GENOCIDE | CREATING SPACE FOR CAMBODIA

A thesis presented by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Who remembers? How do we, as a collective, remember? Are there particular sites, exhibits, or memorials that encourage society as a whole to remember? If there are, do the site’s intentions impact collective memory? As a society we absorb information about genocide from many different outlets, but what are the analytic advantages of each collective practice we confront? In the aftermath of genocide and trauma, it is critical to begin to provide answers to these questions in an attempt to strengthen the effort to prevent future genocides from happening. The purpose of this project is to better understand the ways in which some genocides are remembered while some are left out of the conversation. In order to gain these insights, the research project will be comprised of two main parts. The first part of the research entails the use of both fieldwork and personal narratives at three different sites. The second part of the research utilizes Cambodia as a genocide not remembered. This section is carried out through a series of reflections, personal conversations and experiences. Questions surrounding memory as it pertains to genocide will be raised and answered to gain a richer understanding of how the global community deals with memory post-genocide.
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INTRODUCTION

As I was mulling over the most effective way to capture a reader’s attention on the dark topic of genocide, my mind couldn’t help but drift to my own initial introduction. In May 2008, I strayed from my usual routine and ventured a mere 20 minutes from my home in the heart of Phnom Penh, Cambodia to Tuol Sleng, the former high school turned Security Prison 21 (S-21) and execution hub during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. Today, Tuol Sleng, the Cambodian landmark and must-see tourist destination, has been preserved and repurposed into a genocide museum. As a naive 15-year-old unsure of what to expect, I recall having reservations about my visit. Although at this point I had lived in Cambodia for three years, this was my first encounter with the realities of the genocide. I waltzed up to the poorly barbed wire gates, paid the modest fee for an English speaking tour guide and entered a world that I was fully unprepared to experience.

Thinking back, there were four parts of the visit that stuck out to me. The first piece happened to also be the first stop on the tour. We entered a classroom stripped bare of its educational sanctity as it was reconstructed into a torture chamber. In the middle of the small room stood what looked like the framework of a rusty bed and below it the tiled floor was stained with blood splatter. The intricate details of the torture device were not relayed and as a result, my imagination wandered into the darkest corners of my mind.

The museum was flooded with shock value, and although this may be the intent, to pull at the heart strings of unassuming foreigners, I could not help but cringe at the prison cells during the second leg of the tour. Individuals were barricaded and confined to brick cells smaller than the size of dog cages at the pound. The brick walls were marked with names in Khmer script and
etchings indicating time. I remember my tour guide pumping out facts, “It is said that out of 20,000 individuals held captive in S-21, only seven survived.” In that moment, all I could think was that 19,993 people walked these same prison halls and were held in these same spaces before being called to their demise.

The third part that I vividly remember was the walls of an entire room, from ground to ceiling, filled with the mug shots of the victims held in S-21. Before the victims were taken to the Killing Fields and tossed into mass graves after being lethally beat with a club-like instrument, they were forced to sign a document agreeing that they had committed a heinous crime accompanied by a mug shot in the moments before being transported to the fields. The contrast between reality of the perpetrator and the victim was striking.

The final and possibly most important part of the tour that I recall was a conversation shared with my tour guide on the street after walking out of the museum. She began to recount her experience with the Cambodian genocide. What she remembered, how she survived, and how she moved forward. She told her story and started to tear when she explained that she lost every single member of her family during the genocide. She appeared to be my age but after living through hell, she embodied unparalleled wisdom. She ended her account proudly stating that she was earning an education as a means for her to personally combat the genocide and what it stood for because intellectuals were the group targeted and attacked by the regime.

What does it take for society to remember a genocide? How is it that we, as a collective, confront conflict and trauma? What different mechanisms are in place that either inhibit or promote the remembrance of some genocides over others? Is it possible for us to really remember and absorb trauma that happened in a different space and a different time? Despite the fact that I lived in Cambodia for three years and had studied the genocide, it wasn’t my
connection with the peoples or the history that left a mark on me – it was my visit to the actual site of violence.

Seven years ago, unbeknownst to me, I subconsciously became invested in the Cambodian genocide despite the fact that I was not directly involved. In hindsight, and after conducting this research, I have come to realize the significance of my visit to Tuol Sleng, the physical site of violence and devastation, as an experience that will forever frame the Cambodian genocide in my memory. That said, the excerpt unpacked above mirrors the style of the research project as it is a critical reflection of my personal journey (over the course of a year) of commemorating and questioning the value of remembering as it relates to genocide. Although the Cambodian genocide is the vessel and lens in which this project unfolds, the overarching goal is to more broadly answer the questions: how does society remember genocide? What are the ways in which we confront some genocides and not others? What outlets exist that impact collective memory? And further, how can they be used to prevent future genocides from happening?

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite the fact that six million lives were lost in the Holocaust during World War II, the phenomena of genocide persists and continues to exist in different manifestations throughout the world. How is this possible? Did we not learn from the Holocaust? How do we allow such events to recur? Unfortunately, the reality is that, whether we want to admit it or not, we regard some human lives as more valuable than others.

Although a blunt claim, there are reasons why. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the reason(s) and underlying motivation(s), or lack there of, behind the human behavior that allows
for genocide to continue to take place. What is the most effective way to prompt humans to put an end to these events? Is there enough of a common bond between humanity to stop genocide altogether? Why or why not? Are some semblances of genocide prevention better than none at all? These questions lead to an overarching discussion of collective remembrance as it pertains to genocide.

Where do we “see” genocide, or more broadly conflict, today? Most minds immediately drift to the Holocaust in some way, shape, or form. This connection may have been derived from a classroom, a museum, listening to a survivor speak of their experience, watching a film or an artistic representation of the history, etc. While this connection is identifiable as it relates to the Holocaust, how many other genocides experience this same recognition? How many students graduate high school with an understanding of the Rwandan, Armenian or Cambodian genocide?

Here in lies the core problem: some genocides are remembered and others are not. Furthermore, the challenge to expose a genocide outside of the geographic confines of the atrocity uncovers an added layer of obstacles. As it relates to collective remembrance of a genocide there are three critical issues pertaining to prevention: 1) the promise of education, and the impact of knowledge prohibiting denial; 2) the promise of affect, and the way in which empathy propagates political action; and 3) the promise of ethics, and the effect of how our commitment to ethos can foster a society geared towards coexistence. Are these obstacles overcome? How? If not, why? Are they overcome equally across all genocides? And what impact does this have on collective remembrance? Sites are constructed around certain genocides, notably the Holocaust, in order to prevent future ones. These spaces are created for society as a whole to raise awareness, to educate, and to warn us that if we are not careful atrocities will continue to happen. Are these sites enough to stop genocide?
LITERATURE REVIEW: REMEMBERING AND VISUALIZING GENOCIDE

How are genocides remembered? Do some genocides match the definition better than others? Further, does the definition of genocide dictate remembrance or is remembrance driven by societal factors, or perhaps a combination of both? Some literature argues that the term genocide is coined by the Holocaust and as such, there is a desire to preserve its uniqueness in the overarching conversation of morality (Harris, 2008). Elie Wiesel once said, “after Auschwitz, the human condition is no longer the same.” In the same light as Wiesel’s quote and recognizing that as humans we exist in a post-Holocaust era, when calling an atrocity a genocide it is critical to remember that the term may be inextricably tied to the Holocaust. As such, the memory surrounding it may also be impacted by this tie (A. L. Hinton, 2014, 2015). It is important to highlight this point as many scholars and practitioners experience the difficulty in the labeling of other “genocides,” and the controversy around what is in most cases the starting point – the definition (Jones, 2006).

Aside from the seemingly endless discussion regarding definition, the question of remembrance becomes a primary focal point in atrocity studies. In the same way that the Holocaust provides a benchmark for the definition of genocide, it also provides a benchmark for conceptualizing the ways in which some genocides are remembered (A. L. Hinton, 2012, 2014). In other words, if an atrocity occurs on a smaller scale and is deemed less severe than the Holocaust, does the event stand to be termed and remembered as a genocide? How does this comparison help or hinder how both the perpetrators and victims internalize the atrocity? And what impact does this comparison have on how the rest of the world either remembers or does not remember the event(s)? Within this study the Holocaust will serve as the null case in an
attempt to flesh out answers to the aforementioned questions. The Holocaust is extensively documented and remembered, which facilitates the identification of factors leading to the lack of remembering in contrapositive cases and understanding the different ways in which we facilitate memory (Cheng, 2010). In other words, to understand why a genocide is not remembered, it is perhaps better to analyze how the aftermath and the act of remembering differs from that of the Holocaust.

After surveying the literature through the lens of memory, three main conceptual frameworks surrounding the remembrance of genocides warrant discussion: who remembers, how and why do we remember, and how do they remember? The following discussion serves to flesh out the logic and arguments behind each of the three main conceptual frameworks. Additionally, it is important to note that within each framework attention will be given to both how an individual internalizes and grapples with memory and how different sites influence this process.

WHO REMEMBERS?

The first underpinning of genocide and memory studies addressed throughout the literature is the idea of who remembers? Before fleshing out how different people remember, who actually remembers (and why certain groups of people remember over others) needs to be addressed. As a logical exercise consider the Cambodian genocide as the contrapositive against the null example, the Holocaust. How many people outside of Cambodia could identify the perpetrators and the victims? How many people could reference the year? Even more generally, how many people may not even be aware that there was a genocide in Cambodia? Maintaining the framework of Cambodia, the following questions are forced to the table: who owns the genocide? More broadly, who owns the memory? Is it a part of practice? Who remembers?
Where in the world is it remembered? Is it learned about and taught in schools? And does it matter who remembers?

All of these questions comprise the first major component of this research endeavor – examining the different arguments surrounding who remembers different genocides. Within this component, there are four dominant theories that will be detailed in the following sub-sections of the literature review: 1) Western Tradition Theory/Power Politics & Self-Survival Theory; 2) Alliance Theories; 3) Cultural Propensity Theory; and 4) Impact of Religion.

**Western tradition, power politics and self-survival theory**

It is often argued that the geopolitical significance of the state in which a genocide takes place is cause for remembering – or not (Harris, 2008; Huang & Ding, 2006). Questions surrounding the importance of the state and who the state is connected with in the global theatre arise (Mudambi & Swift, 2011; Nye, 2008). Scholars have corroborated that different international agendas and relationships result in different manifestations of recognizing and remembering the genocides (Jinks, 2014; Rotberg & Weiss, 1996). In short, it is important to understand that states operate within an international system dictated by norms and that Western tradition, arguably, sets the agenda for many of these norms (Power, 2013).

There are several ways in which international agendas are set: lobbying, conflict and crises scenarios, international organizations and networks, and from the hegemon (Stone, 2001). For the purpose of this paper the latter is critical: international norms are set by the current hegemon. The United States maintains this power position in the current global climate. Consequently, the United States has the power to set agendas and norms at the international level for the foreseeable future. It is for this reason that the theory is aptly labeled “western tradition,”
especially considering that the world’s hegemon has been a western country since the coining of the word genocide (Hurrell, 2006; Kwon, 2012; Vezirgiannidou, 2013).

