge offers a means to think and talk about issues of gender inequality and violence today.

As a specific request for reparation at the ECCC, Pka Sla foregrounds questions about the value of (participatory) arts as a way to address experiences of trauma. As Sotheary Yim notes, 'Survivors who joined the project said "You are describing my story. You use my language, my story. You express my suffering through the performance"' (Manning and Ser 2018b). The ability of participatory arts to harness a sense of ownership for victims over their experiences appears pivotal. Yet Yim acknowledges the challenges of such representational strategies at the same time. Pka Sla depicts experiences of gender violence and its aftermath with a degree of realism that can invite questions of re-traumatisation. For Yim, the key with such strategies is reconfiguring the dynamics of the relationships within which victims are situated: 'The environment has to be different from the traumatic experience. If they were powerless, we have to make them powerful. Healing is a process, don't expect magic to happen' (Manning and Ser 2018b).

Part Two –

Changing the Story: Learning from difficult histories with and for young people

This section turns to outline and reflect on Changing the Story's project activities developed in Cambodia since 2017. These were informed and shaped by key thematic issues and questions identified in the preceding review of existing CSO practice. As aligned to the overarching aims of the project, Changing the Story initiated these activities with the recognition that a 'top down' understanding and operationalisation of reconciliation, memory, and justice would likely have little resonance for its intended beneficiaries. Instead, in recognising that the language of reconciliation can have different meanings across and even within the same contexts (Manning 2015), our proof of concept activities were produced to align with the strategic priorities of Cambodian CSOs in regard to the legacies of the Khmer Rouge. In particular, our work has prioritised engaging young people with the history of the Khmer Rouge in recognition of the uneven historical knowledge of the regime among younger generations, a priority identified by CSOs and survivor constituencies. Secondly, we have attempted to engage the histories of lower level Khmer Rouge members in particular, which CSOs have identified as key site of reconciliation. Lastly, we have deployed arts based methodologies – specifically, participatory film, for and by young people – as an educational technique that can explore marginalised histories of lower level Khmer Rouge, while helping to destigmatise their place as “complex victims” of the regime (Bernath 2015). Drawing together these three priorities, this section outlines how our work in collaboration with the Documentation Center of Cambodia evidenced proof of concept of the value of intergenerational dialogue through arts as a tool for reconciliation.

1.1 The Documentation Center of Cambodia and the Anlong Veng Peace Tours

In 2014, DC-Cam established the Anlong Veng Peace Center and initiated a programme of “Anlong Veng Peace Tours”. Anlong Veng, a small town on Cambodia's northern border, was the final Khmer Rouge stronghold at the end of the civil war, and former residence of several senior Khmer Rouge leaders, including Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Ta Mok. The houses and strongholds of these leaders have become the focus of ongoing conservation, heritage and tourism initiatives in the area. The region is also home to a large community of former lower level Khmer Rouge members and combatants, who remained in the area at the end of the war.

Anlong Veng is therefore a key site for reconciliation initiatives in Cambodia that seek to understand and integrate the experiences of former Khmer Rouge as it represents a geographically marginal and highly stigmatised community. In this vein, DC-Cam approaches history education with, and through, the lives of former Khmer Rouge as a form of reconciliatory practice as it can help deter future violence, while cultivating relationships across estranged communities (Ly 2016).

The Peace Tours initiatives have recruited student groups from Cambodian high schools and universities across Cambodia, though tours have always included a sample group from local high schools and provincial teacher training facilities in the Anlong Veng area. DC-Cam invited groups to the Anlong Veng Peace Center for visits over three days, convened roughly once each month. In particular, DC-Cam focused its work on groups of pre-service and trainee teacher students on the basis that learning yielded from the tours could be 'multiplied' in classrooms across Cambodia. In turn, furnishing trainee teachers with deeper knowledge of and experiences with members of the regime to deploy in schools would encourage further intergenerational dialogue beyond the classroom within wider family and community networks, inculcating civic norms of non-violence, supporting and embedding reconciliation, while dignifying the experiences of survivors. The Peace Tours initiatives have also relied on participatory, student-led approaches in the delivery of genocide education. The Anlong Veng Peace Center would provide history seminars, testimony and talks from former Khmer Rouge, and include tours of local heritage sites to help develop students understanding and awareness of the Khmer Rouge regime and subsequent history of conflict in the Anlong Veng area. For the final two days, students were tasked with researching and writing news stories about issues of reconciliation, memory, and intergenerational dialogue, based on interviews and conversations with (the principally former Khmer Rouge) local residents. These news stories were included in local news publications, offering students a sense of ownership of their learning.

