“EVERYTHING IS JUST STARTING”: (RE)PRESENTING THE
TUOL SLENG MUSEUM OF GENOCIDAL CRIMES
AS A POST-JUSTICE SITE OF MEMORY

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By
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Abstract

Since the ECCC, seeking to try Khmer Rouge leaders in an international tribunal, was first discussed, many conversations in Cambodia have come to focus on the memories and memorialization of the Khmer Rouge past. Based on 10 weeks of ethnographic field research in summer 2014, including participant-observation, interviews, and a survey, as well as semiotic analysis, this analysis considers how one prominent history museum in Phnom Penh, the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes, (re)presents these ongoing conversations to foreign and national visitors. In particular, this research frames these (re)presentations as a form of implicit public relations in lieu of more formalized communication methods, and it broadens considerations of public relations as something that can act externally on the museum. The project explores debates at the museum relating to museum, education, authenticity, tourism, and memorialization as they relate to communication strategies that shape Tuol Sleng’s identity as an institution in the “post-justice” aftermath of the ECCC’s Case 001, in which its focus is shifting away from survivors to the next generation.
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<tr>
<td>ADHOC</td>
<td>Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association; law NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNRP</td>
<td>Cambodian National Rescue Party; opposition party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Cambodian People’s Party; ruling party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC-Cam</td>
<td>Documentation Center of Cambodia; Cambodian archive and research NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>German Society for International Cooperation; German funding agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCC</td>
<td>Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia; Khmer Rouge tribunal</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Lead Co-Lawyers of the ECCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>LICADHO</td>
<td>Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJM</td>
<td>Non-judicial measure (as opposed to reparations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCIJ</td>
<td>Office of the Co-Investigating Judges of the ECCC</td>
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<td>VSS</td>
<td>Victim’s Support Section of the ECCC</td>
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Chapter 1  
Introduction

Fatigued after several hours talking with visitors to the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes, I avoided the hot June sun by resting under the wooden shelter connected to the museum’s offices where prisoners were once photographed. A few feet in front of me sat, where he always did, Bou Meng. A fixture at the museum, Meng, at that time in 2014, was quite old, and the soft lines of his face crinkled in a smile when he greeted visitors with raised hands pressed together in a traditional *sampeah*. I struggled to imagine the life that this man has experienced: in the Khmer Rouge period of the late 1970s, when these buildings were known as S-21 prison, he was brought here for execution and saved only by his painting skills. Now, in his old age, he sat in the blistering Cambodian heat under this shelter from early morning to mid-afternoon, peddling his memoir and posing for photos with visitors, many of whom stopped in Phnom Penh on their way to the famous temples of Angkor up north.

I leaned back and absentmindedly watched tourists’ interactions with Meng and another survivor, Chum Mey, until one moment caught my eye. A young Western woman, perhaps around 20 years old, dressed in the typical, colorful, elephant-ridden garb of tourists and accompanied by a small group of other young women, sat next to Meng when he beckoned her to do so, as he often does. He held up his book and smiled, and she smiled, and Meng’s translator snapped a photo on the woman’s digital camera. As the flash faded to nothingness, she turned to Meng and sobbed, holding his small shoulders in an embrace. Meng consoled her through the language barrier, returning her hug and sniffing.
A few moments passed. The young woman’s friends stepped closer and encouraged her to stand, patting her back gently as they slowly moved toward the museum’s exit, leaving Meng behind. His face folded into a deep frown as his shaking hand reached into his pocket for a handkerchief and patted away a single tear at the corner of his eye. He sat alone.

This incident represents the divide between local memories of the Khmer Rouge period and the response of international tourists to the indirect experience of the genocide mediated by the museum. For Cambodians like Bou Meng, the past is inescapable, represented by his being left to sit at his booth as the young woman walked away. For her, the empathy experienced may be profound but at the same time is overwhelming; she does not know how to respond except to cry with the survivor. The message communicated by Tuol Sleng inspires in international visitors a desire to respond in a way that expresses unity between the parties, but present options fall short of needs.

Aim and Scope

My aim in this project is to investigate the role of museums in the aftermath of transitional justice mechanisms, specifically through the lens of the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, after the end of Case 001 of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). In particular, I am interested in the messages being communicated at the museum about value structures
relating to the legacy of the Khmer Rouge. Designed as a contribution to strategic communication studies and the anthropological study of museums and tourism as situated in the context of post-conflict memory politics, this project explores the combined influences of social, economic, political, and legal processes at national sites of memory of conflict on how that site approaches its own mission. My thesis posits that the close of the transitional justice mechanism specifically pertaining to Tuol Sleng has encouraged an institutional shift to a new phase that emphasizes several functions other than the formerly highlighted preservation of proof.

This project seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What sorts of official and unofficial understandings of the relationship between the ECCC and Tuol Sleng shape the museum?
2. What is the role of a site of memory intimately connected with a particular event before the start of and after the end of transitional justice mechanisms?
3. In what ways does a site of memory of suffering respond to increased tourism in an effort to remain sensitive to the social and historical saliency of the site?
4. What implicit and explicit communication strategies shape public perceptions of a site of memory?

By addressing these questions, this analysis hopes to identify characteristics of what I call a “post-justice site of memory,” which refers to the particular ways a site of memory might respond to completed transitional justice mechanisms. My intention is that this new category may be applicable to other states with a history of suffering and engagement with international legal forms of redress.
Context and Location

This research applies the concept of “post-justice sites of memory” to the context of Cambodia as it grapples with the legacy of the Khmer Rouge through the hybrid tribunal known as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). From 1975 to 1979, a group of revolutionaries known as the Khmer Rouge seized control of Cambodia. In their pursuit of a communist Maoist utopia, modeled on the successes of the Angkorian Empire of the 9th through 15th centuries, the Khmer Rouge killed roughly a quarter of the Cambodian population. One of these sites of killing was Security Center 21 (S-21), a prison dedicated to interrogating, torturing, and executing Khmer Rouge cadre accused of treason. Roughly 14,000 people were killed at S-21 alone during the few short years of its operation.

Today, S-21 still stands in the middle of Phnom Penh as a testimony to those who lost their lives during the Khmer Rouge regime. Its name has been changed to Tuol Sleng and it now operates as a museum. Memories of the Khmer Rouge period as a whole find use at the ECCC, where the international and domestic legal community try those deemed most responsible for the atrocities committed between 1975 and 1979. Its first case (Case 001) charged Duch, the leader of S-21 of crimes against humanity, and since that case’s closure in 2012, he has been serving a life sentence in a provincial prison. Although Tuol Sleng was highly involved in Case 001 as a proxy...
for S-21 prison, its relationship with the tribunal has changed to a less active role since Duch’s conviction.

I selected Cambodia as the site for this study because of my access to the country through my university as well as for its particular history. Cambodia’s ECCC is part of the latest trend in transitional justice mechanisms, hybrid courts, which seek to mitigate the neocolonial potential of imposed standards of justice by incorporating domestic understandings and infrastructure in as many ways as possible. In the future, the ECCC and other extant hybrid courts will be used as models, and this research therefore is more poignant than in most other countries undergoing transitional justice.

Additionally, up until the start of the ECCC in 2007, very little had been taught about Khmer Rouge history in schools, and Cambodians of the generation born after the genocide knew little about that part of their country’s history.\(^1\) The first Khmer-language textbook about the period was published in 2007 by DC-Cam, and school groups have begun taking field trips to sites like Tuol Sleng for educational purposes (Dy 2007). The ECCC and related NGOs also facilitate endeavors in the provinces that seek to educate rural Cambodians, young and old, about Khmer Rouge history and opportunities to seek justice and reparations at the court. An emerging middle class, the popularity of social media, and a demographic heavily weighted toward those under 30 have inspired greater engagement in politics than those experienced in the past few decades.\(^2\) The conversation in Cambodia about its past is changing, and NGOs and memorial sites have taken on active roles in the process. For my research,

\(^1\) See Dy 2009 for more on genocide education in Cambodia
\(^2\) For example, during the 2013 elections and the months following, people took to the streets in response to allegations of electoral fraud.
this means that any changes in the position of Tuol Sleng in society will be important to future generations’ understanding of the past.

Conceptual Framework

In drawing upon the related disciplines of anthropology, museum studies, international law, and strategic communication studies, I have situated this project in a truly interdisciplinary space. The synthesis of these fields in combination with research data has inspired me to introduce and utilize the concept of “post-justice sites of memory” to describe the particular moment in existence faced by places like Tuol Sleng in the aftermath of transitional justice.

The term “sites of memory” derives from Nora’s classic work on lieux de mémoire, which refer to “embodiments of a memorial consciousness” that conscientiously highlight and return the visitor to nostalgic representations of the way things once were (Nora 1989, 12). To Nora, the “acceleration of history” – our compulsion to organize the past into a cohesive narrative – threatens the cultivation of plural memories of the past, grounded in and varying by the subjectivities of their local contexts (Nora 1989, 8). Memory is collective in a way that history is not, as it is a poetic version of the past that disregards contradictory facts and verifies itself in the voices of others, whereas the practice of history includes analysis and criticism (Halbwachs 1992; Nora 1989, 9). Rather than living, as they historically have, in milieu de mémoire (environments of memory), collective memories now situate
themselves at *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) – places where unofficial histories are deliberately evoked, discussed and transformed by the community and others.\(^3\)

*Lieux de mémoire* are “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded” (Nora 1989, 12).\(^4\) Tuol Sleng is a site of memory broadly defined, reaching beyond its walls to encompass the neighborhood as well.

Post-justice sites of memory, I argue, are a sub-section of Nora’s sites of memory. These are sites that are tied to particular events and people by nature of their existence, and speak to a historical violence that once wracked society to its core. That violence has then been met with transitional justice mechanisms as a means of reconciliation and recovery, such as truth commissions, reparations, or engagement with international law through international, ad-hoc, or hybrid courts, and those justice mechanisms have come to completion, at least in their relevance to the site of memory.\(^5\)

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\(^3\) Because of this, sites of memory hold a particular importance for minority groups whose voices have traditionally been contested and rejected by hegemonic power structures. As Nora says, “The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de mémoire* – that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away.” (Nora 1989, 12)

\(^4\) Also see Bodnar 2000, Myers 2001.

\(^5\) Examples of truth commissions include the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa or the Greensboro, North Carolina, USA Truth and Reconciliation Commission. For more on truth commissions, see Hayner 2000. Examples of international courts include such as the International Criminal Court. These courts operate under international law only with international staff, and they are typically geographically removed from the site of the conflict. Examples of post-hoc courts are such as International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia or the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. See Hazan 2004, Bemma 2013, Wagner 2010. Examples of hybrid courts are the Special Court for Sierra Leone or the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. These courts operate under a combination of both international and domestic law with corresponding internal staff hierarchies. They typically run in the country in question. See Ciorciari 2014.
The relationship between museums and law is well-established in the literature of the anthropology of museums and the cross-disciplinary fields of collective memory studies and law and society. Memorial museums, a complementary concept to but separate from Nora’s sites of memory, like Tuol Sleng, are “a specific kind of museum dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind” that serves to “add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts” (Williams 2007, 8). Memorial museums and sites of memory make sense of the nonsensical by providing visitors with a coherent narrative, and, as Nora says, history takes precedence over memory. The individuals who construct and advance narratives at sites of memory then become “memory entrepreneurs,” who “seek social recognition and political legitimacy of one (their own) interpretation or narrative of the past” (Jelin 2003, 34). By this definition, both individuals and collective entities, like states, can act as memory entrepreneurs when they select a particular narrative of the past. Such decisions inherently exclude or marginalize contradictory voices, but offer structure for otherwise unknowing visitors who would not recognize these omissions.

These conceptualizations of sites of memory and memorial museums overall stand in contrast to scholarship on dark tourism, also referred to as thanatourism, described as the “act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre” (Stone 2006, 146). Much of the research on dark tourism describes it as an almost deviant activity, but recent scholarship has problematized this

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6 Also see Foote 2003, Bilbija et al. 2005, and Andermann and Arnold-de Simine 2012.
7 Also see Bilbija and Payne 2011
8 Also see Lennon and Foley 2000.
generalization in favor of a “moral tourism” (Stone 2006; Heuermann and Chhabra 2014; Hughes 2008; Butcher 2003). Moral tourists, in contrast to dark tourists, seek to minimize the effects of tourism on the local population by seeking out alternative forms of tourism, such as ecotourism or “volun-tourism” (Becker 2014, 101). At sites traditionally associated with dark tourism, moral tourists experience the sites as humanitarian gestures toward the affected communities (Hughes 2008).

Due to the almost voyeuristic nature of dark tourism, I analyze how Tuol Sleng is (re)presented through the framework of place branding and rebranding by the various memory entrepreneurs seeking to influence public perceptions of the museum. These concepts often used in the fields of marketing and public relations: marketing seeks to influence behavior by encouraging consumers to engage with a product, and public relations seeks to influence public attitudes toward a product, which then would result in altered behavior (Gürel and Kavak 2008, 43). Place branding is a subset of branding that deals specifically with places, like Tuol Sleng, rather than tangible products, for example. For “post-conflict travel destinations” like Tuol Sleng and Cambodia, branding messages often emphasize what is known as “the three R’s: recovery, rebuilding, and re-imagining;” while this situates the site as moving away from violence, it does so by inseparably uniting the site, its history, and its value as a tourist destination with that violence (Volcic et al. 2013). Tourist destinations, like other commodities, are very susceptible to public image, so processes – like public relations, semiotics, and marketing – that shape public perceptions deserve special

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9 For more on place branding and related destination branding, see L’Etang 2007, Chon 1990, Konecnik and Go 2007, and Pike 2005. For more on branding generally, see Hung 2008
attention (L’Etang et al. 2007, 69). This analysis takes a broad approach to branding and public relations by discussing the brands about Tuol Sleng developed externally from the institution.

Post-justice sites of memory also fall under the framework of strategic communication studies with regards to the ways that a site is imagined on the national and international stage. The narrative memories supported by Tuol Sleng, for example, ultimately become the takeaway for visitors, in addition to more explicit representations of the site like brochures, books, and photographs (Caswell 2014). Additionally, the symbolism and language actively and passively associated with Tuol Sleng reinforces certain perceptions about the museum and Cambodia as a whole. When symbols are repeated across time with consistent meanings, they become incorporated in collective memory; memorials, in general, are a symbol for mourning and remembrance. With the museum, memory entrepreneurs are positioning their narratives in a collection of available cultural symbols referring to the Khmer Rouge period, and visitors receive this actively positioned narrative. Symbols shape memories by modifying associations already present in the memorial context, and memories act as the accumulation of certain symbols and associations. Semiotics, the study of the relationships between symbols and the ideas they signify, provides insight into this memory-making process (Leach 1976, 17). The construction of narratives through the inclusion and exclusion of particular symbols at Tuol Sleng has a direct connection to the museum’s public image as perceived by different observers, particularly those without prior knowledge of the Khmer Rouge period of Cambodian
history. This is a form of institutional branding, which is significant to the broader field of museum public relations.

Museum public relations, which, as discussed in this chapter, is an understudied field, primarily seeks to establish and cultivate relationships with a local constituency. At Tuol Sleng, however, visitors are primarily international and transient, so the public relations strategies I analyze are more immediate impressions about the museum and its function. Additionally, despite the emphasis within the literature on Western, well-funded museums, other museums around the world still engage public attitudes through their own forms of public relations, which may or may not overlap with the formalized methods described in the literature. At Tuol Sleng, for example, the museum is primarily promoted through word-of-mouth and guidebook recommendations rather than through any formally implemented strategy by the institution itself or the government bodies that oversee it. There are no formalized marketing plan or purposeful public relations strategies, but the museum still engages with public attitudes through the messages communicated by the museum’s exhibitions and other functions and by parties external to Tuol Sleng that have a vested interest in cultivating a certain public image of it (which will be discussed in Chapter 4).