Along with agenda setting, power politics and self-survival play integral roles. If we assume that states are rational actors, we also assume that the state’s primary goal is self-survival (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983). This theory postulates that all states have a certain international reputation or standing. In other words, weak and strong states exist (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004). In this particular framework, weak states have more to gain from aligning with (and essentially following) powerful states. There may be added benefits in terms of cultural ties, cross-border trade, increased foreign aid, etc. (Nikolaeva & Bicho, 2011; Tomz, 2012). The opposite, however, is also true. Weak states have more to lose by not siding with powerful states and they may be stripped of the added benefits more quickly. In this way, pertaining to genocide, power politics and self-survival augments the power that the hegemon has in terms of dictating who will remember.

Specifically, as it relates to genocide, it appears as though the world operates in accordance to the Western trend and in alignment with the power-politics schemata, which is often set by the United States’ agenda. Despite having the means to positively interject in many of these conflicts, the United States has taken a “passive” back-seat role during various genocides (Power, 2013). As a result of this passive behavior, a global norm is (either directly or indirectly) set. In other words, by combining signaling theory with western tradition theory, literature suggests that in order to understand who will remember a genocide, an indicator may be whether or not the United States has officially recognized the genocide (Connelly & Certo, 2011; Fang & Stone, 2012). From an international perspective, and one embodied by the United States throughout these conflicts, it is important to consider that hierarchically, self-interest
usually upstages humanitarian crises (Power, 2013). That said, it is argued that if the West, or the United States, does not engage with the genocide in question, it is likely to be left in the dust as the world will follow that same path.

Alliance theory

On the other hand, the question of geopolitical relevance also comes into play with regard to contemporary politics and the role of allies. The previous section discussed the importance of the hegemon and power politics, but this section explores the importance of allies and country relationships that may not stem from power but from historical ties or geographic proximity, for example (Dacin, Oliver, & Roy, 2007; Li, Eden, Hitt, & Ireland, 2008). If we assume that the world is in a state of anarchy and the goal, again, is survival, states must primarily look out for themselves. One way of doing this is through the creation of alliances. Alliances are either formal or informal bonds and agreements countries make with one another (Marshall, 2015). Although alliances can be broken it is important to understand that in the realm of international relations, many alliances are rooted in history and have deep bonds.

Depending on the type and strength of the alliance, it has the ability to play a big role in the recognition and remembrance of a genocide. If an alliance is strong between two countries, and one country adamantly denies a genocide, there is a high probability that its strongest allies will follow suit and also choose to refuse the recognition of the genocide (Harris, 2008; Thompson, 2007). On the other hand, if an alliance is strong and a country is deeply impacted by genocide and it is in the forefront of discussion and memory, its ally may be motivated to remember. Unlike straight power politics where states can feel coerced into either remembering
or forgetting, alliances can be constructed out of choice, which may be more impactful from a collective memory perspective (Tina Dacin, Oliver, & Roy, 2007).

If we apply alliance theories to the study of genocide, Israel and the United States serve as a useful anecdote to support the logic. Both states refrain from recognizing the Armenian Genocide of 1915 as it would infringe on pre-established relations with Turkey, which is widely viewed as an adverse security implication (Harris, 2008). As such, genocidal recognition is indirectly sidelined when nations are faced with having to maintain political and economic alliances (Zarifian, 2013).

**Cultural propensity theory**

Finally, certain literature also suggests that, building off of the geopolitical framework, the cultural propensity of a region makes it more or less likely to recognize a genocide (Burnett, 2004; Kiernan, 2007). In other words, how close are two (or more) countries or regions to each other? Are there shared customs across borders? Do the two nations share a common history or pastime? Is there a common enemy and history of joining forces that connects the two places? Is there a shared language? Do the two places share contemporary cultural preferences such as music, movies and artists? Are there high levels of travel, tourism, and migration between the two places?

These features account for the cultural propensity or cultural distance across two places. Cultural propensity is important because it unites two or more nations together. It is suggested that the smaller the cultural distance between two places, the more likely it is that the two nations would join together or take interest and concern in the happenings of the other nation (Bailey & Li, 2015; Stohl, 2004). As it relates to genocide, then, it would be more likely for a country to
recognize and remember a genocide that occurred in a country with which it shares a small cultural distance. That is not to say that this is the only determining factor and that if the cultural distance is large a genocide won’t be remembered, but rather that it participates in the remembrance process through shared history and collective identity.

Take the case of the Rwandan Genocide, for example: regions (the United States or Europe) that support women’s rights and empowerment are more likely to recognize and remember what happened, whereas the Middle East as a region is not as concerned with calling attention to these atrocities (Ingelaere, 2009; Melvern, 2001; Thompson, 2007). On the topic of cultural propensity, on the other hand, religion can unify people across large geographic distances. As such, the following section of the literature review will give specific attention to the concept of religion as it relates to genocide remembrance.

Impact of religion

Although the topic of religion, in its entirety, is outside the scope of this paper, the topic cannot be ignored. Religion, although not universal, is global in that it does not stop at state boundaries (Bartov & Mack, 2001; Herbert, 2003). In a sense, religion is similar to nationalism in that people pledge allegiance and support of a set of ideals and an institution (Merton, 1972; Sells, 1996).

Religion has the power to unite individuals, and also the power to draw deep divides. As a result, when a genocide is targeting a specific religion, notably one of the top twelve, it is likely to resonate with a larger audience and possibly be a factor in a society either remembering (or choosing not to) depending on where they align (Wolfgang, 2007).
HOW WE REMEMBER?

Branching off the question of who remembers stems the second question: how or why do we remember? In other words, what tangible vehicles are set in place at the individual level that influence the memory of an atrocity. Although there are many ways in which memories are triggered on the individual level (such as: story telling, personal narratives, traveling, family history, etc.) two outlets will be analyzed for the purpose of this research: media and sites. The following will be a discussion of how each outlet impacts memory.

Media

Popular media is a reason that many attribute to the remembrance of certain genocides over others. For example, if prompted, could you name a Hollywood film based on the Holocaust? The list is endless. On the contrary, could you name one that is based off the Armenian Genocide? Probably not. An individual can only know what is presented to them. Popular media has, in a sense, become a source of news for the younger generations (Fiske, 1994). Whatever the media chooses to present is often considered to be of high importance to the masses with access and as a result, becomes colloquialized and mainstreamed (Fiske, 1994).

For an individual living in the United States, thousands of miles away from a genocidal conflict, if it is presented to him/her through the lens of personal media then the events become more difficult to dissociate. For example, an individual skimming the newspaper is likely to be less impacted than an individual that watches a film in the comfort of their own home because they have the ability to be transported to the realm of the film, whereas the person reading the news may sympathize, however, would likely not react as the circumstances are too real. A film can be reconstructed in memory as it is partially imagined and constructed in the first place –
real-time events cannot be altered. The complexity of a film allows an individual to impose oneself within the storyline.

From an alternate lens, it is also important to note that the media is curated to align with, and serve, societal structures and institutions in place (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). There are always relationships and “mutual interests” behind the scenes that control the media and the news (Herman & Chomsky, 2010). Media is a powerful tool in that it can often alert the world to an event, however, the mark is often missed and audiences walk away with an incomplete understanding of the actual conflict in question (Campbell, 2004; Melvern, 2001).

There is also a space in the literature that is concerned with the aesthetics of genocide in popular media. The portrayal of the genocide by the media dictates the societal response. For example, take the classic case of using a grotesque or shocking image with the intention of evoking sympathy and pity for the individual as a means of generating the mass response sought by the media (Rotberg & Weiss, 1996; Thompson, 2007). Morality is scripted by the media outlet and individuals lose sight of the systemic problems in light of the more immediate consequences portrayed through the image.

Finally, there is at a basic level a concern with the ability of the society to have access to the means to record these extraordinary events. For example, access to cameras and film. It is important to consider that without these means, it’s difficult for the message to be spread in the first place.

Sites

Along with media, the other way in which we remember genocides and atrocities is through sites (please refer to footnote in the Methodology chapter for a working definition of sites). Sites are
important because they allow people and communities to interact with the genocide in a personal way, whether they had been directly impacted by the genocide or not. Sites possess a power to shape “collective values and social understandings” (Peterson, 1996). The purpose of this research is to understand how different types of sites impact the way that we remember. For example, sites that are aimed at education and are thousands of miles away from where the atrocity happened are usually more reliant on traditional memory. But what impact does this have on the audience? Alternatively, sites that rely on art and interpretation could have a different impact. Although the curatorial strategy behind these different decisions falls outside the scope of this research, it is the outcomes of these strategies that this research centers on. The fieldwork portion of this research endeavor aims to flesh out the different types of sites and analyze the impacts that they have on individuals that visit them.

From a literature standpoint, however, it is also important to understand the use of symbols. Sites are often the first place where people learn and interact with atrocities and most, if not all, sites rely on different types of symbols and symbolic representations (Luke, 2002). Symbols are objects or sources through which meaning is attached to the cataclysm of war and atrocity (Edkins, 2003). Symbols represent ways in which individuals and societies put meaning into different events and to conceptualize trauma that has happened. Through these symbols sites become a source of mourning or a trigger for memory (Winter, 2014). Further, symbols contribute to the process of healing and preserving memory through “catharsis” (Winter, 2014). When we see symbols we have an associated memory with them. For example, when a religious person sees a cross they may think of God or their faith in general. In some cases, symbols can evoke painful memories or feeling, especially when dealing with genocide. But through this
memory and process of dealing with associated feelings, we are better suited to move forward (Winter, 2014).

Additionally, it is important to understand who creates the site. As previously mentioned sites represent the crossroad of context, memory, and political landscapes. Sites and symbols are created by collective memories and meanings associated with millions of people who have experienced an atrocity (Cheng, 2010). The narrative is often created by the state and with the intention of disseminating the message to a broader audience (Edkins, 2003). What survivors witnessed may not necessarily be within the site directly and symbols may be used instead. At the same time, these symbols can be altered and undermined by external conflicts or happenings, making symbols even more delicate.

It is critical to remember that symbols and sites are created and constructed, and as such they can be deconstructed. Regardless of how much meaning individuals and states try to put into sites and symbols, the question begs itself: can the atrocity ever be fully captured and remembered by a symbol or a site?

**HOW DO THEY REMEMBER?**

Scholars suggest that response of the local community to a genocide also plays a significant role in how the rest of the world perceives or remembers the genocide. It is important to note how difficult it is for memorialization and healing to take place after a genocide happens (Edkins, 2003). It is equally as important to understand how time and political landscapes shape the narrative around genocide and impact the local community response.

With all these things in mind, the local community faces difficult conscious and subconscious choices. Does the local community seek to educate others (anyone that was not
directly impacted/involved by the events) on the genocide? Does the local community choose to remember? Does the local community elect to forget? Is the history and memory of the genocide kept vivid in collective identity? Are there monuments? Memorials? Have there been reparations? In other words, how has the local community responded to the genocide post-facto?

There are three main features concerning how a local community chooses to remember (or not): 1) the act of forgetting; 2) remembering, either traditionally or in the modern sense; and 3) collective vs. divided identity.