Changing the Story and DC-Cam worked together from 2017 to enhance and incorporate additional arts-based participatory methods on the Peace Tours. From April 2018, the Peace Tours adopted a participatory filmmaking methodology as student groups were provided with basic filmmaking training and invited to produce short documentaries based on the experiences and testimony of the Anlong Veng community residents.

DC-Cam would then, following fieldwork, oversee post-production of films. Changing the Story introduced the participatory filmmaking method with four aims in mind. Firstly, participatory filmmaking would foster transferable audio-visual skills for the students and trainee teachers. Secondly, filmmaking would empower students in the creative process and production of historical knowledge, encouraging their own sense of ownership of Cambodian history, a key challenge identified across the review of CSO activity. Thirdly, filmmaking as a method was particularly suitable as a reconciliatory practice in the way it necessitated forms of relationships and encounters that could humanise and destigmatise former Khmer Rouge members. Fourthly, the products of participatory filmmaking had a unique potential as digital resources for mobilisation and use in other educational contexts, especially as tools that could encourage and facilitate further intergenerational dialogue.

1.2 The Anlong Veng Peace Tours: Participatory Video as a process and the possibilities of reconciliation

The experiences of students on the Peace Tours were analysed through a series of pre and post tour qualitative response sheets that included questions on effective learning activities, attitudes toward former Khmer Rouge, and perspectives on reconciliation. The students were also invited to diarise unstructured daily reflections on their experiences. Changing the Story approached these data with two analytical aims. Firstly, they offered an in depth method of evaluation of proof of concept in terms of the efficacy of participatory filmmaking as a means of instigating intergenerational dialogue in support of reconciliation. Secondly, given there remain outstanding questions in transitional justice concerning the way knowledge and awareness of atrocities translates into civic benefits in the present, qualitative responses before, during and after the tours could offer a 'real time' illustration of the mechanisms through which intergenerational dialogue, reconciliation, and memory are related and actually 'work in practice'. Thematic qualitative analysis was conducted on participant responses elicited on tours between April and December 2018, highlighting four keys themes present in encounters and relationships between students and members of the Anlong Veng community.

These included affirmations of the truth of the regime; the importance of memory as means of deterrence; the de-stigmatisation of former Khmer Rouge; and finally, as a cautionary lesson, the risk of amplifying hagiographic accounts of Khmer Rouge leaders in ways that could risk revisionism and undermine reconciliation.

1.2.1 *Truth seeking*

Prior to the Peace Tours, students and trainee teachers tended to be equipped with a limited understanding and knowledge of the Khmer Rouge regime. Student's prior knowledge of the genocide was principally drawn from content on the public-school curriculum, with the topic of the Khmer Rouge taught across two grades under national history. Less evenly, students drew knowledge of the regime from conversations with family survivors or through news and media content, such as recent coverage of the ongoing prosecutions at the ECCC. Despite these sources of knowledge, and in the context of rapid development and social change, and amid new contemporary strands of exclusionary nationalism, some students still queried the truth of the regime, often struggling to believe that "Khmer would kill Khmer", reflecting questions and challenges survivor constituencies themselves still wrestle with (Manning 2017, 125-126).