This is a key moment in Tuol Sleng’s existence, and sites of memory like Tuol Sleng play a prominent role in compressing large societal questions into an easily debatable form. In an overview of the history and current trends in public memory,

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scholars Carol Blair and Neil Michel articulate the poignant potential of debates surrounding memory projects to reveal larger societal issues:

Public memory is often the very battleground upon which are fought issues of contemporary concern. Because of the pronounced tendency of contemporary public commemoration to take up subject matter that yields to ongoing fractiousness or at least to cultural anxiety, it is more likely that issues of the present will be deliberated by debating memory. (Blair and Michel 2007, 596)

Although Blair and Michel refer to Western commemorative culture and specifically that of the United States, the connection between memory projects and larger societal issues resonates in the Cambodian context as well. In a Letter to the Editor of the Cambodia Daily, a legal associate for the Documentation Center of Cambodia wrote, “Memorialization is inherently a collective action that emphasizes remembering and, in that, acknowledgement. A memorial gives recognition to any reparation” (Senst 2007). As a site where memorialization happens and where symbols form and reform in relation to the site, Tuol Sleng provides an opportunity to explore how Cambodians are responding to transitional justice processes in their country as well as what effect, in return, those responses have on Tuol Sleng.
Methodology

To collect data, I spent ten weeks in Cambodia during the summer of 2014, mostly in Phnom Penh but also traveling throughout less populous areas of the country, as part of a student-faculty collaborative research project run through my university. For this program, each of us five students designed and worked on independent ethnographic research projects related to law and justice issues in Cambodia, specifically related to the ECCC and the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge period. I chose to focus on Tuol Sleng in part because of my combined interest in museums and post-conflict studies but also because of the particular significance Tuol Sleng has carried in the years following the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

I collected qualitative data through participant-observation at Tuol Sleng and in the surrounding community, through interviews with museum officials and visitors, and through a visitor survey carried out on behalf of the museum. A number of my formal interviews and conversations were not directly related to but still informed my project, as they were guided by the other program students’ projects or set up as a fundamental orientation to Cambodian society today. I contacted other interviewees through emails to particular officials and through conversations inspired by frequent visits to Tuol Sleng. I met several of these contacts simply by being at Tuol Sleng at the same time as they and striking up conversation. In addition, I was able to gain access to conversations to officials in high-level positions due to my close affiliation with our program director, a professor at our university and my thesis adviser. She
opened up doors that otherwise would have been inaccessible to a student researcher, as her presence suggested my project to be of a higher level of importance than typical for an undergraduate thesis.

My interviews were semi-structured and a combination of formal and semiformal. With higher level officials in particular, I entered into formal meetings with a specific agreed-upon agenda of topics to discuss. With those whom I met more than once, this preparation took the form of a list of possible topics, and with those whom I saw regularly, we discussed whatever came to mind. In these last two types of interviews, I prompted the discussion slightly toward certain topics but let the interviewee guide the conversation while I asked follow-up questions. This method enabled me to discover answers to particular questions but also give the interviewees the freedom to guide the conversation away from sensitive topics and toward issues they perceived to be important.

I also relied on participation-observation as a research methodology during my time in Phnom Penh. I visited Tuol Sleng many times throughout my visit, both to observe exhibitions and visitors and also to attend the free triweekly history lessons run by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), a prominent research institute, out of the museum. The cafés and tourist-oriented shops in the area immediately surrounding the museum also proved to be a great resource for observing the interactions of visitors with the surrounding community. Twice I ventured beyond

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11 The Documentation Center of Cambodia was founded in 1995 as a part of Yale University’s Cambodian Genocide Program. Since 1997, DC-Cam has become an independent, Cambodian-run research institution based in Phnom Penh under its director Youk Chhang, and it leads scholarship about the Khmer Rouge period and advocates for justice. For more information, see Documentation Center of Cambodia 2014.
Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, the tourist capital of Cambodia, and north to Anlong Veng, a town on the Thai-Cambodian border in which the Khmer Rouge thrived until the 1998 peace process. During these interactions, I would take notes on my experiences and perceptions, and these notes then formed the basis for the formal, typed fieldnotes I wrote each evening. These notes chronicle and analyze each day and form the bulk of my data.

In addition to these traditional ethnographic field methods, I carried out semiotic analysis of advertisements and other forms of communication relating to Tuol Sleng, the area surrounding it, and Cambodian tourism. My methodology for this derives primarily from Leach’s communication dyad, which explains the relationships between signifiers and signified concepts (Leach 1976).

Figure 1: This diagram of Leach’s communication dyad provides the definitions for the semiotics framework I use throughout this thesis (Leach 1976, 12). Many of the images I analyze fall under the category of “Natural Index.”
As explained in Leach’s classic text on semiotics *Culture and Communication*, “all the various non-verbal dimensions of culture, such as styles in clothing, … postural attitudes and so on are organized in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information in a manner analogous to the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language” (Leach 1976, 10). In semiotics, a signifier is an image, and the signified is a concept connoted by that image through any of the associations described in Figure 1. Most of the images I analyze fall under the category of natural indexes, which come about when “A [is] associated with B by nature but selected as an index of B by human choice (‘smoke is an index of fire’)” (Leach 1976, 12). In this analysis, I compare images from advertisements and other media with the historical and natural events that they reference and interpreted what use of such imagery might mean for the organizations using them and for the audiences receiving them.

I also had the opportunity during my time in Phnom Penh this summer to carry out a survey on behalf of Tuol Sleng. After I met with the director, who had significant changes in mind for the museum, several times, he asked my professor and me to help probe museum visitors’ perceptions and priorities through a survey. Over the course of a few weeks, we developed several different versions of the survey with the aim of uncovering insights into the experiences and suggestions of tour guides and foreign and national visitors. Each of these surveys were developed in response to conversations with the director and he approved each of them. Additionally, my professor conducted 11 hours of formal visitor observation, and this, existing survey
results, and our combined perceptions as researchers informed a preliminary report, which we offered to the director before we left Cambodia. Around this time, we trained one of the museum tour guides in the methodologies related to the research with the aim of him carrying out additional surveys, specifically with visitors who speak only Khmer, over the next several months. Together we published a final report based on the research in early 2015, which we presented to the director (Cychosz and Duschinski 2015).

This survey complicated my already complex relationship with Tuol Sleng as an institution and Cambodia as a whole. As a white American student, I was not entirely out of place in Phnom Penh but rather found myself identifying with a large and thriving community of expatriates – an identity that, though not entirely my own, came laden with a host of issues. Since the UNTAC period of the early 1990s, Cambodia has found itself the target of many NGOs that, though their aims may be noble, do bring with them foreign – mostly Western – experts. As such, it is possible for an expatriate to move within Phnom Penh society and hardly come into non-casual contact with Cambodians, though this route does not seem to be a popular one. However, the masses of Westerners, both in the forms of NGO workers and tourists, have shaped Phnom Penh’s landscape, so much so that the US dollar has become unofficial currency, surpassing the value of the Cambodian riel.12

My position as an American researcher, moving in and out of Tuol Sleng on a regular basis, was recognized by those I became close to at the museum but was

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12 For more on the history of post-UNTAC Western influence in Cambodia, especially as it relates to tourism, see Becker 2014, 87-121.
unnoticed by others who worked there. The majority of visitors are of international origin, whether expatriates or tourists, and I could blend in with the tour groups if I wanted, reflecting the prevalence of Westerners in Phnom Penh at large. However, my ability to conduct research in Cambodia and at Tuol Sleng was limited to engagement with those who spoke English; while many of the Cambodians working at the museum, particularly the tour guides, speak English, many others and many visitors do not. I reached out explicitly to Bou Meng and Chum Mey, the two survivors of S-21 who sell their memoirs on the grounds every day, but for the most part, at Tuol Sleng and elsewhere, my data collection was limited to those occasions where I at least had access to an interpreter. My two primary interpreters were a Cambodian graduate student from my university, who had taught me and the other students on the trip conversational Khmer the semester before, and a Cambodian student who volunteered regularly at the museum as Bou Meng’s assistant.

Significance

With this project, I hope to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding sites of memory in post-conflict contexts, proposing a new category for understanding the roles of such sites in places that have experienced transitional justice. “Post-justice sites of memory” as a concept contributes to studies of international law, tourism, museums, and memory.
Additionally, although there has been a movement in museums toward the practical application of public relations in the past few decades, scholarly research about this new practice is limited (Capriotti 2009). Instead, research about museum outreach has focused on marketing or tourism, and it has primarily dealt with Western countries. I will be looking at strategic communications and public relations at a museum – an understudied field – through the particular anthropological lens of international justice, memory, and tourism; this relatively narrow focus has not yet been covered by scholarly research into strategic communications. Conducting my research in Cambodia provides the additional question of how strategic communications operate in a developing region and without a prevalence of standard marketing techniques like multimedia advertising campaigns or promotional pricing (Kotler et al. 2009, 449). Because of this, my research nuances understandings of strategic communication at museums in developing countries as implicit as well as explicit.

Chapter Overview

This thesis steps works through changes that were happening at Tuol Sleng during the summer of 2014 and ultimately frames these changes as being representative of a post-justice site of memory.

In Chapter 2, I situate my argument within the field of public relations through the framework of Segmentation/Targeting/Positioning (STP). I clearly identify the
communications arguments that arise in different chapters throughout the thesis and relate them to the overall narrative being communicated by and about Tuol Sleng.

In Chapter 3, I begin with an historical overview of the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s and the significance of S-21 prison within that regime. I then trace the political history of Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge through the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, UNTAC, and up through the present Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, remarking on the particular moment when the Khmer Rouge faction finally came to an end and the country opened up once again to the world. I explain the origins and purposes of Tuol Sleng as a museum and then the official relationship between the ECCC and the museum.

In Chapter 4, I describe a pedagogical shift at Tuol Sleng from preservation to interpretation, reflecting a broader trend in museology over the past century. Historically, Tuol Sleng has taken on the role of conservationist of the evidence at the site, but such priorities do not necessarily reflect the museum’s needs moving forward. I explore the economic motivations behind particular movements at Tuol Sleng, including the presence and activities of survivors and the development of the surrounding neighborhood, as well as the implications of changes to the power structure at the museum. These movements act as external pressures on visitors’ perceptions of the museum.

In Chapter 5, I look at the image of Tuol Sleng as a tourist destination on the international stage, comparing and contrasting two distinct and actively cultivated brands that shape the museum’s public image. The first, social justice, is inspired by
Hughes’ conception of the dutiful tourist, and probes the marketing techniques regarding the recent prevalence in the neighborhood of NGO-run boutique shops touting social justice messages directed at Tuol Sleng visitors (Hughes 2008). The second, death, responds to scholarship on dark tourism and the government’s support of such imagery as demonstrated by relatively new tourist sites like Anlong Veng. Both brands are analyzed and discussed in reference to literature on semiotics, exploring the significance of these brands to self-perceptions and international perceptions of Tuol Sleng and Cambodia as distinct entities.

Chapter 6 explores the conversations about victimhood in Cambodia with regards to the development and construction of a memorial stupa at Tuol Sleng, which is indirectly supported by the ECCC. I connect the transitional justice mechanism of reparations to the politics of victimhood, authenticity, and memorialization, specifically examining the representations of minority groups and former Khmer Rouge cadre in these conversations.

Finally, the conclusion brings these chapters together in a synthesis of what it means to be a post-justice site of memory. I define the concept and apply it to additional sites of memory around the world, exploring nuances in the definition that arise in different contexts and encouraging future studies of post-justice sites of memory identified by this discussion.
Chapter 2
Contributions to Strategic Communications

Although the overall strategic communications approach to this thesis is observing the brands that influence public perceptions of Tuol Sleng, that approach is framed within the popular strategic marketing approach of Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP). This approach functions by crafting relevant messages for previously identified audiences that the marketer wants to reach, which are defined by demographics, psychographics, lifestyle, or other factors; for example, if the audience were children, the marketer might use bright colors, energetic voices, or cartoons within advertising (Smith 1956, 5; Hanlon 2013). As a subset of intercultural public relations, STP responds to cultural variations within the target audience, and as such is a useful framework for exploring how the wide variety of publics at Tuol Sleng interact with its messages (Sha 2006). This chapter serves to bring together, preview, and synthesize how messages communicated by Tuol Sleng and external parties reach their audiences; of the two primary audiences – international visitors and Cambodians – this chapter and thesis will mostly address the former, as I belonged to that group and therefore had greater access. And again, because of the informal nature of communication about Tuol Sleng designed and implemented by the museum, the messages discussed throughout this chapter mostly take the form of exhibitions, interactions, or general impressions; these less formalized methods still fall under the umbrella of public relations as they influence the ways in which audiences engage with the product – the history of Cambodia as told by Tuol Sleng.

13 For more on the STP model, see Kim et al. 2008 and Kotler 1979.
The international (primarily Western) visitors and Cambodian visitors are segmented in this analysis as a function of country of origin, psychographics, lifestyle, beliefs and values – essentially most ways in which groups can be separated. The majority of international visitors come from either Western or East Asian countries, though this analysis focuses on those from Western countries. They are mostly older families or young backpackers, as the graphic content of the museum discourages children’s attendance, and often their lifestyles reflect neoliberal and sometimes Christian ideologies. Cambodians, on the other hand, tend to avoid Tuol Sleng, as it represents a horrible period of their country’s past, which for some has never quite left the present. I spoke with a former soldier, for example, who said he never visits the museum because his father was killed there. Those who do go to the museum often do so either on school field trips or excursions associated with civil parties’ engagement with the ECCC, so the demographics range from children to the elderly. Cambodian visitors’ engagement with the site takes on an inherently more personal note than that experienced by international visitors, and an STP analysis of their perspectives is not within the explicit purview of this thesis.

As will be discussed in chapter 5, during analysis of the messages conveyed by Tuol Sleng, two key themes emerge: social justice and death. These two themes play upon moral tourism and dark tourism, respectively, which are the parallel and complementary modes of tourism utilized by Western visitors to the museum. The key motivations among Western visitors are to witness to the violence that was done in Cambodia and connect that violence to larger, transnational frameworks of ethics,
common humanity, social justice, and human rights. Many visitors are interested not only with the specifics but also with why the violence of Democratic Kampuchea happened and what is being done to prevent similar tragedies from happening elsewhere. Aside from their interests in different aspects of the Khmer Rouge period and its aftermath, many Western visitors also engage with regular tourist activities like shopping, dining, and visiting other places in Cambodia – most prominently the temples of Angkor to the north in Siem Reap.

Due to the underlying motivations of Western tourists’ visits to Tuol Sleng being a simultaneous response to social justice and death, local and national groups such as the government and businesses utilize those themes as a way to gain the tourists’ interest. These groups act as positioning platforms, targeting tourists with messages that may appeal to their motivations for visiting Tuol Sleng as a way to market their products and ideologies. These messages are communicated in four key ways: through individuals, through visual symbols, through museum policies and philosophy, and through the positioning of groups.

Since the violence of the Khmer Rouge regime occurred only a few decades ago, people who were part of that period and who witnessed events firsthand still live throughout Cambodia. Two survivors of S-21, Bou Meng and Chum Mey, whose stories will be discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis, spend their days sitting at Tuol Seng telling stories of their life experiences to visitors. These oral tellings of the Khmer Rouge period, as a product, focuses on issues and aspects that appeal to their audience, which in this case is Western tourists. Since the storytellers
derive their appeal from their connection to the violence of the Khmer Rouge period, they position themselves as living memorials by selectively presenting their identities; those details that are directly related to the Khmer Rouge are highlighted while others, such as discussions about their families or daily lives, are not presented unless asked. By essentializing their stories in this way, Bou Meng and Chum Mey present themselves as still living in the Khmer Rouge period without being influenced by the passage of time, communicating the horrors of the Khmer Rouge period by speaking about their relevant lived experiences in great detail. Additionally, as will be discussed in chapter four, because of their physical position near one another at Tuol Sleng, they act in competition with one another for visitors’ attention and donations; because their appeal is based in their identities as survivors, this grounding in the past gains additional importance in that visitors might engage more with the one who appears more stuck in time. In a semiotic sense, they have become signifiers who, by only emphasizing their stories that relate to the Khmer Rouge, signify the inhumanity and unconscionable violence of that time period.