**Forgetting**

There is a growing discussion on the power of forgetting (if even possible) or moving forward and achieving cooperation within a society (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). Although the discussion surrounding the efficacy of forgetting falls outside the scope of this particular research, the concept of forgetting as it relates to how the external world views a genocide is of the utmost importance. Literature highlights the importance of community remembrance as an antecedent for global remembrance (Igreja, 2008). In other words, if the community itself elects to forget the genocide, it becomes increasingly more difficult for the global population to then remember it.

Why would a particular society elect to forget? “Away with the monuments,” cried Nietzsche. Maybe the society feels that the quickest way to move on is to ignore the past. Perhaps the victims would rather forget that be forced to routinely come face to face with the dark past (Young, 1994). In some cases, the damage may be so grave that people mentally and physically cannot process remembering.

Whatever the justification for either actively or passively forgetting, within the context of this paper, it is important to consider the two levels of outcomes that stem from forgetting (or not...
remembering). On the one hand, it automatically implies that people within the local community will remember less. Although this may seem obvious, it is critical to point out, as memory is an active process. By extension this assumes that the global community will have a lower probability of remembering the atrocity. If the global community sees that the victims are actively electing to forget, they may, out of respect or simply not knowing how to respond, also forget. Further, if the global community was not directly impacted by the atrocity, it is less likely that they will choose to actively remember it if the victims are not pushing remembrance (Young, 1994).

American philosopher George Santayana warned that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it. He suggested that human cognition, cultural practices, and social institutions come together and shape local environments. He pointed out that if we willingly and actively choose to forget, we are bound to repeat the past. In some ways then, memory serves to shape institutions and set rules. In other words, if we remember genocide and remember it as a damaging atrocity, we establish a rule (formally or informally) to bar it from happening again. On the other hand, if we choose to forget, we do not set that rule and allow for the possibility of genocide to reoccur.

Furthermore, according to Edkins, “memorialization often constitutes a form of forgetting.” Memorials create a certain narrative around an atrocity and at the same time build a box around the atrocity. It gives the atrocity a physical space or a particular day in which it should be remembered. By creating this space, however, it allows the community around it to only face this memory when in that space or on that certain day. Either advertently or inadvertently, it allows the community to forget.
*Remembering: tradition v. modern*

Other scholars bring up the importance of the difference between memorialization and remembrance (Dunne & Kroslak, 2000). Although these terms may seem synonymous, the nuanced difference plays a large role in how the world frames the genocide long-term. Remembrance is a term that implies that a society has chosen to move on with the intention of repairing the society through reparations without forgetting the tragedy. Trials and legal ramification are often products of a community that has selected the path of “remembrance” (Ingelaere, 2009; Stefansson, 2010). Memorialization, on the other hand, is when a society is personified by the tragedy that took place and the memory hinders recovery (Ibreck, 2010; Igreja, 2008). Depending on the path the community chooses different global responses manifest. Building upon the differences in memorialization and remembrance comes another important dichotomy: traditional v. modern remembrance.

*Traditional.* Traditional remembering is the recording of facts and figures, preserving of photographs and documentation. It survives through informational and historical museums and educational venues that attempt to retell the memory (or in this case the atrocity) exactly as it happened. A critical assumption of traditional memory is that humans are capable of remembering an event exactly as it happened and that there can be exact commonality across memories of different people (Neisser & Winograd, 1988). In other words, if two people experienced the exact same event together, they may have experienced it differently, but they could factually retell the course of events in the same way.

Within traditional forms of memory “there is no alternative to starting with the palpable shock of catastrophe of war” (Winter, 2014). Atrocity and war may be less difficult to understand logically from an intellectual or philosophical standpoint if we use the lens provided
by traditional memory. It may be counterintuitive, but scholarship suggests that through the classic and romantic lens of war, the path to moving forward and beyond the atrocity may be shorter.

Bearing this in mind, traditional memory lends itself more readily to remembrance. It focuses on trials and legal ramifications. It finds favor with historical accounts and museums that are based in information and facts. There is a power in preserving the past exactly as it happened, and not necessarily how we felt or experienced it (Ottem, Lian, & Karlsen, 2007). Traditional memory has the benefit of exactness and is clear to digest – making it accessible for a larger audience. Although the facts and history may be painful, it asks individuals to absorb information directly, rather than analyze it or synthesize it. Further, it allows for healing through bereavement and the medication of being direct.

At the same time, however, traditional memory also comes with the possibility of the memory getting left behind. Traditional memory presents facts and “objective” recordings of events and details (McGann, 2014; Ottem et al., 2007). Because it so clear-cut and doesn’t force analysis or synthesis it doesn’t require as much constant interaction and processing of and with memories, meaning that they can be left behind.

Modern. The alternative to traditional memory is modern memory. Modern memory is rooted in insights and feelings. Rather than strict facts and detailed records, modern memory places more of an emphasis on how an individual internalized an event (Vernon, 1986). Unlike traditional memory that assumes a commonality amongst shared experiences, modern memory asserts that even if two individuals shared the exact same experience, it is unlikely that they would each piece together the same story. There is an emphasis on context and attention to detail. Similar to traditional memory, modern memory also relies on photographs and
documentation items, but more as a vehicle to gauge a particular individual’s response to these items.

Modern memory, then, is more individualized. It lends itself to memorialization and different interpretations of memory. Modern memory has a better chance at evoking human compassion and sympathy, as it rests on the idea of humanity and individualism (Erdelyi, 2010; Vernon, 1986). In doing so, however, it also asks more of the audience it speaks to. Unlike traditional memory that may be painful but clear, modern memory often forces the audience to engage and interpret. It asks the audience to make connections and assess exactly what the memory means on a personal level.

This paper does not suggest that one type of memory, traditional or modern, is superior to another, but seeks to draw out the differences of each and how they manifest into different vehicles of collective remembrance.

Collective v. Divided

The final critical aspect that relates to how a local community responds to genocide rests in the categorization of collective v. divided. Are the perpetrators (most commonly the state) and the victims operating back in the same community together? Do both sides have a common goal of never allowing an atrocity to happen again? Do both sides agree on the best mechanisms to achieve this goal? Are the victims so hurt that they are unwilling to be in the same space as the perpetrators? Do both sides have a consideration, or not, for a global response? If so, are both parties on the same page? What role is the state playing in the construction of the post-genocidal narrative?
Answers to all of these questions are critical in understanding if a community is collective or divided post-genocide. It is important to note, however, that a collective community does not mean that both sides have moved past the event and are living in perfect harmony, but rather that both sides have the same objectives and are willing to, at least, put that objective before an emotive response.

As it relates to memory a collective v. a divided society has very different outcomes. If a society is divided it may be less likely that external actors 1) want to get involved and 2) know how to get involved. Sometimes if tensions are so deep, outsider involvement can make the situation worse (Merton, 1972). As it relates to memory, however, this is likely to mean that the chance of remembrance is lower in divided communities. For collective communities, however, global remembrance and recognition may be higher. If the outside world sees that post-genocide both parties are devoted to recognizing the genocide and effectively preventing it from happening again, people may be more willing to join in remembrance efforts. People are generally more willing to help a team that works together before they are willing to help a team that is staunchly divided and combative.

A second consideration in terms of collective v. divided revolves around the role of the state. The state helps frame the global and local narrative and establishes sites and symbols of the genocide. This is a critical and sensitive role that requires a balance. If the trauma has been so detrimental to the victims, they may view the state as their tormentors perpetually and may not find comfort or security in working with the state. Survivor testimonies and individual responses may challenge state power and the narrative that the state is putting forward. When this happens, the chance that the global community will absorb and remember the genocide lessens because visitors and individuals sense the different agendas.
On the other hand, if the state strikes the balance effectively, there is a better chance of global memory and community growth. In these cases, the state must be aware that “every monument, at every turn, is endlessly scrutinized, explicated and debated” (Young, 1994). If the state accepts this and attempts to absorb the victims into a community together, memory has a better chance at surviving.
In order to understand why we do not remember the Cambodian genocide, we must first consider the following questions. What is the point of remembering a genocide? And, what do we in fact remember? The literature regarding genocide remembrance is inundated with the notion that if we do not remember, we are able to deny the events and by extension, genocide prevention suffers (Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Dunne & Kroslak, 2000; Power, 2013; Staub, 1999). What about forgetting? What role does this play with respect to genocide? Should we remember? What does it mean to remember? The concepts of memory and remembrance are essential to the overarching conversation of genocide. How is genocide remembered, if it is remembered at all? Who is remembering? These questions raise important points regarding the role of memory and visibility in the aftermath of a mass atrocity such as genocide. This project seeks to explore the different practices for approaching collective memory and to illustrate the different outlets that exist for encouraging remembrance. In short, for genocides that we aren’t directly connected to, how do we interact with and confront them in a way that promotes prevention?

In order to explore collective memory approaches, a second set of functional questions arises relating to the remembrance of genocide. What are different practices for collective memory? Are some more effective than others? Do certain media (museums, memorial sites, educational outlets, experiential venues, etc.) lend themselves to a particular objective? What is the purpose of these places? Are there goals of remembrance? If there are goals, are they met? And even if they are, is there more that can be done? Who do these spaces “serve:” the perpetrator, the victim or both? Are these places representations of genocide or the physical
places in which genocide was committed? In short, what is the value of a museum, memorial site or vehicle of remembrance?

For the purpose of this research, remembrance is the memory or recollection of an event, and in this case of genocide. Through this research, remembrance is considered to be interpersonal rather than intrapersonal. Remembrance is a personal sentiment based on one’s experiential learning and background. Although it might seem apparent, it is important to highlight the fact that by default remembrance implies not forgetting. In the context of this research, it is critical to iterate that remembrance implies not forgetting because sometimes forgetting can be used as a tool to propel a society passed a genocide, whereas this research will emphasize remembering as a means to move forward. This paper admittedly takes a normative stance against the idea of forgetting as a mechanism for prevention. Finally, it is imperative to address the fact that remembrance is closely linked to commemoration in that to remember in the context of genocide is also a means of continuing to honor the lives lost during the atrocity.

Within this research endeavor, there are two key methodological components: the use of site ¹ fieldwork to understand different mechanisms of collective remembrance, and the use of Cambodia as a historical and functional example of a genocide that is not remembered by society. The study of the sites will be used as a vehicle for the exploration into the concept of remembrance, which will be incorporated into the more specific discussion surrounding how we remember or do not remember the Cambodian genocide.

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¹ For the purpose of this research, a “site” can be considered to be anything along the spectrum of being a museum, a curatorial exhibit, a memorial, a space of trauma, a documentation center, etc. Although each space occupies a different identity and mission, these spaces are being compiled into a single category because they operate and embody more than one role and goal.
The first component is fieldwork conducted at an array of sites to assess whether different spaces relating to genocide remembrance achieve their desired output goals, and if these goals are sufficient in adequately remembering genocide. In order to do this, the following sites will be examined: Walking through a temporary exhibit featured at the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Topography of Terror and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Each site will have a dedicated chapter within this research endeavor. The chapter will be divided into three subsections (site objectives, audience interaction and personal impact) aimed at unveiling a different perspective of the site through different means of research. The following descriptions detail the structure of each chapter.