Young people in Cambodia, who did not experience the regime first-hand but live immediately around the legacies of violence, therefore can be understood to represent a "postmemory" generation (Hirsh 2008), impressed by a contradictory sense of both rupture and continuity with this past. In this context, the students appeared attuned to the Peace Tours as a means of verifying the truth of the regime. The opportunity to explore this history through film based interviews with former Khmer Rouge members was particularly fruitful. As one student observed:

Generally, they talked about the hardship they faced from one era to another. I believe what they said because it's consistent with historical document and have clear time and place. (August 2018)

A tendency to approach testimony in the films produced elicited from former Khmer Rouge on the basis of its veracity, accuracy, honesty, and correspondence to prior knowledge of the regime was pronounced across student reflections. What is instructive and important, in this respect, is the complementing and validation of experiences of survivor constituencies more broadly, supporting wider issues of acknowledgement and dignification as harm is recognised from within communities of lower level Khmer Rouge. Yet other kinds of truth seemed accessible and possible by virtue of the filmmaking method. Another student noted the details and knowledge of the regime – what ‘happened’, its content – elicited through their interview strategies, but noted how further contextual questions were generated concerning why the regime enacted its policies and what the roles of former Khmer Rouge were therein:

They told me about the persecutions of people's lives all the time... eliminate all sorts of rights and mass killing. I feel shocked and frightened towards such an act. This gives me questions on how the Khmer Rouge emerged and for what purpose they did it. (April 2018)

Another student noted curiosities about meeting former Khmer Rouge, connecting the potential for personal stories to illuminate wider public histories.

When hearing the word of Khmer Rouge I think who is he? And I want to ask him the reason of serving the Khmer Rouge soldier, and ask about the life of Cambodian people at that time, and want him to let me know by telling about the experiences and his personal life. (June 2018)

Truth seeking is a strategy that is central to – and constitutive of – the wider landscape of transitional justice. Here we see how participatory filmmaking, empowering young people to produce and take ownership of the creative process, can be orientated to, produce, and connect questions implicating different kinds of truth: evidential, contextual, personal, and collective. A final dimension is important to note from the student reflections on filmmaking in this respect in terms of the affective dimension of testimony on and through film:

I feel as if I have gone through the period. He narrated the hardship and starvation. I am so shocked and regrettable for the family separation and overwork. I am very regrettable for the losses of family members and the brutal killing. (December 2018)

In this respect, we can see how participatory filmmaking further enables empathetic encounters with memory, offering engagement with affective kinds of truth. The extent to which participants ‘felt’ and empathised with the stories of harm described by interviewees would in turn facilitate and embed ideas of non-recurrence, as well as destigmatising former lower level Khmer Rouge.

1.2.2 Never again!

One of the principal concerns of survivors of the Khmer Rouge is that young people should learn about the history of the regime in order to prevent its return and deter future violence (Killean 2018). Indeed, the deterrent potential of transitional justice initiatives is encapsulated in the injunction to remember, “Never Again!”. As the student led interviews furnished evidential, contextual and emotional engagements with the history of regime, the participatory filmmaking method represented a particularly fruitful means through which to explore ideas of non-recurrence. As one student noted:

I was so satisfied with the peace study tour so that people of each generation would not forget and abandon our national history. Learning about the history is extremely important as we can use it an experience for our current daily life. (December 2018)

Another suggested that:

For me, the Khmer Rouge regime left suffering, fear that remains in the mentality of Cambodian people who were survived in that regime. And I really don't want the Khmer Rouge regime to re-establish, and I wish to appeal the country leader at every mandate term to work progressively and lead the country to be developed; and do not take the lead model of Khmer Rouge regime. (June 2018)

What is instructive here is the capacity for students to translate engagements with challenging histories of violence from immediate injunctions of non-recurrence into wider lessons inculcating civic values of non-violence in the present.

1.2.3 *Reconciliation and de-stigmatisation*

The place of lower level Khmer Rouge experiences in Cambodia is sensitive. On the one hand, they remain a highly stigmatised community, and the amplification of their experiences of suffering – or their appropriation and self-narration within more generalised accounts of national harm suffered under the regime – can be understood as potentially offensive to wider victim communities (Manning 2015: 402). On the other, visible as a key priority from our review of CSO practice, lower level Khmer Rouge have been identified as stakeholders within reconciliatory initiatives. Negotiating this tension remains fraught and vexed. Nevertheless, for DC-Cam, the experiences of lower level Khmer Rouge, who suffered loss under the regime or during the subsequent civil war, remain an important part of Cambodia's efforts to address its difficult history.