Because Western visitors for the most part do not speak the local Khmer language, the manipulation and use of visual symbols is a key way for the government and local businesses to engage with this target audience. As will be discussed in chapters four and five, these symbols often align with those themes of death and social justice. For example, preserved bloodstains on the floors and walls of Tuol Sleng become a signifier of death. In the past, these stains may have served as warnings of violence, but now, invoking past danger, the gruesome reality they represent shows the
starkness and intensity of the brutality done at the site. Similarly, a pervasive museum philosophy of preservation – which is shifting now, as can be seen in chapter four – continues to position the violence as an appeal to the Western tourist audience mentality of dark tourism. In terms of social justice, visual symbols of hope and peace utilized by businesses immediately outside Tuol Sleng’s gates, as discussed in chapter five, engage with the Western tourist audience mentality of moral tourism to attract potential customers. The museum’s move toward a philosophy of education, as discussed in chapter four, also engages with moral tourism.

The final message analyzed by this thesis is that of the positioning of groups related to the violence of Democratic Kampuchea and S-21. Namely, this includes the victims, the Khmer Rouge cadre, and Cambodian citizens as a whole. As S-21 prison had been a place where the inner ranks of the Khmer Rouge were tortured and executed after having been accused of treason, it offers a place to negotiate the politics of victimhood in Cambodia with regards to the Khmer Rouge period. Victims are positioned as noble and to be mourned, and the remnants of PRK-era exhibits present the Khmer Rouge as uniformly brutal. However, new exhibits as well as a new memorial *stupa*, which is described in chapter six, blur that line so that the message conveyed by the museum is that everyone, including the cadre, suffered together and relatively equally during Democratic Kampuchea. High-ranking Khmer Rouge leaders, such as Pol Pot or the four on trial in the ECCC’s Case 002, remain as signifiers of the violence, evidencing a leaning toward the narratives structured by the court rather than subjective experiences or past, politically-defined narratives. The
government, which governs the museum and therefore positions these messages, may find this distinction between low-level cadre and Khmer Rouge leaders useful to convey to Western visitors, because several of today’s top officials were once part of the Khmer Rouge’s ranks.

When we analyze these messages, we notice themes of death and social justice emerge at all levels, shaped in part by the government and businesses as external positioning platforms. These messages, targeted toward the market segment of Western visitors, appeal to motivations of moral tourism, dark tourism, or both, as a way to make the ideologies and products of these groups more appealing to visitors. For the businesses, this intercultural public relations functions as a way to sell products, which for many does benefit the community in a nonprofit model, whereas for the government these messages help to shape public and international perceptions of the current regime.

This then ties into the concept of Tuol Sleng as a post-justice site of memory because these messages have been undergoing a shift in their frequency and means of communication, such as how the change in narratives of victimhood and blame at the museum reflects a broader societal shift influenced by the verdicts of the ECCC. As the messages change, briefly alternate messages exist simultaneously, and the nature of Tuol Sleng’s new, post-justice message reveals itself.
Chapter 3
Historical Background:
The Khmer Rouge, International Justice, and the Establishment of the Museum

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of Cambodian history as it relates to the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, the political processes that led to the system of government in place in Cambodia today, and the varying purposes of Tuol Sleng as an institution throughout history. I will also describe the transitional justice mechanisms in Cambodia and place them in the wider history of international justice.

The Rise of the Khmer Rouge

After almost 100 years of French colonialism, Cambodia gained independence in 1953 under King Norodom Sihanouk, who spent the next two decades revitalizing the Cambodian economy. In the late 1960s, the glory of Cambodia’s golden era came to an end as the Vietnam War spilled over the border into Cambodia’s eastern provinces, killing thousands.\(^{14}\) A military coup, led by Lon Nol, overthrew Sihanouk’s monarchy and took charge of the country with the backing of the United States. The next few years saw growing turmoil as people living in the border areas became increasingly frustrated with the government and violence, and a small group of radicals, marching by the name “Khmer Rouge,” began gaining supporters and momentum.

\(^{14}\) Just how many Cambodians were killed during this time is uncertain, and estimates range between 5,000 and 500,000. As Maguire says, though, “Two facts remain certain: the U.S. bombing campaign pushed the Vietnamese deeper into Cambodian territory, and most important, turned many uprooted Cambodian peasants into zealous revolutionaries.” (Maguire 2005, 45)
On April 17, 1975, black-clad youths armed with guns evacuated cities throughout Cambodia under threat of violence, sending their people to the rice fields with the ultimate aim of converting the country into a Maoist agrarian utopia called Democratic Kampuchea. In the chaos of these forced evacuations, parents found themselves separated from their children, friends without a familiar face around them, and possessing only those few bundles of clothes and food they could grab from their homes before pouring into the crowds. Within a few short days, Phnom Penh, known only a decade previously as “The Pearl of Asia,” lay vacant along with all other cities, towns, and villages throughout the Cambodian countryside.

Khmer Rouge ideology was founded upon a desire to eliminate from modern Khmer society anything that was perceived to have been foreign and therefore a contaminant, resulting in a demonization of anyone who deviated from the imagined pure Cambodian (Etcheson 1984, 28). The party imagined Cambodia as separated into two realms of people: the “new” and the “old” or “base” people. The new people were all those who had been evacuated from the cities, exposed to a lifestyle opposed to the Khmer Rouge’s ideal, which included intellectuals, officials of the former regime, and foreigners, among others. The base people lived in the countryside before the revolution began. With everyone now forced to live and work in the countryside, base and new people alike were tasked with meeting increasingly difficult rice harvest quotas and constructing irrigation systems and dams based off those used in the Khmer Empire of the early last millennium. At the same time, however, the new

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15 For more on the forced evacuations, see Kiernan 2008, 31-64
people were forced to mask their identities for fear of being grouped among those opposed to the regime.

The Significance of S-21 Prison

During the three years, eight months, and twenty days of their rule, to ensure their success, Khmer Rouge leaders purged society of all whom they saw as a threat, primarily the “new people.” As time passed, paranoia created enemies even of the “base people” Khmer laborers. Nuon Chea, third in command of the Khmer Rouge, commented, “We are not worried about … external, military aggression. We worry most of all about the enemy inside” (in Chandler 1999, 43). Similarly, Pol Pot believed two percent of Cambodia’s population – meaning close to 150,000 people – actively opposed the regime or would do so in the future (Chandler 1999, 42). Once Angkar identified these “traitors,” often through knowledge of their previous position in society, accusations by peers or flaws reported during self-criticism, they were sent to one of more than 150 prisons throughout the country, where they would be catalogued with a mug shot photograph and their name, piled into cells, then awaited execution (Chandler 1999, 41-76). The most infamous and remembered of these prisons is S-21, founded in mid-1976 and dedicated to purging the inner ranks of the Khmer Rouge (Etcheson 1984, 178). Those prisoners were considered as deserving special treatment, due to their assumed knowledge of insurgent operations and dealings with the CIA or KGB. S-21 was known by low-level cadre working in
Phnom Penh as “the place where people went in but never came out” (Chandler 1999, 7).

In reality, the more than 14,000 men, women, and children who were led, blindfolded, into the complex, were “smashed” – tortured for their confessions in which they named up to hundreds of co-conspirators, then piled into trucks and shipped a few kilometers southwest to Choeung Ek, also known as the Killing Fields. None who were arrested should be spared, for it was “better to kill an innocent by mistake than spare an enemy by mistake” (in Locard 2004, 209). Of these thousands, fewer than 150 survived, and only two of the prisoners living today – Bou Meng and Chum Mey – have adopted their survival as their primary identity. As historian David Chandler has noted, “[a]t S-21, all were charged with political offences, and all were to be killed” (Chandler 1999, 7).

During this period, people could be deemed as traitors for any number of reasons, the most transparent being having worked for the Norodom Sihanouk or Lon Nol regimes. However, simply embodying ideology counter to the Khmer Rouge’s peasant agrarian ideal could be a condemnation; academics, multi-lingual speakers, and even people wearing glasses were swept into the same group as politicians or anyone who actually showed resistance to the regime. Ultimately, the Khmer Rouge prized the youth as the future inheritors of Democratic Kampuchea; they could be “ideal instruments of revolution” for they possessed “marginally integrated cognitive belief systems and immature development of normative values” (Etcheson 1984, 160). By an extension of this logic, families in which one individual was named a traitor
found all their members in prison or executed, so there would be no one left to avenge the traitor and challenge the government. One Khmer Rouge saying captured this: “When pulling out weeds, remove them roots and all” (in Locard 2004, 77).

At full occupancy, which happened particularly during purges of the Eastern Zone, S-21 could hold up to 1,500 prisoners, governed by a cadre of 1700, who rotated – often through their own imprisonment and execution – throughout the three years (Chandler 1999, 35; Ea and Sim 2001, 7). The guards were often children from the provinces who had joined the revolution for the guns they would wield and the resulting respect they would garner from their peers and parents but who were now forbidden from returning home (Ea and Sim 2001, 14). At S-21, they served as prison guards, interrogators, photographers, stenographers, drivers, animal caretakers, and other support positions; through a hierarchy of other young revolutionaries, they reported at the top to Kang Guek Eav, also known as Duch, who lived and worked from an office just east of the prison (Ea and Sim 2001, 28).

After the Fall

In late 1978, splintering and infighting among the upper echelons of the Khmer Rouge hierarchy weakened the strength of Democratic Kampuchea as a nation. Refugees who had fled east across the Vietnam border during the previous few years

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16 The Khmer Rouge revised the map of Cambodia, eliminating province names and instituting a nomenclature of geographic zones. The Eastern Zone comprised roughly Kampong Cham, Suon, Prey Veng, and Svay Rieng provinces. (Ea and Sim 2001)

17 Children were able to join without their parents’ permission because, instead, “revolutionary children are the children of the Revolutionary Organization of Kampuchea.” (Ea and Sim 2001, 16)
convinced the Vietnamese government to intervene in the violence happening in Cambodia, and their army pushed westward across the Cambodian rice fields full of exhausted laborers toward Phnom Penh. Democratic Kampuchea quickly crumbled under the pressure, and on January 9, 1979, the Vietnamese army entered into and liberated the capital.

For the next ten years, Cambodia would be ruled by the Vietnamese-backed proxy government known as the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). Cold War politics dictated that Vietnam’s connections with Russia upheld among the West the conviction that the Khmer Rouge – the ideology of which aligned more closely with China’s – remained the legitimate leadership of Cambodia, which manifested as a lack of aid to Cambodians in the post-war period (Maguire 2005, 70-77). Additionally, the dissolution of personal property rights under the Khmer Rouge led to a free-for-all mentality as people returned to the cities, and many not only found themselves looking for lost family members but also a physical home. In response to all of this, the PRK prioritized an international campaign to validate itself as the government of Cambodia, which included a 1979 tribunal of Khmer Rouge leaders, finding them guilty of genocide and condemning them to death in absentia (Slocomb 2003, 185).

At the end of the Cold War, the United Nations intervened in Cambodian politics and instituted the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC), the purpose of which was to bring about free and fair elections for Cambodia’s new constitutional monarchy and jumpstart the rehabilitation of the country. The first elections, which were held in 1993, incorporated five political
parties, notably including the Khmer Rouge. The Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), headed by Hun Sen, who is still Cambodia’s prime minister in 2014, won the election, and the Kingdom of Cambodia has remained under the rule of Hun Sen and the monarchy since.\(^{18}\)

However, the Khmer Rouge did not concede its position, and remnant cadre and leaders, including Pol Pot, remained powerful in the edges of western and northern Cambodia, concentrating on Pailin, Poipet, and Anlong Veng. They continued to make political statements and challenges against the authority of the Kingdom of Cambodia, even kidnapping tourists during their travels. This violence ensured the continued international perception of Cambodia as a dangerous place. After a series of betrayals, in 1997 and 1998, Pol Pot found himself placed on trial in Anlong Veng by those who had been in his inner circle over the years. He passed away under house arrest on April 15, 1998, and Ta Mok, formerly Brother Number Four and \textit{de facto} ruler of Anlong Veng surrendered the Khmer Rouge forces in 1999. The civil war was finally over.

\textit{The Museum as an Arbiter of Memory}

Within the early months of 1979, the PRK converted the ruins of S-21 prison into the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes. Their premise was simple: to provide “evidence to the outside world that the invasion by the Vietnamese army was

\(^{18}\) King Norodom Sihanouk resumed his position after UNTAC and passed on leadership to his son, King Norodom Sihamoni, in 2004. Norodom Sihanouk passed away in 2012, and the funerary ceremonies were still ongoing during my time in Cambodia in summer 2014.
indeed a liberation” from the evil Khmer Rouge regime (Ledgerwood 1997, 88). Additionally, it functioned as a site where documents pertaining to the charges brought against Pol Pot and Ieng Sary in the 1979 trial could be stored (Caswell 2014, 64). The museum’s first director, Ung Pech, was one of the seven recognized survivors of the prison out of the 14,000 men, women, and children who passed through its walls. Guided by Vietnamese museum designer Mai Lam and references to Holocaust memorial imagery, Pech curated exhibits only someone who had gone through such torture could have imagined (See Figure 2).\(^{19}\) A particularly salient example of this that has since been removed was a wooden bust of Pol Pot, which had been crafted by one of the prisoner-artisan-survivors, with several lengths of chain wrapped around it. By uniting this index of Pol Pot’s power with the natural index of chain signifying suffering and imprisonment, Pech conveyed just how inextricably linked the two historical concepts were.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{19}\) Mai Lam is also known for helping to create the Museum of American War Crimes in Ho Chi Minh City. For more information, see Maguire 2005, 85-106. Additionally, for information about the connections to Holocaust imagery, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and State Museum in particular, see Williams 2007, 175.

\(^{20}\) Unfortunately, I have only seen poor quality photos of this display that would not have made sense to include in this thesis. Index and natural index refer to Leach’s communication dyad (Leach 1976, 12).
Figure 2: This map of Cambodia, constructed of exhumed human remains and rivers of "blood," was once displayed to represent how the Khmer Rouge’s violence affected the entirety of the nation. It has since been removed, but a photo of the map is now displayed in Building D of the museum. See Ledgerwood 1997 for details. (Photo by author)

Since then, Tuol Sleng has gone through a series of transitions with regards to its function as a museum, but the fundamental experience remains very similar (See Map 1). The museum opens at 7:30 in the morning and closes around 5 p.m. Although morning seems to be the high point of business for the day, perhaps chosen by tourists as a way to avoid the sweltering heat, the area seems impervious to the boisterous activities of the rest of the city, almost devoid of traffic. Entering through the gates,
visitors pay a few dollar entrance fee to a rotating staff of guides waiting in the ticket booth for their turn to lead a tour.  

The museum complex itself, which was Tuol Svay Prey High School before 1975, comprises five main buildings: four three-story, open-air buildings full of classrooms surrounding a central, one-story office with a covered patio. Most of the exhibits and preserved scenes of torture are housed in the four classroom buildings, and the most popular experience of the museum includes only the bottom floors of each building. Building A, the first encountered to the left of the main entrance, includes 10 rooms sparsely decorated with a metal bedframe, chains, and a photo of how the room looked when the Vietnamese soldiers discovered corpses there in 1979. Building B, a slight turn to the left from the end of Building A, features rows upon rows of the infamous Tuol Sleng mugshots – black and white photos of the haunted faces of prisoners soon to be executed (See Figure 3).