The site objectives subsection will be a synopsis of information gathered directly from the site itself by the researcher as a means to provide the site’s perspective. The primary objective features about the sites that will be used are the mission statement, if available, the site’s goals, and purpose. In order to obtain this information, the researcher will gather data and quotes directly from the respective site’s information pages and mission statements, provided that they are available. The goals and objectives of each of the sites will be recorded. It is important to consider how accessible and clear these goals and objectives are to the public. For example, are the goals clearly outlined on the site’s website, or does the audience need to search for them? This is important in terms of the site’s effectiveness because if an individual enters the space cognizant of the objectives, perhaps they would be more likely to be met. It is critical to point out that each site will be assessed based on its own goal criteria (in terms of does the site meet the goals or not, rather than normatively assessing the actual goals) as opposed to attempting to subjectively measure the different goals against each other. In addition to the goals of the site, the researcher will also outline the descriptive information of the sites themselves.
This will feature information regarding the physical location and history of the site, and exhibits featured within the site. This information will be gathered in order to provide the reader with a brief history and understanding of the time and space in which these sites were built.

The second subsection is dedicated to the audience interaction with the site as a means to provide an additional lens to contextualize the site. The purpose of this section is to flesh out not only how the site intends its visitors to interact within the space but also for the researcher to provide an analysis of how these visitors actually interact. The following represents questions to be answered by the researcher relating to the sites intended visitor interactions. The questions will include but are not limited to: who is the target audience? What age demographic is suggested for site visit? What language/how many languages are the objectives written in? Are the site objectives broad, specific or a mix of both (simple categorical variable)? Is there a price of admission for the site? Is there a section of the site for purchases? How many days of the week is the site open? Is the site accessible via public transportation? Is the site handicap accessible? How many visitors does the site attract in a fiscal year?

The final subsection, personal impact, will take place after the site objectives and audience interaction have been analyzed. A visit will be paid to each of the sites in order to assess whether the goals are effectively met or not by the researcher. It is important to note that the fieldwork included in this thesis is intended to be as objective as possible. Prior to walking through a given site the researcher will review the objectives of the site to keep them in the forefront of her thought. While walking through the sites the researcher will be focusing on the site objectives as the primary motive, as opposed to learning about each specific genocide presented in a site.
Immediately upon leaving the site the researcher will isolate herself for a minimum of one hour. In this time the researcher will refer to the objectives of the sites she left. During this period the researcher will record her visceral reactions to whether or not the site met its objectives. These notes will be kept in a notebook that will be available upon request. The following is a sample of the type of notes the researcher is recording relating to her impacts: first feeling entering and exiting the museum, too much information or too little, was there a guide, were there sections compartmentalized to frame the audience’s mind in a particular way, who was given more attention (perpetrators or victims), who was the target audience (Age group? Child friendly?), what was the demographic of other visitors and were they paying attention or simply walking through?

The aforementioned sites are briefly described and justified for this research project below. The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston hosted a traveling exhibit by Walid Raad, an internationally recognized Lebanese artist, titled *Walkthrough*. This exhibit will serve as the core of the first component of the research. Despite the fact that the *Walkthrough* is void of the mention of genocide, the exhibit, according to the ICA website, ultimately aims to “weave elements of past, present, and future to build narratives that question the construction of history, memory and geopolitical relationships” (ICA, 2016). From the researcher’s perspective, the exhibit forces the audience to question how we remember and what we believe to be the truth. The exhibit begins to scratch the surface regarding remembrance through art, which is the key when confronting museum efficacy.

The Topography of Terror in Berlin is a Nazi Forced Labor Documentation Center and is one of the “most frequently visited places of remembrance in the capital city,” according to its website. As such, the Topography of Terror has been selected by the researcher as a space that is
dedicated to shedding light on the persecutors of a genocide. Additionally, the Topography of Terror is located on the former Gestapo grounds. This makes the Topography of Terror not only the site of a documentation center but also the physical location in which these genocidal acts were conceived and committed.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C. was selected as the memorial museum, which is a space for and committed to commemorating the victims of the Holocaust. The USHMM is approximately 6,706 km away from the Topography of Terror and the places in which the Holocaust occurred. The geographic distance from the genocide is important to consider in this study. Additionally, as the name implies, the museum resulted from a Presidential Commission appointed by President Jimmy Carter and therefore, it is considered to be the nationally (from a United States’ perspective) recognized museum dedicated to the Holocaust, as opposed to the various state or city operated museums or memorials.

Finally, it is important to note that due to the vast content relating to the pertinent literature on museums, the decisions and outcomes of the artistic curatorial process fall outside the scope of this research. In other words the researcher is not going to comment on the arrangement of photographs or critique the overall aesthetic of the museum design.

All of the aforementioned portions of the research design account for the fieldwork component of the overall project. It is worth reiterating that the fieldwork is intended to provide the backbone and theoretical framing of functional remembrance that is intended to be applied to the following portion of the methodology: the Cambodian case study.

The Cambodian case study is placed within this research to better understand the ways that the different approaches for remembrance can be utilized and work in junction with one another. In other words, what can be learned from this site fieldwork and be applied specifically
to Cambodia (and then by extension other genocides)? The second portion of this research aims to tease out different approaches for collective remembrance and assess the extent to which they are (or are not) in existence in Cambodia. As it stands Cambodia utilizes three different approaches towards genocide remembrance and prevention: 1) local community response; 2) tribunals; and 3) creation of documentation and genocide prevention center. These three approaches will be highlighted and analyzed to better understand their roles within Cambodia.

This component of the paper consists of two research features. The first feature will analyze the Cambodian genocide as the central evidentiary piece focusing on the three different dialogues (approaches) centered on genocide remembrance. This particular genocide is considered by many to be a contested genocide, familiar to few, however, having lived in Cambodia for three years growing up and having a personal connection to the culture and people, the genocide has been visible to me. It follows logically then why I, as a researcher and a person, question how others could either be unaware or unconcerned with such a devastating event. A brief historical analysis of the Cambodian genocide will be included (see Appendix J) with special attention given to the events of the genocide itself as well as society’s recovery and acknowledgement of the genocide. This will include a discussion on both the Cambodian government and Cambodian people’s responses and remembrance of the genocide.

The second feature is a conversation with a survivor, expert, and spokesperson of the Cambodian genocide that aims to highlight the local perspective in the project. Youk Chhang is a distinguished member of the Cambodian community and the Executive Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), which aims to preserve “Cambodia's historical memory and help to bring justice for victims of Khmer Rouge atrocities” (Shao, 2010). Since the non-profit’s founding in 1995, “the group has collected more than one million documents,
interviewed thousands of former Khmer Rouge cadres and identified or mapped 20,000 mass graves and nearly 200 prisons” (Shao, 2010). This conversation will attempt to gauge the following: local perspectives on the genocide, local responses to the genocide, government perspectives and responses to the genocide, expert opinion on future steps that could be taken to move forward from the past, expert opinions and responses to the space and dialogue created within this project for the research specifically as it relates to the Cambodian genocide.

The project is structured as follows: introduction and motivation for the topic, a literature review aimed at unveiling patterns of visibility and invisibility on the world stage and the role, fieldwork conducted at the pre-selected sites, an assessment of the approaches utilized within Cambodia and a conversation with Youk Chhang, all concluding with a discussion and analysis section that aims to dissect the different features at play that promote genocide remembrance.
PART ONE: SITE FIELDWORK
SITE OBJECTIVES

The West Gallery of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, MA featured Walkthrough a Walid Raad exhibit featuring two works of the artist, The Atlas Group (1989-2004) and Scratching on things I could disavow (2007-ongoing) in Spring 2016. According to Eva Respini, the Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the ICA, these pieces are usually separated but at the ICA they were presented in a single room to display Raad’s work overtime. It is important to note that for the purpose of this research, the researcher conducted fieldwork by focusing solely on The Atlas Group portion of the exhibit despite the curator’s intention for the audience to experience the two pieces in flow together.

For contextual purposes, the artist Walid Raad was born in Lebanon and his art is influenced by his upbringing in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war. Raad was one of many Lebanese to flee the country to the United States in the early 1980s. He attended the Rochester Institute of Technology where he studied photography and Middle Eastern studies before later getting his PhD at the University of Rochester, all the while maintaining his interest in Lebanon.

When a visitor first enters the Walkthrough exhibit they are invited to read an introductory plaque (See Appendix A) outlining the different two aforementioned works in the gallery. The Atlas Group, according to this plaque, is “a fictional organization created by Raad to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon, specifically the Lebanese Civil War (1975-91).” There is a coinciding website dedicated to the fictional one-man organization.2

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2The website for the fictional organization, The Atlas Group:
http://www.theatlasgroup.org/index.html
For clarity purposes, the researcher will refer to three layers of each art piece: the image, the accompanying informational document and the oral storytelling by Raad. The grouping of the three layers will be referred to as an “art piece.” The artist intentionally produced an array of fictionalized mixed media (photographs, videos, notebooks, lectures, etc.) relating to real events that took place in and around Lebanon, however, none of The Atlas Group art pieces are “fundamentally faked.” In other words, the foundation of the images is real as the photographs were taken by Raad himself and clippings were taken from real newspapers or archives. That said, the art pieces have been edited by The Atlas Group in some capacity, whether the image was physically doctored or through the fabrication of a story provided by Raad or the accompanying informational document.

To help paint the picture, as an example, next to each set of images, which may or may not be physically altered themselves, there is an additional document, similar to a description that would accompany a painting in an art museum, that outlines information such as the document title, date, and who donated the item (See Appendix B). Each of these accompanying informational documents also includes a summary that tells a story about the individual or organization that donated the main images (Raad refers to these as “documents”), which may or may not be true. This is one way that the artist created a fictitious layer to the real foundational mixed media displayed in the exhibit.

A third layer to Raad’s art, an integral aspect of the exhibit, is a 55-minute presentation or “walkthrough” of the exhibit told by Raad himself. According to Respini, “The artist uses photography, sculpture, performance, and collage to probe the construction of history – but the heart of his work is storytelling.” The ICA hosted Raad on multiple occasions for the public to experience the artist’s presentation firsthand. In the event that a visitor was unable to acquire
tickets to the live presentation, the ICA provided complimentary headsets with a recording of the presentation. Additionally, visitor groups had the opportunity to have a guided tour of the exhibit. This tour was meant to mirror the probing nature of Raad’s presentation for the visitors.

In conjunction, the introductory plaque and the *Walkthrough* information made available on the ICA official website were used as the working “mission statement” for the exhibit. As a synopsis of the goals, the exhibit “weaves elements of the past, present, future to build narratives that question the construction of history, memory and geopolitical relationships.” Raad “investigates the distinctions between fact and fiction and the ways we represent, remember and make sense of history.” The exhibit aims to provide an “alternate vision of how we might understand and remember history.” Finally, it is important to note that the exhibit description alludes to the fact that the audience does not need to know any prior information about the conflict in question in order to experience the exhibit. This is possible, Respini says, because “at its heart [the exhibit] is coming to terms with the limits of directly capturing history through images or words.” As such, the relationship between image, text, and performance is essential to understanding how these documents occupy the public domain (Respini, 2016).

