



CTS Workshop in Cambodia: Reflections as an Early Career Researcher

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Changing the Story held a project workshop in Cambodia on 15th-17th March 2019, [Learning from the past with and for young people: Intergenerational dialogue, education, and memory after genocide](#). Our [phase 2 projects](#) launched at this meeting and here, [Wee Chan Au](#), co-investigator of the phase 2 project '[Youth-led Social Enterprise in Malaysia](#)' reflects on her experience of the workshop.

This reflection is triggered by a question posted by another participant on the way to Phnom Penh International Airport upon the completion of the three-day workshop:

“So, what is the take home message?”

“Seriously? An academic from the School of Business attending a workshop on post genocide? What has it got to do with your specialization?” This was the reaction from most of my colleagues when I told them about this workshop. But I accepted the invitation, although I went with some doubts, wondering how would it be relevant to my business background and what can I bring to the table? Quite the opposite to my expectations, the three-day workshop turned out to be an impactful learning journey for me, as an ECR who is in the constant struggle of which area should I be specializing in; as an academic from the School of Business that “barged into” a network that is full of historians, lawyers, ethnographer, professional film makers, artists, musicians, etc.; and as a researcher from a developing country, Malaysia.



The “impact” matters more.

As an ECR, especially at the very early stage, I used to have doubts about which area I should be specialized in. The common advice from senior colleagues would be something that can produce high quality publications and/or something “sexy and contemporary” which business practitioners are after. During the workshop, I realized researchers and NGOs from different disciplinary areas and from different parts of the world are all given space in the Changing the Story project. We are all doing something in little or big ways to make

a change, a better change to be precise. This makes me realize, regardless of which area I specialize in, I have to constantly be mindful about the potential impact I could make through research and/or teaching.

Closing the loop through co-design.

Through the presentation and sharing of the core team's research projects, co-creating solutions together with the owners of issues is the common theme I have identified from most of Changing the Story's projects. This makes me appreciate how powerful and meaningful it is to engage the local community and stakeholders through co-design activities. Being a researcher situated in a developing context (Malaysia), I do not only embrace the sense of responsibility to be more proactive in doing research that's impactful for the developing context, but also feel a strong sense of calling to engage and co-create with the local stakeholders in future research undertakings.

Economic sustainability issues should not be overlooked.

While the storytelling, memory and documentation of the past are crucial for recovery from post-conflict contexts, the realistic and fundamental issue of economic sustainability should also be brought to the forefront of discussion. Accordingly, social entrepreneurship initiatives and NPO initiatives that have income generation mechanisms are becoming increasingly relevant in this context. The key principle of social entrepreneurship to address issues at the societal and community level with sustainable business models may be the right model to be explored by stakeholders in the post-conflict context. This reminded me about the motivation of us putting forward the project of [“Youth-led social enterprises in Malaysia: Shaping Civil Society by and for Young People”](#) (a collaborative project between [Dr. Andreana Drencheva](#) from [University of Sheffield](#); myself, [Dr. Wee Chan Au](#) from [Monash University Malaysia](#); and [Ms. Yew Jian Li](#) from [Global Entrepreneurship Movement Association](#)).

Last but not least, sincere gratitude to the Changing the Story core team's effort in putting this interdisciplinary research platform together. I had never imagined myself sitting together with lawyers, musicians, historians, and film-makers on the same table and discussing common issues that matter to us and to society. I am very proud to be part of the Changing the Story's family – a family that is not only open minded, but also embraces and celebrates diversity.