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21 Up until summer 2014, there was no official entry fee for Tuol Sleng, although a fee of $2 or $3 was often charged to international visitors. The government announced an official fee of $3 to start in August 2014. See Naren 2014 for details.
Of all the buildings in the museum, Building C has been altered the least. Barbed wire still covers the openings of the balconies, and cells made of wood and bricks still restrict the space for visitors passing through. Building D, the last of the exhibit halls, includes more mug shots and torture instruments, ending with a Buddhist altar with space for incense offerings. The final room also includes the remains of several individuals, the bones of whom had once been displayed in the form of a map of Cambodia (Ledgerwood 1997, 85). Most tours end near the office building in the
center of the complex, where survivors Bou Meng and Chum Mey tell their stories and smile for photos with visitors.

Much of the language in the early exhibitions and signs used terms not common to modern-day discussions of S-21, and some of these remain in parts of Tuol Sleng today. One still-standing sign explaining the 14 graves near the entrance, for example, reads, “14 corpses of the victims were discovered in Building ‘A’ by the armed forces of the United Front for the Salvation, Solidarity and Liberation of Cambodia. … These victims were the last ones executed by agents of S-21 before they fled this prison compound.” Both the name of the liberating army and the imagery evoked by “agents fleeing” erases any possible sympathy for the cadre, who also suffered greatly and had little control of their experience, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Such political language was designed to evoke feelings of gratitude toward the invading Vietnamese army (Ledgerwood 1997).

However, over the years, international and domestic groups, such as Cornell University and DC-Cam, have contributed in material ways to Tuol Sleng as an archive and as a museum (Ledgerwood 1997). In the early 1990s, a Cornell University team of experts worked to microfilm all extant photos of S-21 prisoners and their confessions as a way to mitigate danger to these documents, as the archive at Tuol Sleng is not equipped to preserve them from heat, humidity, and other threats (Caswell 2014, 62). More recently, in 1999, UNESCO granted Tuol Sleng’s archives Memory of the World Status, which means it is an endangered archive with significant
documentary value to human heritage, and a small monument stands at the entrance to the museum declaring this new status (UNESCO 2014).

In regards to the museum function of Tuol Sleng, DC-Cam in particular has contributed greatly to its exhibitions in the past decade. This organization, founded in the mid-1990s to collect and provide access to documents regarding Democratic Kampuchea specifically with a tribunal like the ECCC in mind, produces original research about that time in the form of books, articles, and exhibits. In 2014, the most recent DC-Cam installation was two large, multi-story sized panels hung on the back fence of the museum, which showed a photo of the child survivors of S-21 and a photo of the April 17 evacuation of Phnom Penh. Additionally, DC-Cam runs a history classroom for tourists several times a week in one of the rooms in Building A not dedicated to exhibits. Together, these contributions have served to depoliticize the language in Tuol Sleng’s exhibits by replacing some PRK-era ones, but, as many decades-old exhibits have not yet been removed, the end result has been a series of chronologically stratified layers of exhibits and texts.

_Tuol Sleng and Transitional justice_

Part of Tuol Sleng’s importance relies upon its relationship to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), an international tribunal

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22 One, _Genocide: The Importance of Case 002_, premiered at my home university, Ohio University, in part because Farina So, one of the researchers cited in this and other chapters in this volume, attained her Master’s degree here.

23 For a first-hand description of these classes, see Barisani 2012.
based in Phnom Penh created to prosecute Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes committed between April 17, 1975, and January 7, 1979. The ECCC is a hybrid tribunal, meaning it incorporates relatively equal parts of international and domestic law, personnel, and funding and is situated in the country in question; in this case, it occupies a large complex just north of Phnom Penh. Hybrid tribunals, which also include, for example, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, differ from ad-hoc tribunals, like the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in that they push for contextualization in a way unprecedented in the history of international justice through their involvement with the domestic legal infrastructure (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014).

The first case (Case 001) tried by the tribunal, which began in 2007, dealt explicitly with S-21 prison; the accused was the head of the prison, Duch, and all evidence related to the prison in some way. It concluded in 2012 with Duch convicted as guilty of crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and sentenced to life in prison. More than this, however, Case 001 is interesting because of its relationship to the trajectory of public opinion about the ECCC in Cambodia. Because Case 001 was the first time the international community banded together in recognition of the horrors of the Khmer Rouge regime and actively sought to find justice, it began amid a sea of excitement and hope, though this has since dwindled.

The structure of the ECCC did not originally permit for much victim participation in the tribunal. Despite the fact that the ECCC functions in a hybrid legal system drawing heavily from civil law, the traditional civil law means for victims to

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24 For more on Duch and Case 001, see Ciorciari and Heindel 2014 and Cruvellier 2014.
participate in a trial – what are called “civil parties” – was not originally incorporated into the tribunal’s mandate, leaving survivors of the Khmer Rouge period to wonder if the tribunal really represented their interests (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 205-211). Victims could begin to take part in the proceedings starting in October 2007 (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 206). For Case 002, out of this unfulfilled desire came the official Victims Support Section (VSS), a new section of the ECCC dedicated explicitly to helping victims contribute to the tribunal’s proceedings as either witnesses or civil parties.

Importantly, victim participation in the ECCC also relates closely with S-21 prison and Tuol Sleng museum. According to a court lawyer, during Case 001, several prominent victims who were registered as civil parties, including Chum Mey and Bou Meng, became frustrated with a court decision to not permit civil parties to ask questions of the accused. These civil parties wrote a letter to the court, announcing that they would boycott the tribunal if they could not ask questions, and this letter was then read by their lawyers before the court. The trial chamber rejected the condition, so the civil parties boycotted and turned to a prominent legal NGO working with the court, the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), for help. With the assistance of ADHOC, 33 civil parties founded Ksem Ksan, which is the only functioning Democratic Kampuchea-era victims association in Cambodia today that is not explicitly affiliated with the ECCC (as is the VSS) and is another means for victims to engage directly with the tribunal.
Throughout its 35-year history, Tuol Sleng has performed a series of political functions related to mediating narratives about the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge. Among officials, the museum has been imagined as a place to communicate to the world what happened in Cambodia, though, in the past decade, the political nature of such claims have been shaped by the involvement of the international tribunal.
Chapter 3
Identifying the Pedagogical Shift at Tuol Sleng

On the morning after my return to Phnom Penh after spending a week in Siem Reap, I woke up early to head to Tuol Sleng to catch up on anything that may have happened during my absence. On the way, I ran into one of my friends and interlocutors, a young woman who volunteered as a translator at the museum. We chatted as we walked toward her usual work location, and suddenly her voice picked up speed. The week before, she said, one of the cars that paid to park overnight in the museum’s parking lot crashed into a low wall of Building E’s patio – the building where former prisoners Bou Meng and Vann Nath once labored to create Khmer Rouge propaganda under penalty of torture or death. Thankfully, no one was harmed in the accident, but the wall had to be repaired. She said she feared it might have been a drunk driver, and the museum director had vowed to do whatever he can to prevent this from happening again. It was an original part of an old, historic building. “If old is replaced with new, visitors might as well go to Thailand!” she worried, the sun glinting off the dark lenses of her sunglasses.

Her fear that necessary repairs to the facility could damage its appeal demonstrates that Tuol Sleng’s value lies in its identity as a former prison of the Khmer Rouge regime. Things happened here, and that “here” is just as important as those “things.” Here, at S-21, thousands of people lost their lives or were sent to their deaths soon after passing through the prison. Since the moment these buildings ceased to be a prison, they have been upheld as a site where the past experiences of terrified,
hurting individuals – who were deemed as more worthless than anything else, even as 
they were tortured for proof of guilt they did not possess – might be preserved.

This chapter addresses the claim that Tuol Sleng is turning away from a 
mission that emphasizes a pedagogy of education through preservation above all else. 
Instead, it has begun to respond to deficits in a strict policy of preservation by 
recognizing economic and interpretative needs at the site. I accomplish this by 
identifying the value structures that have historically been associated with preservation 
at Tuol Sleng and by discussing the economic pressures that have led to the inclusion 
of survivors at the museum and changed the museum’s immediate surroundings. I then 
propose that the museum as an institution is embracing a pedagogy of interpretation in 
response to these various pressures.

A Pedagogy of Preservation

From the moment of S-21’s discovery in early 1979 to today, documentation, 
preservation, and evidentiary value have held foremost importance in the minds of the 
museum’s curators, broadly defined, as well as society at large. The Vietnamese 
soldiers who discovered the ruins of the prison days after its evacuation were the first 
in this process. Their reaction after stumbling upon the abandoned, desecrated corpses 
of S-21’s last 14 victims was to capture the scene in film as documentary proof of 
what happened here.
Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh also evidenced this with his documentary *S21* (2003), in which he invited the few survivors of the prison as well as several former prison guards to reenact their daily routine at S-21. The key to the performance was the men’s presence in the physical space in which they lived out this traumatic period of their lives. In 2004, an initiative to repaint the façade of the main buildings at Tuol Sleng was brought to a sudden halt by public outrage that the new painting would literally whitewash away the history, covering up remnant bloodstains and other markers of horror (Plaut and Chandara 2004). From a semiotic perspective, the stains and other remains act as a natural index of violence, and their erasure would mark an erasure of the realities of those death (Leach 1976, 12). One workman denounced what he was doing because “When we make this nicer, I am afraid the young people will find it harder to believe what happened during the Pol Pot regime” (Chum Sam Ath in Plaut and Chandara 2004). In the summer of 2014, only Building D bears a slightly lighter and cleaner shade of paint. And in an interview I conducted in 2014, a government official described the collections of Tuol Sleng as “objects that prove torture during the Khmer Rouge period” (emphasis added).

Further and even more relevant than these examples is the use of Tuol Sleng’s grounds as part of Case 001 of the ECCC. In early 2008, mid-way through the first stage of the case, Duch was brought to Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek “with court cameras rolling” in order to connect the alleged crimes to the space through audio-visual records and on-site conversations with witnesses and the defendant specifically.

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25 In this news article, Sopheara Chey, Tuol Sleng’s director at the time, is quoted as saying, “Back in Khmer Rouge times [this complex] smelled bad and had high grass. ... Now we have a garden and a pathway. We can’t make it a prison again.”
for use in the courtroom (Kinetz and Channyda 2008). This visit demonstrates the continued importance of Tuol Sleng specifically as a site where something horrible happened. Only with access to the site, so the visit symbolizes, could the ECCC persist in its prosecution of Duch as the leader of S-21 prison.

Much of this rhetoric about authenticity has revolved around discussions of Tuol Sleng’s archive’s status as a UNESCO Memory of the World archive. A ministry official told me this means they must preserve the “evidence of human history” contained within the archive and interpreted this as that they “can’t transform, destroy, or shut down the museum.” The provision not to transform the museum has been used to defend stances in favor of everything from maintaining the facilities to adding restrooms and a ticket booth to letting them crumble.

Tuol Sleng has functioned as a space where the reality of the Khmer Rouge period persists across time through the physical maintenance of a microcosm of that horror. Because Tuol Sleng preserves the story of S-21 prison, the rest of Cambodia can move forward without fear of that story being forgotten. However, looking at the museum 35 years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, if those buildings and their function stand without intervention, they will eventually crumble away to nothingness; their curators must choose whether to let this happen, to preserve things as they are, or to take a step further and reevaluate the mission of the museum as a function of societal needs in reference to memories of the Khmer Rouge period.

*Survivors as Living Proof*
An older Cambodian man leaned back in his chair, reclining in the shade of a red umbrella near the old front gate of Tuol Sleng, his greying hair ruffling in the breeze. A folding table in front of him boasted piles of books about the Khmer Rouge period, including one with his face on the cover. His intense eyes focused on my tour group, the first I had been on, as we walked past, and he smiled as our tour guide brought us to his booth. The guide explained in English that the man, Chum Mey, was imprisoned at S-21 soon before the Khmer Rouge fell and was saved from execution only because he could repair the typewriter used to record prisoner’s confessions. She offered to translate questions and asked if anyone would like to take a photo with him or purchase his memoir. One by one, each of us sat down next to Chum Mey, leaned in and smiled for a photo, handed him $10 for his book, and returned to the small crowd of onlookers. The scene repeated across the sidewalk at Bou Meng’s booth in the overhang of Building E.

The discomfort of the experience lay not in the actual interaction with the survivors but rather the suddenness of the interaction. If visitors managed to remember specific faces from the thousands viewed throughout the tour, they might recall seeing Chum Mey and Bou Meng’s stories of survival described in the last building on the tour, soon after encountering the preserved cell blocks of Building C and before experiencing the opportunity for catharsis in a room with an altar to the lost souls of Tuol Sleng. Not only the faces but also the message that among the thousands a few
prisoners did survive might also have been lost to the emotion of the tour for some people.

As such, the two men covered the fronts of their tables with signs declaring who they were, and the tour guides and the survivors’ interpreters did announce their significance, but the experience of seeing actual survivors in the place they survived deviates from what many visitors expect (See Figure 4). And that surprise is met with incredulity. As one museum visitor expressed: “I stopped and looked. I wasn’t sure who he is. Is he really a survivor?” (in Cychosz and Duschinski 2015).

Figure 4: The sign in front of Bou Meng’s table includes references to the portrait of Pol Pot he painted to save his life at S-21, his testimony at the ECCC, and the loss of his wife. The two images in the bottom right are paintings by fellow survivor Vann Nath, who used his skills to bring visual representation to the torture he witnessed and experienced. (Photo by author)
The survivors and the booths where they peddle their life stories to passing visitors represent a particular politics of victimhood in Cambodia: at a symbolic level, the men’s identities comprise little more than the memories of a few years, yet their motivations for engaging with those identities speak to hardships faced by many throughout Cambodia today who survived Democratic Kampuchea.

After leaving S-21 prison in 1979, Bou Meng spent the next twenty years putting his artistic skills to work once again by painting murals on Buddhist temples in the provinces. When he heard of a rumor saying he had passed away, he came forward to DC-Cam and has been a public figure based at Tuol Sleng ever since (Vannak 2010). Chum Mey, on the other hand, has been involved in the museum since it opened in 1979 (Mey 2012).

When they sat on opposing sides of the path near the end of the tour guides’ routes at Tuol Sleng, Chum Mey and Bou Meng engaged in a competition over who can sell more copies of their memoirs, because, as a museum volunteer explained to me, visitors often did not engage with both survivors in the same way. Instead, they were more likely to take a photo with, ask questions of, and purchase a memoir from the first survivor they encounter and move past the other. Additionally, the books sold provided a vital source of income for the survivors, and even the tour guides gained a small commission fee for each book sold on their tours (Caswell 2014, 140-141). Bou Meng had commented that he “get[s] really tense” when he enters the museum but he has “to come to earn some money, to feed [his] family, because [he is] inadequately supported by the state” (in Caswell 2014, 141). Although the survivors have expressed
a desire to not engage with Tuol Sleng, they felt economically compelled to market their public images in the form of books and interpersonal interactions at the museum, simultaneously advancing a sympathetic narrative of survivors of the Khmer Rouge period as well as their personal finances.

Therein lies the complication of survivor participation at Tuol Sleng as a museum: the survivors are there, and they act as participants in a sort of “living museum,” but their motivations for being there are not entirely about history and posterity. Rather, they are there at least partially for a very present purpose; the economic hardships faced by survivors since the fall of the Khmer Rouge – generally and particularly with respect to those who found themselves physically or emotionally disadvantaged after the fact – clash with a narrative that all is better now in Cambodia. At Tuol Sleng, visitors can experience past and present hardships at the same time and in the stories of the same persons.