AUDIENCE INTERACTION

**General Information on the Institute of Contemporary Art and The Atlas Group**

The Institute of Contemporary Art was initially founded in 1936 as the Boston Museum of Modern Art, the sister program to New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). In 1948, the museum was renamed as the ICA as its reputation became identifying and promoting new artists. The ICA building opened in 2006 and is located on the Boston waterfront.
The ICA is open every day except for Mondays and specified holidays. There is a $15 entrance fee for the general public and a $10 entrance fee for students. The site is accessible via public transportation, however, it is not near other Boston tourist attractions. There is not a designated parking garage at the museum and there is limited street parking in the vicinity. The site is wheelchair accessible and provides assistive listening devices and sign language interpretation upon request. The ICA does have a café and a section for purchases, however it is not widely advertised.

*The Atlas Group* exhibit does not have a specified target audience or corresponding age demographic. The ICA itself, however, notoriously hosts programs for families and teens. For example, the ICA offers guided and self-guided tours for adults, university students, and school/community groups. The exhibit itself was written in English. That said, there were pieces of art that featured Arabic script. It appears as though the site objectives are broad as the goal is ultimately for the audience to walk away questioning how history is portrayed and what the “truth” is – in this sense, the audience does not walk away with the same interpretation of the exhibit. The exhibit goals are abstract in nature.

*How Visitors Interact? Art Critics Perspectives*

To provide insight into the visitor interaction perspective of *Walkthrough*, the researcher compiled comments from two articles critiquing the exhibit. The purpose of including this research is not to offer a synthesis of these particular art critics but rather to use them as a way to illustrate the difficulties that an audience attempting to interact with the exhibit encounters.

The first art critic, Sebastian Smee, comments on Raad’s ability to capitalize on “American naïveté” in his piece with his ability to “dazzle with artful fictions.” He states that
this is one of the more dangerous forces in the world because we are “ready to believe,” pointing out that the American gullibility is unparalleled. “How to describe it? I have to tell you, I’m so nervous about getting this right I’ve had to walk around the house a few times. The last sentence may or may not be true, I mention it only because Raad begins his talk with a similar disclaimer” (Smee, 2016). Smee brings to light how you are constantly on your toes as the visitor in the exhibit. You are questioning everything that you come into contact with, what you see and what you hear. Your brain is racing, trying to piece together the truth. Overall, Smee’s article alludes to the fact that visitors appear to merely scratch the surface with respect to the goals laid out by the ICA because visitors are not willing to look deeper into the purpose of the exhibit as they are too busy questioning the authenticity of each individual art piece.

The second article by Alan Gilbert consisted of a general Q & A series with Raad on The Atlas Group portion of the exhibit. Raad claims that in his performance piece (the storytelling layer) he states that the organization consists of documents (the art pieces) that he produces himself and that he attributes these to imaginary people. “But even this direct statement fails, in many instances, to make evident for the readers or an audience the imaginary nature of the Atlas group and its documents” (Gilbert, 2016). In the same vain as the critique of Smee, Gilbert also zeroes in on the fact that you need to be a certain kind of audience member and be willing to labor through the exhibit in order to understand the complexity of the questions posed by the artist.

How the ICA intends for Visitors to Interact? The Gallery Perspective

In order to gauge the perspective of how the ICA intends for visitors to interact with The Atlas Group exhibit, the researcher attended a “Gallery Talk” program hosted by the ICA. The talk
was led by Carrie Lambert-Beatty, an art historian and professor at Harvard University who specializes in parafiction or “fiction that is presented as fact in art.” Unlike the exhibit tour examined in the personal impact section of this chapter, the gallery talk was organized in a straightforward fashion whereby the speaker shared the “behind the scenes” intentions of the exhibit rather than encouraging the visitor audience to reach conclusions on their own. The following is a synopsis of three key points taken from *The Atlas Group* segment of the gallery talk:

Lambert-Beatty began her talk by highlighting the carefully selected name of the exhibit, *Walkthrough*, which is the first key point. She said that when an individual hears the word “walkthrough” they associate it with a walkthrough rehearsal in the theatre or of a wedding when in reality the word was selected in the context of the virtual gaming community, which refers to an expert strategy guide through the game. Lambert-Beatty suggested that Raad was filling the role of the expert and strategically walking the audience through the exhibit. In a sense, Raad is the authority figure or teacher, and everyone else is meant to feel like the student.

The second key point Lambert-Beatty stated in the talk was that the exhibit is meant to offer a way to document war and trauma in a way that we do not usually in an academic setting. This format, she said, is intended to make the audience uncomfortable. The speaker noted that the exhibit is meant to encourage individuals to continue to learn in different ways -- similar to how Raad was a continuous seeker of knowledge, which she attributed to his succession of academic degrees. The speaker also said the exhibit was intended to aid in the memory process and questioned the purpose served by Raad’s photographs without context.

The last key point of the gallery talk that is critical to note is that Lambert-Beatty claimed that the artist does not agree with one side over another. She emphasized that the exhibit
showcased perspectives, *not truth*, which are different kinds of fact. This highlights the inability for the audience to distinguish the players in the events, who are the perpetrators versus the victims, which is usually apparent in sites. This fact also compliments the overarching goals of the artist as he is not trying to provoke a conversation regarding the actual historical truth, but rather a dialogue on how people interpret and view information presented in sites that are presumably dedicated to public learning and knowledge.

**PERSONAL IMPACT**

Imagine yourself walking through a museum. As museum-goers, we must consider the notion that these spaces were constructed for us to believe what was in them. Raad’s exhibit challenges this very premise through his creation of *The Atlas Group*. My initial experience with the exhibit left a lasting impression as I entered the space willing to believe without question the art that was hanging on the walls. Although I did not have the pleasure to witness Raad’s exhibit performance, a tour guide accompanied me for my first visit.

Upon entering the Walkthrough exhibit, the tour group was directed to one of the first components of the exhibit, which was a series of black and white photographs with colored dots splattered on top of the images (See Appendix C). Each dot color and size was meant to represent a different country’s bullet shrapnel found in that space. While many questions arose from the crowd regarding the ability to collect such specific data, the image did successfully paint the complicated image revealing how many actors are present, physically or not, in conflict in a tangible format. While the details and the accuracy of the art are questionable, the overarching message was received by the audience and in a way that is easier to process. For example, an alternative and perhaps more expected image to explain the actors involved could be
a collage of the flags of each nation involved. The images Raad selected place these actors within the context of the actual conflict, and attempt to illustrate actual impact, which has a greater effect on the audience members that can look past the sheer fabrication of facts. In this way, the value to this artistic point of view and manipulation of images and photographs came to light.

As we meandered through other pieces featured in the exhibit, the group came across six large portraits (See Appendix D). Each photograph portrait stood around five feet tall and most were out of focus. As the tour guide pointed out, the series was intentionally blurry in order to show that it is impossible to accurately document all killers and/or methods of killing in times of war, while simultaneously highlighting that certain documents get saved over others. This piece served as a commentary on how we document history. As Respini put it, “he [Raad] is an artist, not a journalist.” While Raad’s work directly relates to the experience of trauma, his commentary remains focused on the relationship between the image and language, memory, and lived experiences and the slippery nature of truth” (Respini, 2016). The various complicated layers to each document began to make me question the efficacy of the exhibit. Would I have reached this same conclusion without a tour guide? Is this exhibit so abstract that it forces the audience to labor through it? What do the uncertainties of the exhibit ask of the audience? Do they work? Is art or the manipulation of art (intuitively) the way forward?

The perpetrators and the victims in this exhibit are not explicitly stated. This was intentional as Lambert-Beatty stated in her gallery talk. Rather than identify the actors (perpetrator/victims), the accompanying description (refer to Appendix B) to each art piece meticulously outlines a story explaining the scenario behind the featured document. Individuals are always more likely to remember a story than the simple statement of fact. That is what this
exhibit exploits. Although fabricating a story may make it easier to remember, who is it benefitting? The artist? The audience? The Lebanese citizens? It appears as though Raad is willing to risk the spread of a falsely created Lebanese history at the expense of a somewhat controversial conversation surrounding the ways in which history is shaped through documentation. From a moral standpoint, as a researcher I could not concede this oversight. Perhaps if the entire operation and conflict was imagined, my reaction would have been different.

That said, the *Walkthrough* exhibit successfully offers an alternate method of portraying, remembering and understanding history. Raad accomplished the goal of generating a relationship between the image, text, and performance aspects of the exhibit, in fact, the exhibit would not make sense to an audience without the story telling component through the accompanying documents. Overall, the crux of the exhibit, however, would be lost if the visitor did not take the time to read the introductory plaque. Without a tour guide, or listening to the performance, the exhibit would lose all sense of purpose. Entering the exhibit space without guidance would likely cause the visitor to assess the works individually from an artistic exclusive perspective, rather than assessing them as a unit working together to generate a narrative that questions how we may understand and remember history.

On that note, it is important to disclose that my exhibit experience is what led me to explore in depth spaces that are dedicated specifically to genocide remembrance. That said, it is equally as important to consider my framing of this museum. I entered the *Walkthrough* exhibit as a member of a genocide research cluster with the intention of learning and picking apart the exhibit. As a researcher and individual that studies genocide, after my initial visit, I left the ICA
baffled at the message it had the potential to send to the audience: What is the truth? What is real? And does that matter?

Not once, after visiting the *Walkthrough* exhibit on four separate occasions, did I feel the need to conduct further research into the conflict in question. My visceral reaction was a product of my academic background, the study of genocide. Had this exhibit been centered on a genocide, would the exhibit have begged the same questions? In the genocide conversation, or at a minimum in the case of the Holocaust, experts and victims dedicate their lives and efforts to ensuring that there is a space for understanding the truth of the events and atrocities that took place in order to prevent them in the future. In a sense, Raad’s exhibit questions the necessity of this “truth” in understanding conflict.

This exhibit warns of authenticity and forced me to question the importance of commemorating and remembering. If we are always questioning the truth and what is real, how will we move forward and grow? We would live in a perpetual existential state of uncertainty. Truth is a consensus and no one enjoys uncertainty. The abstraction of conflict in Raad’s work does a disservice to the history and consequently, the future of Lebanon.

In sum, the Raad exhibit certainly forces the audience to consider many questions. My issue is, is Raad forcing the audiences to consider the *right questions*? Perhaps it’s not *how* we remember but rather *what* we walk away with that matters most.
TOPOGRAPHY OF TERROR

SITE OBJECTIVES

Before diving into the site objectives of the Topography of Terror Documentation Center, it is imperative to understand the historical significance of the site. The site is located on what used to be central institutions of the Nazi organization that encouraged and perpetuated terror and persecution between the years of 1933 and 1945. It was home to the Secret State Police Office, the Gestapo prison, the SS and the Reich Security Main Office. During this time, it is estimated that 15,000 political prisoners were held in the Gestapo prison, which was built primarily for interrogation purposes, however, it is infamously known for brutal torture methods (G. Government, 2016).