The question of how the participatory filmmaking exercises enables and supports reconciliation can initially be broached through evidence of attitudinal change. Across pre-tour response forms, students expressed fear, mistrust and often hatred of former Khmer Rouge. Yet as students encountered, ate with, talked to, and then interviewed former Khmer Rouge, expressions reflecting greater trust were emergent, especially as tours proceeded.

I was sad when I talked with them. They talked about many things that happened in their lives. There are stories I already knew and stories I didn't. Sometime I find it hard to ask them. I still have my doubt, but I got to know many things since my friends asked questions. (August 2018)

The acknowledgement of others' suffering, or the recognition, at least, of shared suffering seemed crucial to the affective engagements with former Khmer Rouge. For example:

They talked about their lives before, during and after the Khmer Rouge regime, as well as, how they live, worked, eat in a day, their separation from their family, the death of their family, marriage, also the forced migration of people from one place to another...etc. I believed what they said because even my parents have been through this cruel regime. What they said is the same as what my parents told me. (August 2018)

As noted, truth seeking can apprehend or ‘verify’ the ‘content’ of memory. It can locate and contextualise personal stories within collective histories. Yet it can also generate new interpretations of context and meaning. Participatory filmmaking seemed especially well equipped to capture and convey the complexities of these different dimensions of the experiences of the Khmer Rouge, facilitating empathy through the texture and detail of their accounts. As one student noted, reflecting on unexpected personal testimony

When I went to interview people in Anlong Veng there is this uncle [an older resident] who told us that in the Khmer Rouge regime they assumed that his family are new people [more likely to be targeted] without asking him. The truth is they aren't new people. The Khmer Rouge took him and his sister and told them that they will be re-educated. In truth, they were taken to be killed but fortunately the mass grave was full. Therefore, they sent him and his sister to carry dirt and plant potatoes. They cooperated in our interview and told us clearly what happened (August 2018)

The contextualisation of the personal narratives of former Khmer Rouge through film, often marked by accounts of vulnerability and fear, allowed space for less binary understandings of responsibility and blame. In other words, as the potential for “complex victimhood” (Bernath 2015) was illuminated; as the precarious stakes of survival for all those under the regime laid bare; that lower level Khmer Rouge were often themselves purged clarified; and the potential that lower level Khmer Rouge perpetrators were themselves potentially acting under duress suggested, stigmas surrounding the Khmer Rouge were softened. As one student suggested:

I really feel regretful and empathetic towards the victims and the former Khmer Rouge because all lived in fearfulness, no freedom and life-and-death situation all the time. I do not discriminate against the former Khmer Rouge and still respect them as other Cambodian people. (April 2018)

Reconciliation, as envisaged in the work of the Peace Tours, appears conditional on the de-stigmatisation of formerly conflicting parties across older and younger generations, and de-stigmatisation here appears conditional on the convergence of our prior themes: acknowledging the truth of harm and suffering in its complexity, especially as it mirrors shared experiences across groups; acknowledging the importance of non-recurrence of violence; and recognising and acknowledging common membership within a wider community of equals. Intergenerational dialogue within these encounters, as a mechanism of reconciliation, can then be multiplied and disseminated through film to instigate further dialogue, acknowledging shared experiences, de-stigmatising groups, and facilitating reconciliation.