The presence of Chum Mey and Bou Meng as survivors transforms Tuol Sleng from a site of memory to a living museum. Unlike a site of memory, which incorporates static artifacts of a particular event into its narrative, a living museum also includes people enacting the experiences of what it would have been like to experience that event. Although Chum Mey and Bou Meng do not physically relive their experience at S-21 during their days at Tuol Sleng, they exist in the same general space and mentally, emotionally, and verbally recount those experiences. Visitors’ moving bodies in unity with the verbalized stories of these survivors evoke the years

26 “Although the tribunal’s predominant narrative is that without justice for the past Cambodia can’t move forward, it is the survivors who quite literally can’t move beyond Tuol Sleng without material reparations.” (Caswell 2014, 144)
when these halls were paced by guards and the rooms were full of hundreds or thousands of unbathed bodies shackled to one another in the dark.  

Visitors express shock and awe at the opportunity to actually speak with one of the few people who went through S-21 and lived, but they simultaneous read the situation as inherently awkward. As one visitor said,

Meeting the survivor is a good experience for us. But I don’t want him to be showcased like a monkey. It’s a touchy subject. I hope it gives him joy to see that the world knows. And also it gives him a livelihood. … But I don’t like to see anyone making a living off something that is breaking him down. I don’t know whether to give him money or say sorry. (in Cychosz and Duschinski 2015, 19)

This visitor understands why the survivors may choose to sit at Tuol Sleng day after day, watching hundreds of people tread on the tiles where they once walked under very different circumstances. But at the same time, the visitor recognizes a contradiction, noting how painful this might be for the survivors to adopt fully and only their identities as survivors at the site they survived at the rejection of all other public identities.

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27 Caswell describes how engaging with the survivors, particularly with regards to photographs, “transform[s] tourists into witnesses, performing human rights [and] … these tourist snapshots directly address the subtle degradation of human rights through ongoing economic injustice.” (Caswell 2014, 140)
For Chum Mey and Bou Meng, since they returned to Tuol Sleng, their public identities have been essentialized to include only their identities as survivors. In everything they do, they do as representing the victims of Tuol Sleng and Democratic Kampuchea as a whole. During the 2013 election season, for example, Chum Mey came out against the CNRP in the wake of controversial comments about Tuol Sleng on the part of Kem Sokha, the political party’s deputy president. Media outlets identified Chum Mey first and only as a Tuol Sleng prison survivor when he led a 2000-strong march through the streets of Phnom Penh in protest. Their public identities have been simplified to include only their victimhood; because of their experiences as survivors, they have come to be a natural index of the suffering at S-21, so they and their opinions are invoked in many conversations about victimhood (Leach 1976, 12).

In fact, they are often invoked as the experts on Tuol Sleng, above and beyond museum staff, particularly since the previous director Sopheara Chey left in early 2014. Throughout a debate about a memorial to be built on the site of Tuol Sleng, which will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5 of this thesis, the English-language newspaper coverage did not quote the new director at all. This conclusion was drawn after systematically reviewing all references to the debate in both *The Cambodia Daily* and *The Phnom Penh Post* between May and the officially start of the

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28 For example, see Chansey 2013 or Sokheng and Worrell 2013.
29 This became especially true after the founding of Ksem Ksan, the only victims association in Cambodia, in which both Chum Mey and Bou Meng play very active roles. In summer 2014, Chum Mey was the disputed president and Bou Meng the second deputy president.
project in early July 2014. Instead, reporters turned to Chum Mey and Bou Meng for expert commentary.\(^{30}\)

In Cambodia, Chum Mey and Bou Meng represent the ultimate victim-survivors of the Khmer Rouge: they survived the most notorious prison in the country and have continued to use their fame and the infamy of Tuol Sleng to consolidate the voices of victims, as with the victims association Ksem Ksan. Visitors to Cambodia may not realize the extent of the survivors’ celebrity when they encounter them, but they can sense that the men’s identities derive from their existence in this moment in time.

As Caswell reflects, it is “as though Bou Meng and Chum Mey were stuck in crevices of the space-time continuum, unable to leave the place of their torture more than thirty years after their release, inexplicably forced to serve as living museum artifacts” (Caswell 2014, 139). The challenges the two men face as real human beings with present and sometimes contradictory emotional and financial needs reflects broader challenges at Tuol Sleng as an institution. For decades, the museum has purported to freeze the space in time so that the next generation will never forget what happened during Democratic Kampuchea, but the museum administration must also deal with time, politics, economics, and the loss of testimony as survivors age. For both the survivors and the museum at large, current practices seem to be unsustainable in an ever-approaching future.

\(^{30}\) For example, see McPherson 2014
A Changing Neighborhood

Sitting in a chair across from him in Building E of Tuol Sleng, I asked Bou Meng if he remembered anything about what the buildings surrounding the museum were once used for. He looked up and pointed with his small arm and sad eyes and spoke something in Khmer; his translator explained that the peak of Duch’s house was visible just across the street. Daily, Bou Meng and Chum Mey stare unflinchingly at the remains of an office where a man once directed all the horrors at S-21. Just below the wooden peak of the house, however, could be seen the red glint of a car wash, which had since purchased the building and renovated its lower floors beyond recognition. But the bit that could still be seen clearly above the fence of the museum remained nearly untouched.

Although the museum exists only as a compound of four buildings, an office and a ticket booth, occupying less than a block, the historical landscape it represents in its rhetoric once expanded to the surrounding neighborhood. Floors of the Tuol Sleng compound, formerly a high school, had been converted to prison cells. A former primary school, now torn down, stood on the west side of the same campus as the high school and was used by the Khmer Rouge as additional cells for prisoners. Just outside the primary school was a killing field and burial ground. Khmer Rouge cadre carried out torture and interrogations in the buildings surrounding the compound so as not to alert or frighten other prisoners with the inevitable screams and to maintain secrecy.

31 For more information, see Chandler 1999, 77
should the prisoner confess. The cadre and prison directors also lived in the neighborhood to maintain proximity.

Now, however, the Tuol Sleng compound has been compressed to the size of the extant high school buildings, and even the structures that immediately border its fence are now a mixture of residences and businesses. The landscape of horror has been transformed to one of tourism, commerce and life, yet always in close proximity to this representation of what many say we ought never to forget.

Figure 5: A map of S-21 prison. Today’s Tuol Sleng Museum is the rectangle of barbed wire and Buildings A, B, C, D, and E. (From Chandler 2000, 77)
A simple gray stone wall segment, perhaps six feet tall, whitewashed with age and embossed with “Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum” in English, French and Khmer, stood as the only indicator from a main road to turn here to visit the site. Approaching the museum from this southern point, cafés lined the street leading up to the primary visitor entrance to the museum. The gate, closed at night, the same corrugated metal as many residences in the city, was built into the southeast corner of the site, a tall barricade stretching in both directions. The wall, white like the wall segment sign, reached perhaps more than 10 feet up to the sky, another few inches of barbed wire capping it off at the top. When the gate was open, tuk-tuk drivers and beggars injured by land mines spilled out into the street, appealing visually and verbally to tourists for attention and money. In the evening, one of the side streets, stretching to the east of the gate, spilled over with locals from the neighborhood as they enjoyed dinner and drinks until dawn at the sidewalk restaurants. Young children peddled treats in baskets to diners, their income going to their families or bribes to stay in school.

A friend who volunteered at the museum lived on this street with her parents, and her father worked at the museum as well; in an almost poetic turn of events, the cadre of the Khmer Rouge’s S-21 moved out, and the employees of today’s tourist attraction moved in. Practically, this arrangement makes sense: being able to walk a very short distance to work can be appealing when deciding where to live. The question then becomes what the residents of this neighborhood think of the former use of their homes or if they even recognize that.
Turning west while facing the museum entrance, there was a street with a few shops and restaurants on either side. One storefront was a boutique selling items made by women disabled from land mines or polio, and a banner on the building’s exterior, which could be viewed from inside the museum site, proposed in English that, after experiencing Tuol Sleng, visitors should peruse this social justice store. A typical café advertising Angkor Beer sold Khmer and Western food halfway down the block, and a few more local-oriented shops dotted the left side of the street.

At the right of the estimated edge of the museum was an alley making up a community housing several hundred people known as Tuol Sleng A and B. At midmorning one day in June, when I first walked down it, many people bustled out and about on this street, mostly families, and though it was still quiet, booming music could be heard from one store. Some building fronts were stores peddling specialty items and one was a salon. Several children ran and played in an even smaller alley that intersected with it to the left. Most people in the alley watched me as I passed one day, silencing their conversations briefly, and two women smiled and greeted me with a “hello” in English.
Figure 6: Street 330 is one of several comprising Tuol Sleng A and B. Interestingly, this is a squatter community that has been legitimized through NGO development of the area. The land technically belongs to DC-Cam. (Photo by author)

I was clearly an outsider on that street, and I felt incredibly out of place amid the strong communal feeling emanating from the closed body language of those living in the alley. First, because the alley was too narrow for cars, tuk-tuks or even motorbikes, unless someone actively chose to traverse it they would not. Almost all of the signs were in Khmer, further dissuading potential tourists from walking through, and the shops had the rugged look of a family hoping to make ends meet by selling a few goods. However, these indicators were those of a close-knit local community, not necessarily averse to outsiders but instead existing as they would in any other part of the city. In this case, though, their street just so happened to border a tourist site and a
site of horrible collective memories. Additionally, that the two young women greeted me in English with a smile signals that the street was not unwelcome to visitors; it just did not see them very often.

This small neighborhood, known as Tuol Sleng A and B, stands atop what used to be the primary school that was used as alternate prison cells during the Khmer Rouge period as well as the relatively small killing fields (See Figure 5 and Map 2). Economic necessity transformed the area beginning in the 1980s, when people returned *en masse* to the cities after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. As the Khmer Rouge had abolished all property, a sort of land grabbing became the norm in the struggle for housing, and people began building, selling, and renting homes behind the former prison. From the 1990s through early 2000s, UNTAC, the following Cambodian government, and DC-Cam worked to sort out ownership of the land; the squatter community had been legitimized by NGO projects installing roads, electricity, and other necessities. Families and business owners have said they did not know that the neighborhood was officially illegitimate when they settled in and would not have if they had known (Cohen 2003).

The alley intersected with another street, and the storefront opposite the alley announced itself as a law office, its gate closed even in the late morning as if the business were not operating. Most of the buildings on this street were gated residences with no human activity visible, facing the back of Building D of the official Tuol Sleng complex. Very few cars passed through as I walked east. When I reached the corner, two separate tuk-tuk drivers offered to help, asking if I were looking for the
museum. Surprisingly, they did not offer to give me a ride elsewhere, as was common in my interactions with tuk-tuk drivers, but simply pointed southward to the entrance. The next street to the right was a bit busier. Tuol Sleng’s old official entrance was in the middle of this eastern fence, and though it had been blocked off for a couple years by 2014, it still maintained its name placard. The buildings facing the courtyard of Tuol Sleng from the east were another combination of boutiques, cafes and a convenience store, and the few boutiques here both emphasized handmade crafts and local NGOs. I stopped at an open air but western-oriented café on this stretch, where I ate lunch, observed traffic and read with minimal intrusion by other diners or anyone else. Occasionally, a rooster crowed from one of the residential yards next door. Toward the end of my stay, a Western woman and a Khmer man sat down and began discussing something about the Khmer Rouge in English in hushed tones.

The transformation of this small block of land from one of learning to torture and death to life and rebirth represents a loss of preservation in favor of the needs of the present. At Tuol Sleng A and B, families moved into a space that was available as soon as it became available in the 1980s. For the business surrounding the main entrances to the museum, that transformation has come about more recently; the director of the oldest boutique I found, the Cambodian Handicraft Association, dated its presence in the area back to only the early 2000s, and, based on conversations with many of the business owners, it seems that the trend of setting up shop here became exponentially more popular in the 2010s. In both of these cases, the economic motivations of these shops’ owners, external to local sensitivities of collective
memory, have shaped the physical landscape of what once was included as part of S-21 prison. Preservation for preservation’s sake has been relegated to a lesser priority.

Thinking toward the Future

A similar shift in priorities has taken place within the walls of the museum as well. Current approaches to Tuol Sleng as an institution representing memory diverge from the strictly evidence-based approach to the site used in the past, inspired by recent changes in administration.32 As one government official told me:

People have come without a vision for the future, and Tuol Sleng is a museum without museology. Tuol Sleng was operated without management for twenty years. That’s why we changed things. … Museums have a role in changing society, not just keeping things. Tuol Sleng can have an important role in changing society and changing attitudes about the atrocity. Everything has just started for Tuol Sleng.

This idea of a “museum without museology” encapsulates well the past existence of Tuol Sleng, for it functions more as a site where the Khmer Rouge past can be pulled into the present rather than a place that runs on traditional museological practices.

After the close of Case 001, however, the pressing need to access the past in the present does not hold as much weight as it once did. When the goal was justice, the

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32 A new director for Tuol Sleng was hired in April 2014.
mission of the museum was preservation of evidence. In a post-justice era, though, into which Tuol Sleng now enters, an opportunity to reevaluate this mission opens. A shift toward interpretation-based education suggests a changing audience demographic, now primarily comprising people who did not undergo the brutal experience of Democratic Kampuchea. And neither is Tuol Sleng a site for Cambodia’s government to present a specific public relations narrative to the international community (Hughes 2008, 326). Rather, Tuol Sleng has begun to embrace the rhetoric of “Never Again” in a new way, encouraging visitors to empathize with the victims and ask why and how this could have happened.33 The nature of this communication has not changed much since Tuol Sleng’s early days as a museum; the message continues to be communicated implicitly through the inclusion and exclusion of certain persons and stories, rather than explicitly through pamphlets and other written materials that could be received by visitors.

I had the opportunity to participate in this priority-changing process during my time in Cambodia when I, my professor, and an assistant designed and conducted a survey of nearly 500 visitors and tour guides at the museum with regards to their experiences and needs at the request of the new museum director (Cychosz and Duschinski 2015). In our final report, we recommended changes such as providing opportunities to interact with the archive, adding textual explanations for the exhibits and displays, and offering film screenings (Cychosz and Duschinski 2015, 1). In consultation with the director during preparation for that project, I learned of his excitement to provide age-appropriate opportunities for child visitors to engage with

33 See Williams 2007, 162 and Hughes 2008, 325
the past at Tuol Sleng. These projects and recommendations, in conjunction with the knowledge of the new director’s background in museum education, suggests that officials at the museum and ministry levels see a need for emphasizing interpretation-based museum education more so than in the past.

At Tuol Sleng, a shift toward a pedagogy of interpretation implicitly suggests a turn away from a pedagogy of preservation, fitting into my imagination of a post-justice site of memory. Although Tuol Sleng was once a “museum without museology,” administrators now seek to learn about and implement best practice standards at memorial sites around the world, turning to partnerships with other museums like the Okinawa Peace Museum for guidance (Boyle 2011). International priorities for sites of memory and conscience explicitly include collaboration with victims and survivors and education for visitors, and if Tuol Sleng officials wish for their museum to be looked upon as a good example then they will likely continue to move toward interpretation as a key source of education at the museum (Bickford 2009 in Cychosz and Duschinski 2015, 31). This is not to say that the preservation component will become nonexistent; rather, preservation and interpretation will coexist in the space for the benefit of education for the next generation.
Chapter 5
Constructing Cambodia:
Tourism, Death and Social Justice

Around mid-June, a month or so into my research, after I had mostly familiarized myself with things, people, and attitudes normal to Tuol Sleng and the surrounding area, minimalist white advertisements began appearing in shops and mounted on fences – one even going so far as to proclaim its message on the patio of Building E behind where Bou Meng and his translator sat each day. “Tuol Sleng Museum has new Neighbors!” the advertisement reads. “Streets 113 & 330 – Phnom Penh’s newest ethical shopping destination” (See Figure 7).