In the 1970s, the Topography of Terror site first garnered public attention after plans were announced to build a street through the historical grounds. A temporary exhibition in the late 1980s celebrating Berlin’s 750th anniversary spawned the creation of the Topography of Terror Foundation, which was made official by public and foundation law by 1995. The foundation is supported by the state of Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany (Senate, 2016). The purpose of the foundation is to “relay historical information about National Socialism and its crimes and to encourage people to actively confront this history and its aftermath since 1945” (Senate, 2016).

Although the Topography of Terror website does not have an explicitly stated mission statement, the following is a synthesis of the information offered on the site’s website that has been compiled to represent the main goals of the site. After the establishment of the Topography of Terror Foundation, the decision to build a documentation center arose after years of debate.
According to the Topography of Terror Foundation the goal was to develop “an overall concept for the terrain and a new documentation center that would do justice to the historic site’s national and international significance in the heart of the capital, while at the same time avoiding a glorification of this area as the site of the perpetrators” (G. Government, 2016). The documentation center was built to achieve the aforementioned Topography of Terror Foundation goal and is meant to function as “a memorial to the 26 million men, women and children who were subjected to forced labor by the Nazis” (Foundation, 2014).

AUDIENCE INTERACTION

General Information on the Topography of Terror

The Topography of Terror Documentation Center opened in 2010 and features three exhibition spaces that aim to achieve the site objectives. The first two exhibition spaces are permanent exhibitions: Topography of Terror: Gestapo, SS and Reich Security Main Office on Wilhelm- and Prinz-Albrecht-Straße and Berlin 1933-1945: Between Propaganda and Terror. The final exhibition is a fifteen-station site tour of the historical grounds, as the physical terrain is a key component and primary source of documentation. Additionally, there are two monuments on the grounds, one is the remains of the Gestapo prison and the other is Berlin Wall Monument.

The Topography of Terror is open to visitors daily from 10:00am to 8:00pm with the exception of December 24th, 31st and January 1st. Entrance into the site is free of charge to all visitors. The site is located in the heart of Berlin within close walking-distance proximity to other memorials and museums, such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and Checkpoint Charlie. There is no particular target audience, however, the site recommends that visitors be a minimum of 14 years old. That said, the site welcomes more than 1.5 million visitors annually of
which nearly half are foreigners. This exhibition is presented in both German and English. As an individual visitor, there are free one-hour guided tours once a week, one in German and one in English. Group tours can also be booked in advance for 70 € (or free for a student group) and they are available in eleven different languages. It is worth noting that the site personnel heavily recommend a guided tour. Although it is not mandatory, the intended interaction is through the Socratic style tour through the site. The site also offers free five-hour long workshops available in English and Hebrew. The site is wheelchair accessible. A small café and discreet shop are available to visitors. Finally, visitors have access to a library that holds some 27,000 volumes on National Socialism.

External Perspectives on Visitor Interaction

“How Visitors Interact? The Texture of Memory”

According to Young, the Topography of Terror flourishes because the site contests memory. Unlike many sites, the Topography of Terror is able to rely the space as a memory, and not simply through material items, memorials, exhibits and archives. At least prior to the building of the site, the process of deciding what to do with the space allowed the audience to engage in a dialogue between themselves and the past. Participating in this process in and of itself contested memory. “Memory can be sufficiently ambiguous and open ended so that others can inhabit the space, and imbue the forms with their own memory” (Freed, 1995). For these reasons, this is why individuals in the United States are removed from the Topography of Terror, as there is an indisputable distance between themselves and the place of destruction (Young, 1994).

This pushes an important element forward of the intended visitor interaction. Unlike in other sites and spaces where visitors are forced to grapple with primary artifacts, in the
Topography of Terror there is an added element of physically being within a space once devoted to the functionality of the genocide. As noted, this was something that was discussed and debated, and the choice was intentional: it was decided that it would be more impactful for visitors to actually be in the space of “terror,” and this additional dimension certainly impacts how individuals engage with the information and the space itself.

“How the Topography of Terror Intends for Visitors to Interact? The Architect Perspective”

The Topography of Terror site (See Appendix E) is made up of a large open and empty space that, according to the architect, is meant to present a vivid contrast to the surrounding urban Berlin setting. This space is meant to place fragments of memory in their historical context (Heinle, n.d.). This is a space you cannot escape. Even once visitors enter the floating square documentation center building, the glass walls force them to be in constant visual contact with outside courtyard space. This evokes a sense of transparency. Much like the intentional decision to utilize an actual site, the architecture within the site also has an impact on the visitor interaction. The design, in this sense, is quite impactful: it is intended to leave a hole in Berlin, a physical reminder of the past and of the genocide. This dynamic is important for visitors to experience, as the contrast is so stark. Once an individual enters the walls of the Topography of Terror, the vibrancy and liveliness of Berlin is left behind. This forces entrants to come face to face with yet another element of the memory itself.

PERSONAL IMPACT

It is important to note that due to time and financial constraints, the researcher was unable to revisit the Topography of Terror and conduct the same research model like the one used for the
Walkthrough exhibit at the ICA and the USHMM. That said, the framing of my experience at the Topography of Terror is critical to the analysis of the site and adds value to overall objective of the project. I visited the site a month prior to attending my first-ever lecture series on genocide. I was visiting Berlin with my family and a close friend for the holidays, however, knowing that I was about to take a course on genocide, I reached out to my professor wondering if there were any museums, memorials or sights she would recommend. Her suggestion was to pay a visit to the Topography of Terror. Naturally, my mentality upon entering the site switched from tourist to student.

Perhaps out of naivety or sheer un-acknowledgement on my behalf, visiting the site felt more like an academic exercise and as a result, the historical meaning of the space was lost on me. It pains me to admit, but before visiting I had no idea where I was or the significance of the grounds I was walking on, merely that it was related to the Holocaust, and to be frank, what touristy destination isn’t framed in the WWII context in the heart of Berlin? The gravity of the history of the site only became apparent once I walked out of the site doors. Why? Is it because the site is not advertised as a top-10 tourist hot spot in Berlin? Is it because the name is obscure? What does the “Topography of Terror” even mean? Is it because it is not labeled as a museum or memorial? I know that I would not have treated entering Auschwitz with the same mental respect as I did the Topography of Terror and thinking back, that is alarming. Furthermore, I bet I am not the only one.

Lifeless. In one word, that’s how I would describe my thoughts when first approaching the Topography of Terror. Aesthetically, the site felt unapproachable. I remember it as a modern yet cold grey concrete slab in the middle of Berlin. In this way, the Topography of Terror hit one of its objectives: walking around the city of Berlin (especially around Christmas time) and then
walking behind the walls into the Topography of Terror was instantly impactful and the mood shifted without question. The geographic placement of the site and the architecture makes a statement and forces an emotive response.

Similar to its exterior, the interior of the site felt sanitized and mechanic. It mirrored the feeling of the curatorial intention, which as the site label, “documentation center,” suggests is archival by nature. Documents (images, administrative papers, letters, newspapers, party inventory invoices, etc.) are posted on crisp white bulletin boards in what felt like no particular order or without any specific intent. There was not an accompanying informational plaque or one way to walk through the main exhibit. Thankfully, I was able to participate in a guided tour during my visit and the path through the exhibit was paved for me. In some ways this helps the site meet its objectives and in others it does not. Assuming a tour was not available, the loose structure and overwhelming documentation could easily leave a visitor lost. On the other hand, the sanitized structure adds a useful emotive element, leaving visitors feeling the emptiness and sterility left behind by top ranking Nazi officials.

The set up of the main permanent exhibition in the Topography of Terror forces the visitor to work for the knowledge they wish to acquire. Questions were asked of the visitors, rather than the other way around. The tour was not filled with lectures or long diatribes of information and facts, but instead filled with discussion and challenging inquiries. When the tour began it was frustrating to have questions left unanswered, but looking back it was just another way the site is a perfect fit for its intention: there are some questions about genocide that may not have direct and concise answers, even if we want them to.

My experience within the site and analysis of the site post-facto is admittedly biased. In retrospect I can say with near certainty that I would not have had the same fulfillment without
the tour guide and group-style experience that the guide and site offers. Working through the exhibitions and information without prior knowledge or clear understanding of the site’s mission and purpose may have been too arduous and too difficult to make sense of. That said, having had the experience that I did, I was able to walk away from the Topography of Terror with a new appreciation for the study of genocide and a better conceptualization of the parties involved that often times receive limited attention.

There’s a growing dialogue, especially within the United States that surrounds the necessity for the media to reveal the name of the perpetrator of a crime, shooting, bombing, etc. As a society, we question if we are glorifying these individuals by providing a platform for their name and actions to be known by the public? That’s one stream of thought, however, the approach of the Topography of Terror is exactly the opposite. The guided tour centered on the role of the perpetrators: who they were, how they operated, and the crimes they committed. The perpetrators are placed under the spotlight for the visitors to come face to face with the horrific crimes committed by them in the past. It is a space for learning and understanding the atrocity while also being a space that condemns the perpetrators. I walked away thinking that just in the same way that the SS and the Gestapo imprisoned innocent people during the Holocaust, the perpetrators’ names, faces, and actions will be forever imprisoned and condemned in the same space for the German people and the world to see.
UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

SITE OBJECTIVES

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) was born from President Jimmy Carter’s Commission on the Holocaust in 1978. Elie Wiesel served as the chair of the 34-member Commission upon its conception. The Commission’s work is guided by the necessity of the service of memory with the belief that “with the conviction that in remembrance lie the seeds of transformation and renewal” (U. S. Government, 2016). The site opened to the public in 1993.

The USHMM is the United States’ national institution dedicated to documenting, studying and analyzing the history of the Holocaust while also serving as a memorial to the victims (U. S. Government, 2016). The site objectives are easily accessible in 15 different languages via the internet on the site’s website.\(^3\) There are multiple pages dedicated to the Commission’s efforts, the architectural intentions, and most importantly, the USHMM mission statement. For the purpose of this section, the mission statement will be used as the primary source for unpacking the site objectives (see Appendix F).

The overarching goal of the USHMM is to serve as a “living memorial to the Holocaust, that inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide and promote human dignity” (U. S. Government, 2016). The primary mission, however, is “to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who

\(^3\) Additionally, upon entering the site, directly past the entrance security, there is a 1993 quote by US President William J. Clinton that reads, “This museum will touch the life of everyone who enters and leave everyone forever changed – a place of deep sadness and a sanctuary of bright hope; an ally of education against ignorance, of humility against arrogance, an investment in a secure future against whatever insanity lurks ahead. If this museum can mobilize morality, then those who have perished will thereby gain a measure of immortality.”
suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities of citizens of a democracy” (U. S. Government, 2016).

AUDIENCE INTERACTION

General Information on United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Today, the USHMM features eight different exhibitions: The Permanent Exhibition: The Holocaust, Some Were Neighbors: Collaboration & Complicity in the Holocaust, Cambodia 1975-1979, “I Want Justice,” From Memory to Action: Meeting the Challenge of Genocide, Genocide: The Threat Continues, Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story, and A Dangerous Lie: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The site also deploys a set of travelling exhibitions in order to extend the history and lessons of the Holocaust beyond the physical site walls (U. S. Government, 2016). The site also contains a library (with more than 107,000 items) and archives (available to researchers), an educator resource center, a survivor registry, a museum shop (located directly past entrance security) and a café.