1.2.4 Challenges arising from participatory filmmaking among lower level ‘perpetrators’: hagiography and revisionism?

There is a risk of presenting an overly sanguine account of the student engagements with former Khmer Rouge and serious challenges and questions remain outstanding for our understanding of reconciliation in the case at hand, in other Cambodian contexts, and beyond. As noted, DC-Cam’s vision of reconciliation is just one among many deployed and at work led by CSO’s in Cambodia; the amplification of ‘shared’ accounts of suffering from former Khmer Rouge communities would be not necessarily be welcome in other survivor communities (Manning 2015: 402); and DC-Cam staff suggested that some former Khmer Rouge could instrumentally locate their own stories within more general accounts of suffering under the regime. More troubling, perhaps, were instances where empathy for former lower level Khmer Rouge was translated into sympathetic accounts not just confined to the harms suffered they suffered, but of their former leadership as well. These instances were rare. Yet the creative space afforded by the filmmaking process necessitates their cautionary analysis. As one student suggested:

For me, I really admire his leadership. The people trusted him even if he was a Khmer Rouge leader. Ta Mok was a good person and smart who know how to bend with the circumstance.
(August 2018)

Ta Mok was a senior Khmer Rouge military commander, infamous elsewhere in Cambodia as “The Butcher”, responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands under the regime. Lower level Khmer Rouge in the area are today quick to denounce the cruelty of the regime, yet are often equally quick to celebrate the achievements of former leaders such as Ta Mok for their roles in the patronage and governance of the region. These accounts, verging on revisionist, fed into the filmmaking process:

As before, I thought one of the Khmer Rouge leaders [Ta] Mok is atrocious; nonetheless, in contrast, [Ta] Mok created many achievements like constructing a school, a hospital, a bridge, and a road; additional, he was well-behaved, not arrogant, but kind; that’s why the local people there love and respect him.
(April 2018)

Perhaps more troubling still was the solubility of such sympathies within contemporary political currents. Anti-Vietnamese sentiment in Cambodia has been a longstanding currency in some political circles and it is striking that students might acquiesce to or accept re-readings of Khmer Rouge violence because former members can portray themselves as ‘patriots’ that defended the country.

My comments today are that all of the former KR members are brutal. Actually, it’s not. They said they defended our country from the Vietnamese. (December 2018)

In other words, it is possible that in the context of more contemporary forms of exclusionary nationalism revisionist accounts of Khmer Rouge “brutality” are possible.

What can be done to disarm such tendencies? DC-Cam goes to lengths to prepare students with detailed and depth genocide education that locates the Cambodian experience within a wider landscape and history of experiences of genocide globally. Such a strategy seems fruitful in yielding more universal rather than particularist lessons from student encounters with genocide education.

The reproduction of sympathetic and revisionist accounts of the Khmer Rouge leadership occurs across former Khmer Rouge strongholds in the Cambodian northwest and western regions. The tours also confront limitations of capacity, contingent on the changes and conditions of donor priorities, and able only to offer students several days preparation in anticipation of each trip. In this context, and a wider educational and cultural landscape in which the knowledge and lessons of older generations, and teachers, tends to be authoritative, the kinds of critical disposition required for interviewing older subjects about difficult histories cannot be taken for granted.

1.3 The Anlong Veng Peace Tours: Participatory Video and its products

Cook et al. (2018) have noted that while participatory film attracts attention for its value as process that can empower its participants, closer attention should be paid also to the value of the products it yields. In this light, we here offer some further reflections on the work overseen by Changing the Story and DC-Cam in the production of participatory films as forms of reconciliatory texts. These are valuable both for the content and stories they offer in their own rights, as well as ensuring a long term and sustainable legacy for the project as they can be deployed as educational resources in other Cambodian contexts and beyond. In other words, we see intergenerational dialogue as promising value in the act of participatory filmmaking across generations itself, and for the way its products can instigate further dialogue as they are mobilised as reconciliatory texts in communities and classrooms beyond.

1.3.1 "Voices from Koh Thmey Village"



Watch the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwUY4GwGiTM&t=189s>

“Voices from Koh Thmey Village” features an in depth interview with a former Khmer Rouge soldier produced by Pre-Service Teachers from the Battambang Regional Training Center. The film opens and proceeds with an exchange about a wound suffered on the soldier’s hand from gunfire, though he proceeds to unbutton his shirt to reveal shrapnel wounds across his chest. The former soldier traces the scars with his hand and elaborates on the experiences of the attack as the camera focuses on his chest. The former soldier appears at ease showing his scars, laughing at one point, and the film seems caught between fixating on markings of violence, while also accepting the interviewee’s intent on demonstrating its legacy on his body. In a way that other mediums might struggle to convey, the students have crafted a film that shows the material and embodied ‘traces’ of memory through a personal story, which at the same time services wider reconciliatory discourses by illuminating harm and suffering sustained during the neglected history of the civil war.