![Image of advertisement]

Figure 7: Ads like these could be found in the shops advertised as well as in others in the area. Larger versions could be found attached to vertical surfaces in the area.

The four shops featured on the ads were not new to the area; one, VillageWorks, had sat in the same location since 2002, when the front gate of S-21
also operated as the main entrance to Tuol Sleng. However, the cooperation between these shops and their highlighted social justice nature calls attention to the relationship between sites of memory regarding genocide in Cambodia and the corresponding development in tourism.

In this chapter I discuss the concept of branding as it relates to post-justice sites of memory, suggesting that external forces can shape public perceptions of that site. Post-justice sites of memory do work other than pure preservation, and this other work is identified through implicit and explicit communication strategies that present the sites’ priorities to visitors. At Tuol Sleng, brands of social justice and death seek to modify visitors’ perceptions of the site, but those brands do not necessarily come from the museum itself (Gürel and Kavak 2008, 43). An analysis of those external brands and externally-driven public relations methods broadens understandings of public relations to encompass symbols and interactions not controlled by an institution. In order to present the external acts of public relations at Tuol Sleng, I examine the marketing of ethical shopping and Cambodia as a tourist destination through ethnographic and semiotic analyses of their function and imagery in relation to the museum.

*Going Where the Crowds Go: Economic Development and International Tourism*

In the early 2000s, boutique shops selling stuffed elephants, traditional *kramas* and silk scarves, and ceramics from Kampong Chhnang province, among other items,
began to pop up on Streets 113, 330, and 350 – the three streets bordering the visitor entrance to Tuol Sleng (See Map 2). Notably, this increase followed the end of civil war in the late 1990s, when the decline of violence in Cambodia marked the country as open to and safe for tourism. Since then, and in particular over the past three years, the number of these shops has increased to at least five, not counting restaurants. Together, the businesses transform visitors’ experiences of Tuol Sleng from one that is limited to the museum to one that expands beyond the site to Cambodian society overall. With these shops, visitors see that the violence – physical and structural – that permeated the country during the late 1970s has ramifications into the present. In doing so, they implicitly and externally communicate to international visitors that Tuol Sleng is tied to social justice and activism rather than just evidence.

These five shops include the four featured on the advertisement and another shop located around the corner from these four and on the opposite side of Tuol Sleng’s entrance. Cambodian Creations sells handcrafted jewelry and knit stuffed animals as well as products benefitting local NGOs, like Cambodia Living Arts. From inside the shops brightly colored interior, a customer can peer into the rear workshop, where craft classes are held regularly. VillageWorks also features an in-store workshop, with wicker chairs surrounding a large table, and sells silk scarves and clothes. The walls of Khmer Life, founded by the Christian missionary organization Cambodian Methodist Services, are lined with rice sack tote bags and wooden crafts with Christian imagery. JUM Café, during summer 2014, sold both knick-knacks from around Cambodia, such as Kampong Chhnang pottery, and refreshments like
smoothies and coffee. The few small tables boasted large photo books featuring ancient and modern Cambodian arts and culture as well as a copy of Kamboly Dy’s textbook *A History of Democratic Kampuchea, 1975-1979*. In mid-July, as I was preparing to leave the country, the business cleared its merchandise in order to focus on refreshments, an employee told me.

These businesses settled into this “exclusive” location near Tuol Sleng, as I was told, because although tourists come to the area, there is not much competition and the rent is fairly inexpensive. An employee of one of these social justice shops explained that the shops serve as more than an income just for those running them; rather, they also offer catharsis for international visitors who find themselves heavy with the weight of the stories they had just heard at Tuol Sleng. “If a customer comes to visit and feels sad,” the employee explained, “they’ll look at our products and feel better.” She actively seeks conversation with potential customers who appear downtrodden and offers them the shop as a place to relax and process what they had experienced.

This corresponds with Hughes’ research findings that international tourists interpret their visiting Tuol Sleng “in terms of a symbolic gesture … [and] as a form of second-order humanitarian work” (Hughes 2008, 326-327). The abject horrors visitors experience secondhand as they walk through the museum by the end transform into a pressing urge to engage in moral tourism, in part due to the absence of explanatory texts common to many museums (Hughes 2008, 327). Instead, visitors
interpret their visit as incomplete because of a lack of knowledge and turn to framing their visit in terms poetic conceptions of morality (Hughes 2008, 326-327).

The power of this appeal to morality can be seen in the spectacular failure of the Khmer Rouge Experience Café, a theme restaurant where black-clad waitresses served gruel, dove eggs, and tea. It opened up on these streets for two weeks in 2005, during which it served only two customers, and was promptly shut down by local authorities (Sokha 2005). When I asked about this, a government official told me, “It is better to close such a restaurant because it profited on the pain of the people.” A moral barrier prevents Cambodians and tourists alike from condoning commodification of the Khmer Rouge past for personal monetary gain.

This, perhaps, explains how it is that social justice shops have gained so much traction in the area surrounding Tuol Sleng in particular but also Cambodia at large. They explicitly oppose the damage done by “amoral” tourism in Cambodia, instead drawing upon modern themes of international humanitarianism (Hughes 2008, 327; Becker 2014, 101). Moral tourists provide a counter to dark tourists by instead seeking to benefit the country in question. At Tuol Sleng, moral tourists have been given the opportunity to give back to Cambodia immediately after experiencing the horrors of its past through the close geographical and marketing association of ethical shopping sites with the museum.

It is important to note that Tuol Sleng as a site for a museum was selected not because of its location but rather because of the significance of the buildings themselves. As such, these shops are not only in close proximity to the museum but
also to local Cambodian homes, restaurants, and other amenities, which can be recognized by their primarily Khmer language signs. Because of their close proximity to local facilities, the intentions of the social justice shops are made clearer by the contrast.

Those Cambodians employed at these social justice shops find themselves consistently in close proximity with Tuol Sleng, that symbol of horror, staring at its concrete and barbed wire fence through the shops’ open doors. Visitors to the neighborhood sometimes ask the employees if being there makes them scared; one woman I spoke with explained that no, the museum does not frighten her, but the lack of traffic in the area at night does. Viewed in light of the spiritual value of Tuol Sleng for some – which prompts the museum director, for example, to offer a sacrifice of food each day to the spirits of those killed at S-21 – this more secular interpretation of place mirrors the international constituency to which the shops appeal. In fact, Khmer Life, for example, takes the religious interpretation of social justice even further away from its local roots with its explicitly Christian mission and products. The disconnect between the content and visitors of Tuol Sleng manifests as a disconnect between Tuol Sleng as a Cambodian site of memory and the targets of the tourism surrounding it.

Capturing Social Justice in Marketing

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in the summer of 2014, four of the five shops previously discussed banded together in the form of a cooperative
advertising campaign, which simultaneously advertised Tuol Sleng in opposition to social justice and ethics. The director of one of the shops mentioned explained that they chose to advertise together because the content of the shops are complementary to one another; “if people come and want different things, they can look around at the different shops.” The four boutiques fall in location near the original entrance to the museum, but especially since the gate changed in 2012 business has been lacking.

Figure 8: An English-language advertisement for VillageWorks can be viewed from the external hallway on the top floor of Tuol Sleng’s Building C. The signs are just below the green and tan striped wall. (Photo by author)
A “big sign” – not unlike the ones strung up across the side of VillageWorks – is “the best” they could do to appeal to tourists to deviate from their schedules and turn the corner to browse (See Figure 8).

Because one of the primary components of a successful advertising campaign is its positioning, meaning its targeting toward a particular demographic, a semiotic analysis of these advertisements is a useful tool for interpreting just who the target customer group is (Danesi 2002, 183). These advertisements position themselves in a particular moment in space and time – a particular advertising textuality, which is the “construction of advertisements and commercials on the basis of the specific signification systems built intentionally into products” (Danesi 2002, 188). Here, the signifier is language of neighborhood and community and the signified is an external (re)framing of Tuol Sleng as a site of social justice. Although that association corresponds with what Hughes says visitors experience at the museum alone, the externality of the message suggests the museum and the NGO shops are competing for control in the process of meaning-making and presenting at Tuol Sleng.

By announcing that “Tuol Sleng Museum has new Neighbours!”, the shops attempt to situate themselves into a specific textual moment that coopts memorialization of the Khmer Rouge period and the resulting trend in tourists for moral tourism, which “link[s] them to a sense of cultural continuity and communal tradition” (Danesi 2002, 198). The neighborhood that was once a block of prison cells and torture centers becomes united once again by a common message: that we as a global community can work together to ensure nothing like S-21 will ever happen
again. An overt social justice message for “Phnom Penh’s newest ethical shopping destination” provides tourists seeking emotional relief a way to offer financial reprieve to Cambodia’s poor and sick while not having to deviate far from their intended trip itinerary. And the advertisements suggest to treat the shops that way: after “acknowledg[ing] the past” at Tuol Sleng, visitors should “step outside and have a glimpse of a brighter future” at the four shops.

The advertisements do not market the products but rather the combined constructed brand of the four businesses: they wish to situate themselves as a point of catharsis, a natural continuation of the visit to Tuol Sleng. Hughes says the museum is experienced as “a space in which [tourists] may demonstrate sympathy for the victims of [the Khmer Rouge] period,” but the actual interactive demonstration component is absent from visitor engagement with the museum (Hughes 2008, 328). Instead, Tuol Sleng’s “new neighbors” have cultivated an opportunity for catharsis through shopping.

As a post-justice site of memory, Tuol Sleng is associated through these advertisements with both death and social justice. Despite the museum’s lack of involvement in the advertising campaign, a brand of social justice is ascribed to it by the shops surrounding it in such a way that suggests to visitors a shift away from preservation at the museum.
Images of Death as Intrigue

The advocacy bent of international tourists at Tuol Sleng contrasts with the ubiquitous symbolism of the skull and crossbones with regards to tourism in Cambodia at large, an image of death associated loosely with the museum by what is signified. Evoking the thousands of land mines leftover from the war still buried beneath the country’s surface, the skull and crossbones, as well as a number of other images of death and violence, are spread throughout the collective imagination of international tourists as friends return to their homelands from Cambodia wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the symbol or “I survived Cambodia”. With memories of the Khmer Rouge tourist kidnappings of the 1990s in mind, the quest for death-defying adventure brings some to Cambodia for dark tourism. In the international tourism landscape, Cambodia is a place to be explored, conquered, and survived (Winter 2006, 43-47).

On their way to Angkor Wat in Siem Reap from the international airport in Phnom Penh, many tourists take a day to experience the tragedy of Democratic Kampuchea by visiting Tuol Sleng then Choeung Ek. These sites are explicitly about death and treat that topic in their own ways. However sensitive the two genocide museums might be, though, the short exposure to this negative portion of Cambodia’s history followed by several days at the temples of Angkor leaves an impression that death and Angkor are the epitome of the Cambodian tourist experience. Although in the post-war period Cambodia became a prime example of national development
through tourism, that same “tourism initiated a conflation of histories, where the ancient and modern converged within a single narrative of cultural rejuvenation” (Becker 2014, 89-91; Winter 2006, 48).

The skull and crossbones is a sign for death, and Cambodia as a tourist destination has come to be associated with death and the skull and crossbones in a slightly more complicated way (Leach 1976, 12-13). In reference to Leach’s communication dyad, the connection between Cambodia and the skull and crossbones, as seen on t-shirts in many market stalls throughout Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, falls under the category of natural index in two distinct but complementary ways (Leach 1976, 12). Historically, the skull and crossbones can be traced to uses by people like pirates, whose Jolly Roger acted as a harbinger of death for those ships it would cross. On a fundamental level, though, the design includes human remains in a form that is inherently not survivable, and it has therefore come to be associated with death or danger that could bring death. In Cambodia, the sign is one systematically connected to landmines and the deadly havoc they wreak through the placement of signs with this symbol on active minefields.

On another level, the association between death and Cambodia has come into being because the lives lost during the civil war act as a semiotic liaison between the country and the skull and crossbones. There is a very real natural index between death and Cambodia because death was so prevalent for so long in the country. The jump from Cambodia to the skull and crossbones sign is made possible by the millions of deaths during thirty years of civil war, and it becomes all the more poignant to an
international audience because news of death was most of what was heard of Cambodia for those three decades. Cambodia is symbolically tied to death because deaths did happen and the memory of those deaths remains significant for visitors to the country today.

This historically ingrained association of Cambodia with death and therefore tourism with death has the potential to draw international visitors who find appeal in dark tourism, which is “tourism to and consumption of sites that commemorate death or the macabre” (Heuermann and Chhabra 2014, 213). Choeung Ek and Tuol Sleng are only two examples of such sites in Cambodia, but they are the ones most visited. Since 2001, however, the Cambodian government, led by the Ministry of Tourism, has worked toward developing yet another site for “physical testimony of the crimes committed against the innocent Cambodian people by the genocidal Pol Pot regime”: Anlong Veng (Royal Government of Cambodia 2001 in Wood 2006, 181). This small town at the base of the Dangrek Mountains on the northern Thai-Cambodian border played host to the Khmer Rouge remnant up until the party’s final fall in 1999, and most who live there today still smile fondly at the memory of the now-deceased Ta Mok, Brother Number Four. The government indicated that the Anlong Veng area “was of historic importance in the final stage of the political life of the leaders and military organization of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge” and identified one or two dozen historical Khmer Rouge sites around the area for preservation and tourism.

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34 Ta Mok passed away in 2006 while awaiting trial at the ECCC. During his rule of the Anlong Veng region, he led the development of public works, such as a dam, a school, and a hospital, which are still in use today.
development, including Pol Pot’s grave and the place where he was tried for treason by other Khmer Rouge leaders (See Figure 9) (Wood 2006, 181).

![Figure 9: Pol Pot’s gravesite is one of many historic sites in Anlong Veng associated with the Khmer Rouge. Interestingly, the simplicity of this site contrasts with the grandeur of Ta Mok’s tomb. (Photo by author)](image)

Although the development project has stalled since the road connecting Anlong Veng and Siem Reap was paved in 2003 as part of this tourism initiative, the government’s willingness to embrace Khmer Rouge history as tourist attractions

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35 Interestingly, this was not the case in Hughes’ conversation with His Excellency Rous Red, Undersecretary, Ministry of Tourism, Royal Government of Cambodia, in 2000. In her 2008 paper, she said, “Ministry officials consider images of Tuol Sleng and its sister monument, the Choeung Ek ‘Killing Field’ site southwest of the city, as undesirable for major promotional advertising. The Ministry is
indicates that the semiotic link between Cambodia and the skull and crossbones will not end soon (Wood 2006, 183). In the eyes of the international tourism community, Cambodia will continue to be a site of dark tourism – even moral dark tourism, as Hughes suggests – as long as the government continues developing Khmer Rouge history as a resource for tourism development in the future.

A brand of death complements a brand of social justice at Tuol Sleng in that they both fit into the “Never Again” rhetoric common to memorial museums. This challenges conventional conceptions of public relations in that these brands – which are not exclusive to Tuol Sleng but also Cambodia as a whole as a tourist destination – come not from within the museum but rather from external parties, but they still influence visitors’ perceptions about how the museum works and the stories it’s communicating.

Breaking Boundaries: NGO Advocacy within the Museum

Although the neighborhood encompassing Streets 113 and 330 has in recent years been transformed into an “ethical shopping destination,” this social justice framework has literally remained in the sidelines of the primary focus of Tuol Sleng. Rather, the museum – granted with the help of NGOs like DC-Cam – has focused its social justice message toward transitional justice and “never again” rhetoric regarding

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36 See Williams 2007, 162 and Hughes 2008, 325
the legacy of the Khmer Rouge. The small gift shop on the museum grounds does not peddle items announcing their benefit to less well-off Cambodians today but rather features books and movies of the Khmer Rouge.37

After I left Cambodia this summer, however, I came across a post on a museum employee’s Facebook page showing photographs an NGO booth set up near the museum entrance. “Join us to STOP Sex trafficking!” a banner strung across the top of the booth reads in English and Khmer. In the photos, a half-dozen tourists crowd around the booth.