The USHMM is one of many sites that make up the National Mall, the main strip of attraction in the Washington, DC area (see Appendix G). The USHMM is easily accessible by public transportation and is walking distance from various other popular destinations such as the Washington Monument and the National Museum of American History. The USHMM does not have a designated parking facility and public parking is very limited in the area. That said, the USHMM has had over 40 million visitors of which almost 100 were heads of states and nearly one fourth were school children. According to the USHMM website, the website is the “world’s
leading online authority on the Holocaust, is available in 15 languages and was visited in 2014 by more than 9 million people representing 236 countries and territories.”

The site is open daily from 10:00 am to 5:20 pm except on Yom Kippur and December 25th. Admission to the site is free, however, a ticket is needed to enter the permanent exhibition during the summer months. Anyone can enter the building without a ticket if they wish to explore exhibits other than the permanent Holocaust exhibition. Visitors can acquire tickets online in advance and pay a $1 convenience fee or wait in a ticket line for hourly admission on the day of the visit. During the peak summer months, the site has a high demand and volume of visitors and there is no entrance guarantee into the permanent exhibition. Last minute time tickets are released online at 6:00am each day, distributed on a first come first serve basis. Groups of more than 40 individuals may reserve group entrance in advance. The permanent exhibition is self-guided and tours are not advertised on the USHMM website.

The site itself does not have a specific target audience or age demographic, however, certain exhibits within the museum are catered to different audiences. For example, the permanent exhibition is recommended for ages 11 and older. However, there is a separate smaller exhibit, Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story, which is suggested for ages 8 and above. The site is accessible to persons with physical disabilities. Assistive listening is available in three of the exhibits including the permanent exhibition. The site offers a tour for people who have low vision or are blind and their families, however, these tours must be arranged two weeks in advance. Visitors are given an identification card upon entrance to the permanent exhibition and these are also available in braille and large-print upon request. Finally, although parking is limited at the site, site staff can facilitate passenger drop off and pick up for those in need of assistance.
External Perspectives on How Visitors Interact:

How the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Intends for Visitors to Interact? The Architect Perspective

According to the architect, the site is meant to allude to the history of the Holocaust. Although themes in the architecture are an abstraction drawn from memory, nothing is specific to the past. “Just as the Holocaust defies understanding, the building is not meant to be understood intellectually. Its architecture of sensibility is intended to engage the visitor and stir emotions” (U. S. Government, 2016).

As it relates to visitor interaction the space is intended to allow each individual to reflect and come to terms with the history and the genocide in his or her own way. Looking at the ceiling, for example, a survivor and a general visitor will have different experiences and the architecture was not designed to evoke the same, or a particular, memory or interaction. The architecture is intended to supplement the overall mission of the museum: to allow reflection and to provide a space for visitors to process through the events of the past and motivate them remember with the intention of ‘never again’ in the back of their minds.

“Cross-Currents: US Holocaust Memorial”

The USHMM was intentionally designed to be in close proximity to an array of other national museums and archives, which can be taken one of two ways: 1) central to show importance or 2) to evoke American patriotism and solidarity. The design of the site was intended to provoke thought and to allow each visitor to have his or her own experience with the past and to bring
knowledge and personal growth through the tragedy. “The permanent exhibit is darkened, leaving one alone with one’s own thoughts” (Rosenbaum, 2006). Visitors comment that faint apologies are heard throughout the site frequently as if people are interrupting each other’s prayers unintentionally by passing by. Further, it is important to point out that unlike other sites, this memorial is “less linear” so that visitors can find their own progression.

These design choices make clear the site’s objective of personal growth and knowledge, and an individualized experience. As noted, the museum has an overarching feeling of solemnity. Even if visitors enter as a group, silence is often predominating as people attempt to absorb the spirituality and experience of the site.

PERSONAL IMPACT

Make no mistake, the USHMM is a space dedicated to the Holocaust, however, told from the United States’ perspective. For this reason, when you first walk into the site, just past security, one of the first things that you see is an arrangement of 20 flags, each one representing a US army division that was active in liberating Nazi concentration camps. The next feature that caught my eye, mostly out of awe, located directly next to this display, was the Museum Shop. Although I expect all museums to have gift shops, its central location stood out to me. As you continue walking inside, before entering the permanent exhibition, there is a large open hall. There were tall ceilings, a glass roof, and red brick walls. Immediately, my mind floated to a concentration camp. However, with the flood of loud summer tourists, the space only caught me in a moment of reflection before I began exploring the site.

Before entering the permanent exhibit, I visited four spaces. The first exhibit “I Want Justice” outlined ways in which perpetrators have been brought to justice in the aftermath of a
genocide. This exhibit highlighted the Nuremberg trials and the trials currently taking place in Cambodia. The details of the Cambodian genocide, however, were left out and visitors were encouraged to visit the accompanying exhibit (the third space) or visit the website for further details. The number of individuals that take the time to find and view the other Cambodia exhibit is presumably thin as I watched visitors that did enter breeze through. I sat at the bench in the exhibit for over an hour watching the Cambodian tribunal footage and observing the visitors. During that time, only eight other individuals sat next to me and even then, the time spent watching the film varied from one to five minutes maximum.

Without context, what is a visitor learning? Is this particular portion of the museum hitting its target? In some ways, keeping in mind the goal of education and the power of disseminating knowledge, the display succeeds in meeting site goals. In order for information to be absorbed by visitors, there has to be information, something that this space was not short of. In other ways, however, the space did not adequately meet the site goals. There are two key components of disseminating information: 1) the information has to be there and 2) it has to be accessible and digestible. Due to the organization, selection, and volume of information within this space, it would be hard for visitors to intake the message and purpose of the space.

The second exhibit flowed directly from the first in a way that I could not recognize a difference. From Memory to Action was less of an exhibit and more like an arbitrary space for the site to acknowledge that it had made an impact on the visitors, despite the fact that this exhibit does feature select contemporary cases of genocide: Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Sudan. The exhibit is interactive by nature and relies on visitor engagement. Visitors are given a card (see Appendix H) asking them to write and sign a “pledge to help meet the challenge of
genocide.” They are then asked to drop the pledge into a glass case as a visual representation of the community that cares about genocide prevention.

The site puts a heavy emphasis on genocide prevention in its mission statement. Through the sites own informational pages, it is clear that “never again” is of primary importance. Do these pledge cards serve this goal effectively? What goes into an individual’s pledge? Does every individual mean it? Does it translate into actionable tasks in their day-to-day lives? From this perspective it seems that the exhibit may not meet its goal. As cynical as it may sound, it is easy to write a prevention pledge on a card while in a site to prevent genocide, but upon exiting return back to life as usual. From a visual perspective, however, there is a certain power in numbers and size. If enough people fill out pledge cards, meaningfully or not, the volume sends a message to visitors. It depicts solidarity and collectivity in combatting genocides.

The third space is an exhibit (see Appendix 1) dedicated to teaching about the Cambodian genocide. The exhibit is aesthetically loud, making the display difficult to extract information from as a visitor. As a scholar interested specifically in the Cambodian genocide, I could not help but cringe at the exhibit. For one, the exhibit is featured in a remote part of the museum near the auditorium, out of sight from the entrance and nearby exhibits. The perpetrators, the Khmer Rouge, said all the quotes displayed on top of the exhibit. Most significantly, I felt as though I was only able to follow the information because of my prior knowledge on the history. Regardless of my harsh judgments, I assessed the exhibit in perspective. The Cambodian genocide was the only genocide other than the Holocaust with a personal exhibit in a hot tourist destination in the capital of the United States of America. Is having any exhibit space dedicated to Cambodia better than having none - even if it doesn’t do justice to the history?
In a similar fashion as the “I Want Justice” exhibit, the space dedicated to Cambodia faces similar analysis. On one hand, the site effectively meets the goal of information and knowledge. Further, it may prompt a visitor to leave and read more out of curiosity. On the other hand, however, the information may be so convoluted and difficult to follow that it doesn’t allow for absorption.

The last space I wanted to visit before the permanent exhibition was the Hall of Remembrance - a space for reflection, contemplation, and remembrance. The silent hexagon room featured the names of concentration and death camps on the walls (under which visitors can light candles in remembrance), an eternal flame in the center and the following quote from Deuteronomy, “Only guard yourself and guard your soul carefully, lest you forget the things your eyes saw, and lest these things depart your heart all the days of your life. And you shall make them known to your children and your children’s children.”

This space is perhaps the most effective at meeting and upholding the site’s primary objectives. As the mission states, the site intends visitors to preserve the memory of the victims and evoke spiritual and moral reflection. This particular space is somber but aesthetically elegant, showing careful and thoughtful respect for the victims. Further, the biblical passage selection forces any visitor to think about the gravity of the situation.

After these four special exhibits, I ventured into the permanent exhibition. For the sake of brevity and due to the size and scope of the permanent exhibition, four main observations will be highlighted. The first observation was with respect to the tone of the exhibit. Visitors are herded into the dimly lit elevator and from that moment, the tone is set. Corralled in tight quarters,

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4 Quote accompanying the eternal flame - “Here lies earth gathered from death camps, concentration camps, sites of mass execution, and ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe, and from cemeteries of American soldiers who fought and died to defeat Nazi Germany.”
visitors are forced to watch a short black and white film on the screen before the elevator doors opened to a dark room with a wall that reads “The Holocaust” on one side and a black and white image of charred human remains on the other. The initial impact when entering the permanent exhibit was felt by all and the silence was evidence of this indescribable feeling. As visitors meandered through the exhibit, clearly surpassing the initial shock, the sound levels increased. The permanent exhibition is advertised as a self-guided space and technically, a guide does not accompany visitors. That said, there is only one way in and out of the exhibit and only one path to follow. This generated a chaotic nature within the space as visitors pushed past one another and skipped certain displays because of a lack of room.

On that note, I will never forget hearing a little girl say to her father, “Does anyone actually read this?” She was right, it would take hours (far more than the average one to three-hour visit) to read each and every display and watch every film in full. There is something to be said about being so detailed and having an exhibit that features extensive writing and footage, however, conducting research myself I found it was overwhelming and distracting from the main themes. Is there such a thing as too much information when it comes to learning about a genocide? If a visitor only has 30 minutes to explore, what would the suggested pit stops be? Is the take away the same regardless of how much time you spend in the exhibit?