The film pivots away from the soldier's wounds and medical recovery, and the former soldier slides toward more generous reflections of Pol Pot as he proclaims the fair treatment of Khmer Rouge troops as they fought the government in the 1980s and 1990s. At the same time, he is humanised as he accounts wife and children, who remained in the Anlong Veng region as he was dispatched for 'propaganda' missions in the Cambodian interior.

1.3.2 "A Shattered Life"



Watch the film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbXGFpOo_98&t=83s

Trainee teachers from Kampong Cham produced "A Shattered Life" through interviews with two survivors of the regime living in the Anlong Veng area. The two interviewees offer differing stories and it is implied that one is a "base" person – favoured for their class position under the regime – and was enlisted by the Khmer Rouge military laying mines during the war, while it is unclear whether the other is a recent arrival to the area, and potentially therefore lived through Democratic Kampuchea elsewhere in Cambodia.

In leaving these boundaries partially indistinct, the film draws the two sets of experiences into dialogue, offering shared parallel accounts of life under the regime: constant surveillance and fear, hunger and collectivised eating, and hard labour. In this sense, the film can be read as a reconciliatory text in the way such inter and intra group boundaries are eroded. The interviewee enlisted to lay mines describes his memory of the regime as like "...a thorn out of my chest", a Khmer cultural idiom that can be read to designate manifestations of psychological distress and trauma. The interview ends with further strong reconciliatory messaging, echoing calls for non-recurrence and deterrence of future violence.

1.3.3 "Forbidden Love"

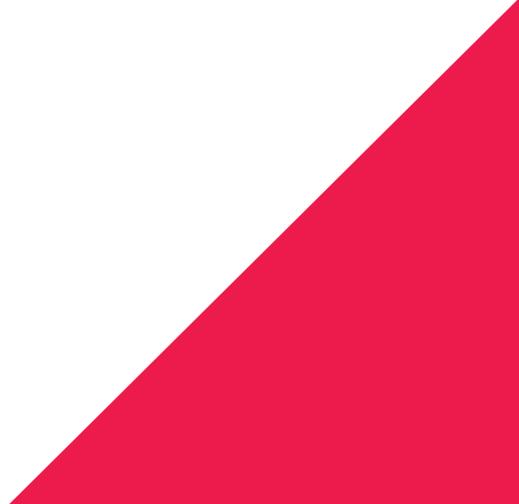


Watch the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-5jJkg4e0c>

"Forbidden Love", produced by pre-service teachers from Prey Veng province, explores the accounts of two survivors of forced marriage. The practice of forced marriage was widespread during the regime, precipitant of marital rape and reflective of the regulation of the most basic intimacies of life under the Khmer Rouge.

The legacies of forced marriage in Cambodia persist, with women survivors particularly stigmatised and unable to access and observe traditional ceremonial practices if remarrying. Forced marriage was recognised as a crime against humanity at the ECCC in 2018. “Forbidden Love” illustrates the dehumanisation at work in the practice of forced marriage, as two survivors offer recollections of mass weddings, the denial of consent, and the harm constituted by the denial of traditional, culturally appropriate marital practice. Interview footage is interspersed with still images of archival photographs of mass weddings under the regime, alongside (scenic) cutaway footage of the local area, flowers, and community life. The challenges and dilemmas survivors confronted after the regime are highlighted, as couples, often with children, were forced to choose whether to remain married despite the coercive origins of their union. As a text, the film can be read to highlight a particular and gendered harm suffered under the regime that has only recently drawn greater attention and acknowledgement. The film ends with a student summary maintaining a commitment to share the video among younger generations of Cambodians.