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37 This shop does, however, sell items common to tourist-targeted markets, like jewelry or fake antiques. Interestingly, it is a private enterprise not officially affiliated with the museum.
Figure 10: This campaign, launched a few months after I left Cambodia in 2014, was the first I had heard of a non-memory or justice advocacy organization crossing the physical boundaries of Tuol Sleng to campaign.

The message resonates with Hughes’ description of a desire among visitors to Tuol Sleng to engage in humanitarian work for the benefit of Cambodia, and now, for what seems like the first time, they are able to do so without leaving the walls of the former prison (Hughes 2008, 327).
With NGOs now breaching the physical boundaries lain out for years between remembrance and tourism, visitors are encouraged to connect modern-day social issues in Cambodia with a history of genocide. While there is a direct historical connection between today’s poverty and the effects of years of civil war, breaching the physical boundary between today’s tourism and yesterday’s memories pulls the NGOs’ advocacy into the past. As Hughes’ says, after experiencing second-hand the horrors of the Khmer Rouge during a walk through Tuol Sleng, the moral tourist seeks ways to give back to Cambodia. These modern-day social justice organizations see this desire and move into the Tuol Sleng neighborhood as a way to promote their own individual initiatives.
Chapter 6
“For the Historical Record”:
The Politics of Victimhood and Representation

Bou Meng tilted his head to one side as he listened closely through his fading hearing for his translator to explain my question. Understanding, he held his head up high and gestured animatedly with his arms, though his torso and face hardly moved, and he raised his voice and pace of speaking to a level far beyond that of the beginning of our conversation. Meng, though quite old, emanated strength as he recounted his traumatic experience of living through the horrors of S-21 prison, of losing his beloved wife to the executioner, of returning here twenty years later to show people he was not dead. Although we had turned the conversation away from stories of the past and toward his opinions of the future, he managed to bring his wife into every discussion of justice. “He hungers to do it,” our translator said. “He wants his wife’s name listed. If the others approve, he will find funding to make it happen.”

I had finally had the opportunity to speak with Meng, one of the iconic seven survivors of S-21 prison.³⁸ I had asked for his opinion about a specific controversy, as he had been cited as a key stakeholder in it in the local media. A proposed memorial stupa – a type of Buddhist monument – to be installed at Tuol Sleng included in its design lists of the names of the thousands who were killed there and at its partner site,

³⁸ By iconic, I mean that the idea of seven survivors has since been disproven in light of new evidence of close to 150 total survivors of Tuol Sleng, some of which were released for various reasons while S-21 was at the height of its operation. Even though the idea of only seven survivors is not factually true, it represents the extreme horror of a site where only a very small percentage of thousands of people walked away alive.
Choeung Ek, during the Khmer Rouge regime of the late 1970s.\footnote{For more information about Choeung Ek, also known as “The Killing Fields”, and its significance to the genocide memorial landscape in Cambodia, see Bickford 2009.} Political and cultural sensitivities had pitted concerned organizations and individuals against one another over these lists. “It would be for the historical record,” the translator relayed. “In future years, the long lists of names will show just how many people were killed and the cruelty of it all.”\footnote{An ECCC lawyer told me the plaques would include the 1273 names of victims that the court agreed were definitely killed at S-21. Because this is only a small fraction of the total estimated deaths, the memorial designers were opening up the list for suggested additions. The lawyer anticipated there would be roughly 2000 names in the end.}

I imagine Meng said these same things to the throngs of reporters clustered around him a few days later at a formal ceremony marking the start of the memorial’s construction. As a survivor, and one of only a small number to have lived through the most infamous of Khmer Rouge prisons, Meng’s voice has been one of the loudest in all things related to the Tuol Sleng. Along with Chum Mey, the only other living survivor of the group of seven, Meng attracts reporters and officials alike for commentary on issues related to law, justice and Tuol Sleng, though he is careful to distance himself from politics. And now the voices of the survivors – both of them – have fallen on opposing lines regarding the memorial stupa, reflecting a broader shift in Cambodian society’s views on law and justice. A May 2014 article in *The Phnom Penh Post*, a prominent English-language daily newspaper, encapsulates this dynamic:

Bou Meng and Chum Mey may have spent much of their lives within spitting distance of one another, first as prisoners in Tuol Sleng and then
as survivors selling memoirs on the grounds, but the two men couldn’t be more different. … When a debate erupted in recent weeks over the construction of a new memorial stupa at Tuol Sleng, they … took opposing points of view. (McPherson 2014)

The stories of these two men are so similar, yet they fall on opposing lines when it comes to deciding how to commemorate those who lost their lives to the Khmer Rouge regime. As exemplified by these men, the broad spectrum of prominent opinions regarding justice and memorialization in Cambodia suggests the beginning of a new moment of transitional justice in Cambodia, one in which temporal distance from the Khmer Rouge regime prompts freer expressions of debate and a new type of memorialization.

Current changes and debates at Tuol Sleng are, I argue, related to collective disenchantment with the ECCC as its momentum dwindles in the aftermath of Case 001. As such, I suggest that Tuol Sleng has entered into a new phase of existence that I call a “post-justice site of memory.” By “post-justice,” I refer to these changes as a phenomenon related to the current political and social status of Tuol Sleng as a particular site of memory of past atrocity, which I will illustrate in greater depth throughout this chapter. “Post-justice” means that the site was once conceptualized as a site important to preserve so that justice might be served, and now, after the hope of justice has been either satisfied or curtailed, the site has doing a different type of work. Tuol Sleng, as an institution, must forge a new path in which it (re)establishes itself as
important in a new way – apart from its potential to be used as evidence, since that potential has now been fulfilled in the form of Case 001.

Historically, as established, Tuol Sleng has been seen as a site where evidence can be preserved in order to eventually give voice to S-21’s victims in a court of justice. As we saw in chapter three, the physical existence of the buildings, left as preserved as possible, have been imagined as natural index signifiers for the signified reality of history and violence. Justice has been linked with memory and preservation in a discourse that leaves little wiggle room, but the stupa suggests alternative means for honoring victims: remembering names that are inextricably tied to the identities of those who were killed at S-21 and who further disappeared to history in unmarked mass graves.

Because these names are signifiers of the signified identity and therefore the acts of individuals, the decision to inscribe them on the memorial together simultaneously acknowledges the unique personhood of each of them but also silences characteristics that made certain groups altogether different from one another. In the public debate surrounding this memorial stupa, this duality manifests in conversations regarding who should be recognized as victims of the Khmer Rouge and how, particularly in reference to religious and ethnic minorities and lower-level Khmer Rouge cadre.

This chapter explores perceptions of Khmer Rouge-era victimhood through the lens of a specific, recent topic of conversation: a memorial stupa that is currently being installed in Tuol Sleng’s courtyard. The discussions surrounding this proposed stupa,
its design, and its construction reveal larger debates about authenticity and change, memory and justice, and professionalization at Tuol Sleng. Together, these debates indicate a shift at Tuol Sleng toward it becoming a post-justice site of memory, one focusing no longer on survivors but rather on the next generation.

The Memorial Stupa

The memorial stupa to be constructed at Tuol Sleng follows a traditional Buddhist style; other such stupas can be found throughout Buddhist countries, and they are regarded as holy places, mimicking the design of a grave mound (Buddha Dharma Education Association 2012). In Cambodia, the history of memorializing memories of the Khmer Rouge regime is tied up in stupas, as a PRK mandate in the 1980s made it so each of the 27 Cambodian provinces would build a memorial stupa as a way to remind people of the horrors of the past (Sion 2011, 8-14).

The square base faces the four cardinal directions, referencing the underworld (See Figure 11). The top includes a design referencing a dome, like a grave mound, and a stylized parasol, which provides protection from evil.
The stupa stands on a raised platform with six steps climbing down at each of the four directions. A wide stone pathway wraps around the square base, and a small garden follows the perimeter of the path. In the garden lie 16 dark granite panels, slanted toward the outside for ease of reading. The names are scribed on the panels.

The stupa would be built at the site of previous wooden stupa that fell to the elements a few years ago, in the courtyard surrounded by Buildings C and D. It would be constructed of stone, a far more durable and permanent material than the previous wooden one, nodding to a more permanent narrative and mode of memory.
Victim participation in the ECCC relates closely with S-21 prison and Tuol Sleng museum. During Case 001, several prominent victims who were registered as civil parties, including Chum Mey and Bou Meng, the S-21 survivors mentioned previously in this chapter, became frustrated with a court decision to not permit civil parties to ask questions of the accused, which is a standard in civil law. These civil parties wrote a letter to the court, announcing that they would boycott the tribunal if they could not ask questions, and this letter was then read by their lawyers before the court. The trial chamber rejected the condition, so the civil parties boycotted and turned to a prominent legal NGO working with the court, the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), for help. With the assistance of ADHOC, 33 civil parties founded Ksem Ksan, which is the only functioning Democratic Kampuchea-era victims association in Cambodia today that is not explicitly affiliated with the ECCC (as is the VSS) and is a means for victims to engage directly with the tribunal.

Victim disagreement with the function of the court also arose in relation to what many looked forward to as a potential result of the ECCC: reparations. “Reparations” refers to whatever is given to a victim by the perpetrator (or in this case, the court) in light of a guilty verdict, seeking to compensate for what has been lost. For the ECCC, many hoped that they could be compensated individually and financially for whatever harm had come to them because of Democratic Kampuchea
and specifically in this case S-21, but the court has been limited to “collective and moral” reparations, excluding that desired result from consideration and prompting proposals for stupas, schools, roads, and religious buildings (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 225-227). The reparations are decided upon during a fairly lengthy process that has evolved over the life of the court. In 2014, the civil parties are asked to propose specific reparations projects, and the civil party lawyers and lead co-lawyers select from there. The lawyers must consider whether the proposals are “collective and moral” and whether they have external funding, as the accused have been declared indigent and therefore unable to fulfill requests for reparations. The latter question poses the greatest challenge, as donors can then influence the projects by withholding funding without specific alterations to the proposal. Once a “collective and moral” project has secured funding, it is then passed on to the judges, who determine which projects will be supported by the court. Although the reparations are tied to specific court cases, all this happens before final judgment.

Even more than this, reparations are tied into the politics between the ECCC and the Cambodian national government. Although the national court has come out in support of reparations, the ECCC cannot mandate the Cambodian government to actually implement reparations projects. As a whole, in fact, the government is somewhat suspicious of NGO projects and appears to face the ECCC in a manner it does with groups like DC-Cam.

41 Unfortunately, many of these proposals, such as schools and roads, are for projects that the Cambodian government should be completing and maintaining on its own but isn’t. People see these projects as important but unfulfilled, and they take advantage of ECCC funding to complete municipal projects.
For Case 001, despite reparations proposals ranging from the construction of pagodas to psychological programs for victims, the ECCC agreed to fund only two projects: it would post the final judgment and the names of the civil parties on its website (Di Certo 2011; Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 128-130). The lack of participation in the court proceedings disappointed civil parties and victims. The creative response to this situation has been to circumvent the bureaucracy of the court in favor of non-judicial measures (NJM), which instead bypass the court and progress straight from the civil parties or sponsoring organizations to donors (sometimes those same organizations) to construction (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 227-229). NJM are not contingent upon the ECCC’s verdict in a case, nor are they subject to the whims of the judges. They have the benefit of being loosely affiliated with the proceedings of the court, which ties these projects to a justice mechanism and thereby appropriating some of the court’s legitimacy, but formal reparations do have a greater sense of (legal) legitimacy simply because they are approved by the court. And because their origins are in civil parties and other organizations, NJM allow for greater victim participation in the reparations process. Ksem Ksan, the victims association, took advantage of this capability with a proposal for a memorial stupa at Tuol Sleng.

Back in the early years of Ksem Ksan, the organization proposed a memorial project to the ECCC as part of the reparations initiative and submitted a suggested design imagined by prominent S-21 victim and painter Vann Nath.\textsuperscript{42} When the ECCC

\textsuperscript{42} Vann Nath had dedicated his life to telling the story of S-21, painting many horrifying images of torture based on his personal visual and audio observations. Several of these hang at Tuol Sleng. At the time of the stupa proposal, Vann Nath was very sick, and Ksem Ksan sought to keep him involved in his last years through the memorial proposal. Vann Nath passed away in 2011.
rejected nearly all reparations proposals for Case 001, the organization then passed the proposal on to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and then to the Supreme Court of Cambodia, which upheld the project as a good idea but admitted, yet again, that it had no authority to compel either the Cambodian government or the ECCC to complete the project. For two years, the project lay untouched. However, it was resurrected early in 2014, but redesigned by a Cambodian architect affiliated with the design group SELA.\(^{43}\) On July 10, 2014, at Tuol Sleng, under the auspices of the ECCC, the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the German donor organization Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) met to formalize an agreement to fund and construct the memorial at Tuol Sleng as a NJM of the ECCC. As mentioned in the opening to this chapter, Bou Meng took this opportunity to passionately recount to reporters his desire to include his wife’s and other victims’ names in the final design, his tiny frame swallowed up by the nameless faces and voice recorders straining to hear him answer questions (See Figure 12).

\(^{43}\) This group also designed the monument to King Norodom Sihanouk that was constructed at Independence Monument in 2013. The architect for the stupa project was a student at Tuol Svay Prey High School before the Khmer Rouge regime.
Inclusion and Exclusion of Religious Minorities

The Khmer Rouge period was distinctly Cambodian, with primarily Cambodian victims, and as such, many believe, commemoration of that time should be authentically Khmer. The memorial stupa complicates this distinction by prompting conversations about what it means to be authentically Khmer today. One of the challenges of these conversations as well as the ECCC is the experiences of different ethnic groups, particularly the Cham Muslim minority, both today and in the Khmer Rouge past. With regards to this particular reparations project, the “Traditional Khmer Style” stupa would traditionally invoke Buddhist imagery. A religious style would not be out of the ordinary for memorials dedicated to those who lost their lives during the Khmer Rouge period, because of the 1980s PRK-mandated memorialization
movement. Some of the stupas that emerged from that movement, including the stupa at Choeung Ek, display bones of excavated victims, a practice which has since been the subject of great debate in the Buddhist community in particular.\textsuperscript{44}

However, some fear these conventional memorial practices, and in particular the decision to inscribe names, exclude victims of different faiths or backgrounds. The Cham Muslim community, for example, was targeted even before the 1975 revolution, and their collective experiences, particularly in the Kampong Chham province, have been highlighted by the ECCC in Case 002/02 as legally marking the Khmer Rouge period as a genocide (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 176). Although the Cham community suffered under the Khmer Rouge like ethnically Khmer populations or other minorities, memorial projects seeking to represent all victims can easily fall short of the needs of religious and ethnic minorities.

The Documentation Center of Cambodia’s Farina So, a researcher who specializes in Cham experiences related to the Khmer Rouge, responded to the proposed memorial stupa and its inscriptions in an interview for the \textit{Phnom Penh Post},

While stupa erection can be justifiable because it is a Cambodian practice, name inscription raises some concerns: Western practice, incompatibility with Islamic traditions, and problems with inclusion and exclusion. … All of which raises a main question: is it an appropriate form of reparation that

\textsuperscript{44}King Norodom Sihanouk argued in favor of cremating the remains rather than putting them on display, questioning “What Buddhist man or woman accepts that, instead of incinerating their dead relatives … one displays their skulls and their skeletons to please ‘voyeurs’?” (Sion 2011). For more on this, see Sion 2011, pp. 8-14.
would help victims rest in peace and survivors find solace? (in McPherson 2014)

So finds fault with the stupa’s design, and particularly the listing of names, because it does not ring true to all parties, like the Cham community. The memorial stupa’s ability to authentically represent the experiences of victims and the needs of victims’ families depends upon the perceived personal validity of the means of commemoration. Using this design would enforce upon the Cham a Western style of highlighting individuals, which runs contrary to their beliefs. So also suggests that inscribing names is a Western practice, a suggestion that must be addressed given that the primary donor supporting the stupa is the (Western) German donor organization GIZ. Much of the financial support around the ECCC has fallen on the backs of donor countries and organizations; the original agreement between Cambodia and the UN that established the court, in fact, said that international donors would pay roughly three-quarters of the total costs of the court, and Cambodia would pay the other quarter (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014, 98).

This financial influence prompts a closer look at the origins of the recent popularity of listing names on memorials for a post-colonial insight on what this design might mean. Blair and Michel mark the United States’ Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, D.C., designed by Maya Lin and constructed in 1982, as an influential moment in commemorative practices globally. They suggest that it was one
of the first memorials to “democratize” violence by recognizing the contributions of every fallen soldier.

The names are recorded in absolutely uniform fashion; the only differences among them are the markers for KIA or MIA. There are no military ranks or units listed, not even military branches. This represents a departure from the representations of the dead in U.S. military cemeteries and on most of the walls of the missing from the two world wars. Military gravestones almost always mark rank, unit, and branch of service, as well as major commendations. Most walls of the missing do the same. At the [Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial], though, every individual is represented, and each is marked as absolutely equal in death. (Blair and Michel 2007, 599)

At least in this form, the design concept of listing names of the dead marks them as equals without distinction. Similarly, the proposed design of the memorial stupa at Tuol Sleng includes panels listing the names of individuals who died after detention at S-21, without distinction between individuals whose experiences under the Khmer Rouge were markedly different or whose identity suggests a different commemorative practice (or lack thereof) as more appropriate. This design simultaneously democratizes the experience of S-21 by connecting the horrors with the experiences of individuals while also homogenizing those same
experiences; all *individuals* suffered equally, so the design says, despite the fact that the ECCC recognizes – and its charges are founded upon, really – the premise that the Khmer Rouge targeted distinct groups.

One government official explained,

> To me, we cannot avoid any problems because in Khmer society, we have no problems of religious conflict. This is a new concept that people may think also of other religions. In general, we don’t build stupa just for Buddhism. It’s for the deaths. It just represents victims so victims can rest peacefully.

This official believes that the memorial stupa should be seen as a memorial, not as a stupa, an opinion shared by an ECCC lawyer who made clear that Ksem Ksan’s original proposal was for a generalized memorial at Tuol Sleng, not a stupa, because its members were sensitive to the experiences of religious groups other than Buddhists. The design invoking Buddhism draws from traditional Khmer architectural style, rather than explicitly religion. The design harkens back to days in which Cambodia was the glory of Southeast Asia, both during the Angkor period and in the Sihanouk-ruled golden era of the 1960s.

However, these differing opinions about the stupa’s design indicate that Cambodians broadly defined do not all see themselves as inheritors of the same culture and experiences, specifically in recent history. This manifests in debates about
design but also whether or not writing the names of victims is the best way to represent the individuals who were killed. And these disagreements about which groups suffered how and how to remember them are complicated further when we consider those who worked within the ranks of the Khmer Rouge.

The Gray Zone of Victimhood

Possibly the most complicated of all the controversies surrounding the listing of names on this memorial stupa is the nature of victimhood. S-21 was a central prison under the Khmer Rouge regime, and roughly 70 percent were Khmer Rouge cadre accused of treason during rounds of internal purges (Ea and Sim 2001, 46). Even S-21’s guards were not safe: if accused of wrongdoing, especially while on the job, these young men could be arrested.

Ea and Sim report that at least 563 guards, roughly one third of those working at S-21 throughout the three years of its operation, were executed for crimes supposedly committed while working at the prison (Ea and Sim 2001, 46). Even the grueling pre-placement training process and the weekly “livelihood meetings” pushed the cadre’s limits on how much they could take (Ea and Sim 2001, 22-26). The cadre were instructed to critically describe their performance throughout the previous week and open themselves up for criticism by their peers – a process that alienated individuals from one another and impressed upon them the gravity of living fully by Khmer Rouge ideology. If they did not, the young men could be imprisoned or killed.
The emotionally and physically grueling experiences of the cadre – generally but specifically at S-21 – has led some to argue that they, too, were victims of the Khmer Rouge regime. Others, however, including DC-Cam, disagree, arguing that the position of authority held by these cadre gave them an experience under the Khmer Rouge that was perhaps not as horrific as the experiences of the millions of Cambodians working in the fields. Rather, stating that the cadre also suffered can be perceived as tantamount to insult to non-cadre victims of the Khmer Rouge schemes.\footnote{\emph{It is always more comfortable to have a Manichean vision of the world, for that allows us not to ask too many questions or at least to have the answer readily at hand. In this fashion, representing the Khmer Rouge as an homogenous group of indoctrinated fanatics, the incarnation of absolute evil, responsible for all the unhappiness of the Khmer people, is a reductive vision of a complex phenomenon but one which a good many people find satisfying.} (Hiegel and Landrac in Chandler 1999, 9)}

In relation to the memorial stupa and the proposal to inscribe the names of those killed at S-21, the cadre would be formally recognized as victims alongside non-cadre without distinction, as discussed earlier in reference to the United States’ Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Survivor Chum Mey argued, “In no country in the world do they take the names of someone who kills and put it on a stupa” (in McPherson 2014). However, under Khmer Rouge rule, joining the ranks of the cadre was hardly a choice: as children, they were separated, often forcibly, from their families to live under the direct supervision of the authorities because they possessed “marginally integrated cognitive belief systems and immature development of normative values” making them easier than adults to incorporate in the rank and file of the radical revolutionary regime (Etcheson in Ea and Sim 2001, 12).
In his description of another, similar prison – Auschwitz – Holocaust concentration camp survivor Primo Levi identifies a level of complicity within the prison’s internal power structure, a level that he names “The Gray Zone.” One example unique to Nazi concentration camps is the policy of selecting individuals as they arrived by train for inclusion in the Sonderkommando, which was entrusted with running the crematorium and other undesirable tasks within the camp. The prisoners would work in this role for several months and then find themselves rotated out, when, “as initiation, the next squad burnt the corpses of its predecessors” (Levi 1988, 50).

The lines were blurred at S-21 as well, with S-21 cadre found themselves on the line of victim and perpetrator, particularly if and when they too found themselves facing the torturer. The Gray Zone of victimhood at S-21 does not end at those quickly processed in front of the camera and shipped to Choeung Ek; rather, it also includes those who involuntarily found themselves acting on behalf of the Khmer Rouge.

The debate of whether or not to inscribe the names of the cadre on the memorial stupa at S-21 suggests yet again that this is a moment where multiple stakeholders are seeking to gain control of the nature of the symbols associated with Tuol Sleng and Khmer Rouge history, and the rise of a narrative counter to the Standard Total View indicates a recognition that perhaps the cadre suffered as well. This recognition evidences a departure from absolutism in historical analysis and a willingness to acknowledge the banality of evil epitomized by some of the Khmer Rouge cadre. In contrast, the Standard Total View, a master narrative of Cambodian

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46 As mentioned in the background section of this chapter, the original intent of Tuol Sleng and its early exhibits, some of which are still extant, was to clearly condemn the Khmer Rouge for their acts
history, states everyone suffered equally under the Khmer Rouge regime (Vickery 1984).\textsuperscript{47} A memorial democratized to include former cadre next to other victims would problematize indications that the cadre suffered less; in this way, the Cambodian government shows a willingness through the stupa for a more nuanced understanding of the Standard Total View.

This recognition may be tied to the limited justice offered by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, which is limited to trying only senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge and those deemed most responsible for violations of international and domestic laws as they had existed leading up to Democratic Kampuchea and only those violations that occurred between April 17, 1975 and January 6, 1979 (Ciorciari and Heindel 2014). Many former Khmer Rouge cadre walk freely in Cambodian society, living side by side with those who may have been victimized by them. In order to reconcile this pervasive anger of the past with the reconciliation of the present and future, Cambodians are using the memorial stupa at Tuol Sleng as a means of negotiating the politics of victimhood.

\textit{Moving toward Nuance}

Debates surrounding the memorial stupa at Tuol Sleng offer insight into local understandings of what it means to be a victim of the Khmer Rouge. The general sensitivity toward ethnic minorities’ opinions and experiences suggests a greater

\textsuperscript{47} For more on the Standard Total View, see Ledgerwood 1997 and Hughes 2008.
openness into what it means to be Cambodian and possibly an understanding of the benefit of recognizing difference positively. Relatedly, disapproval in regards to including the names of cadre-victims on the stupa suggests that, for many, it has not been enough to try only the leaders of the Khmer Rouge in the international tribunal. As these debates play out on the ground among stakeholders in Tuol Sleng, they supplement the justice mechanisms in place at the court. The memorial stupa itself acts as a post-justice site of memory because poetic understandings of victimhood are finding voice in the conversation about design. With peaceful reconciliation of the different stakeholders’ opinions in the design of this particular stupa could come general peace and acceptance.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

In this project, I have analyzed the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes as it existed in summer 2014 with particular attention to trends and conversations of authenticity, evidence, and pragmatic changes. After analyzing the implicit and explicit communication strategies used both by the museum and about the museum, I have concluded that Tuol Sleng is now being (re)presented as a post-justice site of memory, as can be seen in the new messages being communicated at the site. This may be a result of the struggle for control of symbols and therefore narratives associated with the site, as revealed through semiotic analysis. These symbols are poetic, as are sites of memory broadly, in that they take on multiple meanings throughout time and space, depending on who associates which symbols as presented to whom. Memory creation is fundamentally semiotic, and there is a moment now in Cambodia in relation to memories of the Khmer Rouge and international justice that influences development of the mission of Tuol Sleng. These struggles for symbols and other changes shape the neighborhood as well as other aspects of tourism in Cambodia.

In this thesis, Tuol Sleng is approached as a site of memory not as a controlled institution but as broadly defined, reaching beyond its physical walls to the surrounding neighborhood. More specifically, however, I treat Tuol Sleng’s current mode of existence as indicative of an emerging trend among memorial museums in post-conflict societies: it is a post-justice site of memory, meaning that it is not pushing for justice to be done through its exhibitions and activities but rather
reflecting on transitional justice mechanisms that have already been completed. With the intent of this category being applicable to other contexts throughout the world, I have identified a few broad characteristics that, if met, suggest a particular site of memory is a post-justice.

1. The site of memory must explicitly tell the story of a particular conflict or event within a conflict that is tied to that site through location.

2. That conflict must have been addressed through now-completed transitional justice mechanisms.

3. A primary goal should be something other than providing a space to house evidence.

Tuol Sleng, for example, explains the story of S-21 prison as representative of the horrors that existed in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period, and, under the leadership of the new director in particular, it is shifting its emphasis to interpretation-based museum education rather than authenticity-based education, as was discussed in chapter three. With education, as well, comes a willingness for open discussion and debate about collective memories of the prison and Khmer Rouge period, as can be seen with the memorial stupa discussed in chapter five. Because of the influx of visitors, as was discussed in chapters three and four, Tuol Sleng and the surrounding neighborhood compromise authenticity for the ability to speak to a larger number of people as well as economic pressures. And as chapter four discusses, the museum has also begun to situate its brand in the wider memorial landscape in Cambodia as having relationships to not only death but also social justice, calling implicitly for a
humanitarian approach to visitors’ time in the country. As for the transitional justice mechanism, Tuol Sleng fits into this category only because of the unique nature of the still-incomplete ECCC, in which those held most responsible for S-21 was tried and convicted before anyone else. Since Case 001 has come to a close and most of the museum’s interactions with the tribunal have ended, Tuol Sleng can now be described as a post-justice site of memory.

Drawing upon these characteristics, only a few sites exist today that qualify as post-justice sites of memory, primarily because the majority of transitional justice mechanisms that have been implemented around the world in a variety of post-conflict contexts remain incomplete. Immediately, then, we can overlook those contexts where transitional justice either has not been implemented or not been completed. Another post-justice site of memory is the Museum of Free Derry in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, which memorializes the Bloody Sunday Massacre of 1972 and was instrumental in bringing about an inquiry, the Saville Report, in 2010. This museum was established at the site of several of the shootings, and bullet holes can still be seen in its walls. Today, the museum is undergoing an extension process and is temporarily housed in the local courthouse, another site related to its transitional justice mechanism (“£2m extension to Free Derry Museum ‘ready by 2016’”). It falls under the framework of post-justice sites of memory because it is dedicated to the Bloody Sunday Massacre, has been active in the search for justice, and is now changing physically – and therefore likely ideologically, though I cannot say that for sure without further study – after that justice process has concluded.
Even in contexts of ongoing transitional justice processes, sites of memory relating to those conflicts do not yet fall under the category of post-justice sites of memory. The key word there, however, is “yet,” for once justice has been done in the eyes of the international and national community, then sites relating to those conflicts can then fall under this new category. What follows here is a list of sites that almost fit the framework for post-justice sites of memory.

- Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and State Museum, Poland: This in situ museum is dedicated to a Holocaust concentration camp, and it was used as a site of evidence for the Nuremburg Trials of Nazi war criminals. Although this easily fits the first two requirements to be designated a post-justice site of memory, the Nuremburg Trials (November 1945 through October 1946) occurred quickly after the end of World War II, so Auschwitz wasn’t treated as a place to house evidence for very long. By definition, this site is a post-justice site of memory, although its stage of evidence preservation was very short. This leads me to conclude that post-justice sites of memory are likely a late 20th century and later phenomenon as a response to the types of transitional justice mechanisms that gained popularity after the Cold War.48

- Kigali Memorial Centre in Kigali, Rwanda: This museum was built to memorialize the victims of the Rwandan genocide, housing artifacts that are referred to as “material proof of the genocide” (Genocide Archive Rwanda). In addition to the 258,000 genocide victims buried in the cemetery, the

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48 See Bost 2008, Williams 2007,
constructed building also includes an archive and a documentation center. Because the related transitional justice mechanism, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, has not yet been completed, it does not yet fall under the category of post-justice site of memory.\(^{49}\)

- Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center, Bosnia and Herzegovina: This center and cemetery is dedicated to the more than 8,000 lives lost in the Srebrenica Massacre of 1995. It does not yet fall under the category of post-justice site of memory because its related transitional justice mechanism, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, has not yet concluded. However, the site and massacre have been referenced throughout the tribunal’s proceedings.\(^{50}\)

Because of the large number of potential sites fitting this framework, in the next few decades holds a large potential for contributions to and revisions of the concept of post-justice sites of memory, given the wide variety of sites that could be added to the list. As a framework, post-justice sites of memory fall at a specific intersection of law, justice, memory, and strategic communication that could prove useful to organizations and individuals conducting memory work in the aftermath of conflict. Perceptions of utility about certain memories change throughout the relationship between sites of memory and transitional justice mechanisms. With an understanding of the communication strategies involved in presenting a post-justice site of memory, such sites can recognize this changing utility and negotiate potential discrepancies between

\(^{49}\) See Genocide Archive Rwanda, Bemma 2013, and Williams 2007, 18-19.
\(^{50}\) See Wagner 2010, Hazan 2004.
local collective memory of the violence and (re)presentations of that violence to outsiders.

The implications of such a category to post-conflict societies and the international justice community is still unknown, but it is safe to say that the function of sites of memory in post-conflict and post-justice contexts differs from most sites of memory because the site is tasked with the job of communicating that justice has already been done.
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