Conclusion



In this review, we have explored a past and present arts-based interventions in Cambodia that have become increasingly central to the work of CSOs as they support Cambodia's transitional justice process, especially noting the increasing presence of participatory methods therein. Inspiration can be drawn from creative CSO practices that have, for example, deployed participatory initiatives that employ sites and artefacts of atrocity, testimony and narratives of survivors, as well as through youth led programs that seek to document and instigate dialogue with survivors of the regime. Two themes were crucial for the development of the Changing the Story proof of concept strategy. Firstly, CSO practice and priorities reflected an urgent commitment to educating younger Cambodians about the regime in order to acknowledge and dignify the experiences of survivors. Secondly, the nascent interest among Cambodian CSOs in engaging former lower level Khmer Rouge foregrounded stigmatised former Khmer Rouge communities as key to Cambodia's ongoing reconciliation process.

Our proof of concept strategy, developed in collaboration with DC-Cam and learning from the landscape of Cambodian CSO practice, took intergenerational dialogue as a mechanism for transformative change. Intergenerational dialogue enables reconciliation in Cambodia by empowering young people to take ownership of the history of the regime and can respond to need to acknowledge and dignify the experiences of survivors. Moreover, through collaboration with DC-Cam's longstanding record of work in stigmatized Khmer Rouge communities, we saw intergenerational dialogue as a means engaging divided communities. Participatory initiatives within stigmatized communities was reconciliatory as it acknowledged neglected – but often shared – experiences of suffering and encouraged mutual empathy across them.

Participatory arts-based strategies are particularly suitable to these aims. Our participatory filmmaking with and for young people was successful in supporting intergenerational dialogue in two ways. The act of participatory filmmaking immediately developed relationships across communities, acting as a form of truth-seeking, while our analysis and evaluation shows strong evidence of de-stigmatisation.

More broadly, the products of participatory filmmaking can and have instigated further dialogue as they have been mobilised as reconciliatory texts in communities and classrooms beyond. Young people can be seen to take ownership in the production of historical knowledge and have been empowered to further share and disseminate their work. Today, our films have attracted over 56,000 separate views on DC-Cam's Youtube channel, evidencing the strong potential for films to 'multiply'.

Lastly, as noted, care and caution is required when approaching and amplifying narratives of former Khmer Rouge. In Cambodia, questions of reconciliation are unresolved and ongoing. Challenges of capacity and resources among CSOs and across the public school system in Cambodia mean students often commence genocide education with partial or limited knowledge of the material at hand. While participatory filmmaking has proved invaluable in the creative freedom it affords young people, participants must appropriately prepared and encouraged toward a critical awareness of the issues at hand in order to ensure creative content is sufficiently critical of the narratives it attends to.

List of Films Produced



Forbidden Love: Khmer Rouge Crimes

<https://youtu.be/9-5jJkg4e0c>



A Khmer Rouge Messenger និរសាក្នុងសម័យខ្មែរក្រហម

<https://youtu.be/dww86hKDxvM>



Leader with Two Faces | អ្នកដឹកនាំមុខពីរ | តាម៉ុក

<https://youtu.be/F99XpuyKb2s>



If We United | ប្រសិនបើយើងចេះសាមគ្គី | អន្លង់វែង | ខ្មែរ ក្រហម | តាម៉ុក

<https://youtu.be/byalPKE80ek>



A Memory of Romchek Village

https://youtu.be/P-j7VP_fUWU



Anlong Veng: The Shrapnel Still in My Body

អំបែងគ្រាប់ក្នុងខ្លួនខ្ញុំ

https://youtu.be/m3b2bHL8_jI



The Least Survival | Anlong Veng| Khmer Rouge History

<https://youtu.be/401eG87NS1M>



A Shattered Life Experience | Anlong Veng| Khmer Rouge History

https://youtu.be/VbXGFpOo_98



Changing the Story: the Anlong Veng Peace Tours, Cambodia | Khmer Rouge History

<https://youtu.be/i5Gffl0eUUI>

Additional films not currently available online:

Interview of a former Khmer Rouge Cadre at Anlong Veng (Sem Paroda)

Interview of a former Khmer Rouge Cadre at Anlong Veng (Monivann)

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