The third observation I had was the number of “recreated” objects that there were in the museum such as the “Arbeit Macht Frei” gate replica, a train cart replica, etc. Does remodeling a place make you feel like you are there? Does it matter if the item is recreated or does it have the same effect? Will you remember it? There’s no way that anyone could “walk in the shoes” of the victim, so why try? Does the museum space make this okay? Are visitors able to distinguish between the actual primary objects versus the replicas?
The fourth observation was the USHMM dedication to the victims of the Holocaust. If you were to ask a visitor the part of the permanent exhibition that struck them most, it would likely be the display of 4000 shoes (U. S. Government, 2016). Why is that what people tend to remember this and talk about it after the museum? Is that the point at which the visitors realize the gravity of the entire history? Is it because these inanimate objects are something that we can relate to? Or is it because it’s a symbol that we will forever associate with the Holocaust? While most visitors remember the shoe portion of the exhibit, the film of survivor liberation recounts projected in the amphitheater left a lasting impression on me. Just as symbols are easily identifiable and often associated with genocide, stories are too. Prior to visiting the USHMM as a researcher, I recalled one of the survivor stories shown in the amphitheater that I had seen five years earlier as a tourist. From the earlier visit, the story evoked sadness and was memorable as a tragedy. This time during my visit, however, one same story also stood out to me, but this time the feeling was of urgency, a sense of warning, and a profound wisdom in the survivor’s unforgettable words.

“I want the six million to be remembered as brave, courageous people who died for one reason only, that they were born of a different race. Their loss is a loss is a loss for all humanity. If anybody comes to the museum and sees the mementos that we left behind, whether it’s a little shoe, a letter, our Torah, or prayer book, remember these are our precious valuables. Remember, from these books, that we are gone. And remember the agony of the survivors, who had to live with these memories, and could never touch them, could never have them back. We hope that future generations will never know our pain, and that everyone will stand up to any form of persecution. I taught my children love and not hate. But I could never forget. I could never forgive.”

- Cecile Klein-Pollack (USHMM film testimony, RG-50.042*-0018) -
In an attempt to make sense of the efficacy of the permanent exhibit it is imperative to keep in mind the site's primary objectives of education, remembrance and reflection. In terms of education, the museum offers an abundance of information, but whether or not it is absorbed fully and meaningfully is up to the perseverance of the visitors, as it is overwhelming and challenging in many spaces. In terms of remembrance and respect to the victims of the Holocaust, the site is successful, as it can realistically be at paying reverence and representing their tragedy. Finally, it is worth asking: does the site make visitors stop and think? Do people reflect? Similar to the goal of education, reflection is highly contingent upon the visitor. For some, the museum might be a sensory overload and the replicas and aesthetic may be too purposeful, thus distracting some visitors. That said, however, the site has so many different facets and spaces that it would be near impossible for a visitor to walk through the permanent exhibit and not self-reflect and question at least once.

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5 Could the victims and their stories ever be fully and completed mourned? Would it be possible to give them the full respect they merit? This ontological question exceeds the scope of this research but it is important to make this distinction.
SITE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research is to gain a richer understanding of the intersection between genocide and memory. Who remembers? How are genocides remembered? What contextual factors influence remembrance? How does the local community respond in the after a genocide? Does it matter? Throughout the fieldwork, conversations, and reflective exercises presented within this research study, many important insights regarding the aforementioned questions have been discovered and merit further discussion and analysis. This final chapter of part one will be organized as follows. First, three main themes from the sites will be discussed as they relate to the research question: accessibility, who is telling the story, and the spectrum of representation. Second, features that impact practices of collective remembrance will be highlighted within this chapter and then used in the latter part of the project. Third, the limitations of the research will be outlined. Finally, the chapter will conclude with avenues for future study and ways that other scholars can build upon the themes developed throughout this research.

The first theme, accessibility, is hugely important to the remembrance of genocide. From a tangible perspective, location is everything. On a macro-level, the importance of accessibility can be assessed through a visitor’s socio-economic level. For example, while two out of the three museums are free, unless a visitor conveniently resides within one of the three cities (Washington DC, Berlin and Boston), it would require the visitors to travel the distance, which includes the financial burden associated with that travel, to experience the sites. Acknowledging that this travel is made easier with globalization, there are still financial constraints at play. By default, on a global scale, only certain individuals have access to these sites. On a micro-level, assuming that the visitor has the financial capability to travel to the cities, sites are considered
more accessible based on their locations within the city. The Topography of Terror and the USHMM have a strategic advantage because of their location relative to tourist destinations.

In a different sense, visitor interest in a site is critical. For example, art commands a certain audience and perhaps that audience is willing to go out of their way to visit the ICA and experience Raad’s exhibit. On the other hand, trigger words like “The Holocaust” or “Contemporary Art” make the site’s content association clear, whereas the name of the Topography of Terror leaves visitors unsure of the site’s topic and by extension could deter visitors from taking the time to enter the site. These associations, interest levels, and different site typologies all impact mental accessibility, a compliment to a site’s physical accessibility.

The second theme is concerned with the author of information. Who is telling, or rather dictating, the story within these spaces? Does it matter? Whose story is being told? A different actor in each site would produce a different perspective and therefore, a different product. The USHMM is the Holocaust told from the United States’ perspective but is a space dedicated to the victims. The Topography of Terror is put together by the German government with public insight, however, one could argue embodies a neutral perspective as the space was created by the perpetrators (Germany) to essentially shame the perpetrators (Nazi Germany). Both sites acknowledge the history through a different lens. It is worth posing the following question: why is the leading site for information (from the victim perspective) located in the United States, when the victims themselves were located in Europe? This is not to suggest that other places and citizens cannot mourn and respect the victims, but rather to question why there isn’t there an equivalent space for the victims where the tragedy took place. Finally, the ICA is dictated by the artist without a clear distinction of the space being for the victims or the perpetrators.
As it relates to the telling of the stories and perspectives, constructivism must be considered. It is critical to keep in mind that all of these sites, and any site for that matter, are constructed. No matter how inclusive, authentic, or effective a site aims to be, a person or group of people constructs it. As such, it is always already incomplete and it can always already be deconstructed. Although this may seem trite, it has a large impact on genocide and memory research, which relates directly to the idea of how and what we remember.

The final theme is the spectrum of representation of these sites. In other words, how do these sites frame the conflict in question? Are these sites the actual locations of physical violence? If so, what does this add to the site? If not, how does the site go about portraying the history? Does the site attempt to recreate the physical sites of violence? Better yet, is the audience even aware that the space is recreated? How does this recreation impact memory?

The Topography of Terror represents one end of the spectrum, as the site is physically located in a space where violence was carried out and perpetuated during the Holocaust. Nothing needed to be recreated and as such, visitors are able and encouraged to confront the history. Without the documentation center, the site speaks for itself as a space for visitors to engage and confront the past. The physical location serves as proof of violence and combats the notion of forgetting. This value is unmatched by sites that recreate symbols and spaces.

The USHMM falls in the middle of the spectrum as the site is a reconstruction of a space in which physical violence occurred, and associated symbols are recreated with the intention of bringing the audiences closer to the actual places of violence that they may or may not ever have the opportunity to visit. The USHMM did not have a foundational space of physical violence to build from due to the geographical distance between the United States and Europe (where the genocide took place). As alluded to in the stream of questions above, while the site has good
intentions, it also has the potential to trigger traumatic memories for survivors that visit, confuse visitors as they may not understand that the space and symbols are recreated, and receive harsh criticism for the ways in which the site was curated.

The ICA falls on the opposite end of the spectrum as the artist bases his exhibit on abstraction of the conflict in question. In the space of the ICA, a visitor’s interest in the conflict in Lebanon does not matter to the artist. The act of questioning the art featured on the walls within the establishment appeared to suffice. What is to be said about forgetting the conflict? Could this exhibit achieve the same goals using any conflict as the vehicle? Although art (especially contemporary art) has a reputation of being controversial, in the space of conflict is it appropriate or disrespectful? People around the world are seeking global attention for their causes and an artist featured in a prestigious art institution has the opportunity to shed light on one of these causes but instead fabricates a story based on real events. Perhaps if Raad had included some sort of caveat or revealed the real history in a pamphlet in some way, these questions could be averted.

The following features that impact the practices of collective remembrance warrant a space within this analysis: the location and authenticity of a site of violence, the objective of remembrance, and the subject of remembrance. The location and authenticity of the site of violence refers to whether or not the site being used for remembrance was a place where actual violence or conflict occurred. Although it might seem obvious, it is worth fleshing out the importance of this practice of remembrance. Whether it should or shouldn’t, the actual place where violence took place validates the memories and narratives surrounding the incident, they cannot be wiped away or ignored or discredited. When visiting an actual place of violence at some point the audience is overtaken by the gravity of the space and is transported, as
realistically as possible, to the framework and moment intended with the space. This adds credit to the space and the narrative. On the other hand, created sites and spaces do not necessarily evoke this same feeling. Entering a space that is replicated (or not authentic) the audience is more likely to question the authenticity of the narrative. In some ways constructed, or fake spaces, violate the sanctity of the actual spaces where violence occurred. It is important to note that this is not to suggest that the replicated spaces had mal intent or sought to violate spaces, but rather that this replication has the possibility of misleading unassuming audiences that may believe them to be authentic.

The objective of remembrance circulates around the questions of purpose and why a space is created. If you are aware of the objectives of a space before entering it, your mental framework is constricted and confined in some ways – it is likely to be guided. For example, if the purpose of a site is to educate, an audience member entering the space from an academic framework will likely have a neutral approach, which, by default, lessens the extent to which an emotive response is experienced. This has an impact on how the site is remembered. That said, if an audience member entered the space with the understanding that the site was intended for commemoration, then they are not thinking about the event reoccurring but rather understanding the event as an isolated occurrence intended to be frozen in time. This isolation can prohibit prevention efforts. Awareness of the objective forces categorizations of spaces. This categorization has natural drawbacks and advantages. On the positive side, categorization is more likely to lead to objectives being met. As a disadvantage, however, categorizations take away from the audience’s ability to genuinely and uninhibitedly interact with the space or event.

The subjects of remembrance, victims v. perpetrators, are critical to the experience of an audience and by extension the way in which we collectively remember. A space dedicated to a
specific subject has the potential to limit the memory lens. For example, if a space is established to remember the victims, entrants are less likely to learn about or understand the event from the framework of the perpetrators, and vice versa. Ownership of the space lends itself to whether the victim or the perpetrator will be the central focus. In the case of the Topography of Terror, Germany as a nation has ownership over the space and encourages citizens to confront the past as a form of accountability. This particular practice of memory aids in prevention because clear blame is given and not swept under the rug. That said, it is often easier to commemorate spaces dedicated to the victims, as the owners of the space are able to evoke an appropriate emotive response. In other words, when dealing with the victims of an atrocity, although it may take many different manifestations, sympathy is often the target response. When dealing with perpetrators, however, the lines are blurrier because you don’t want to glorify the perpetrators but you also don’t want to forget them and their actions. Whether we like to admit it or not, there is a tendency for people to have a dark fascination with that which is evil and twisted. For example, one of the most frequently searched Nazi officials is Dr. Josef Mengele, the Angel of Death. Although most would agree that his experiments were tragic and inhumane, there is always a deviant curiosity and desire to understand how and why humanity can be pushed to its bounds and people can commit heinous crimes against one another. In this way the subject of remembrance plays a large part in collective memory as it can determine the ways in which individuals interact with the actors involved.

A subsection of the subjects of remembrance is ownership. Is it a national ritual? Is it a private space? Is it a museum geared for the public? Further, what impact does this have on remembrance? National rituals or nationally owned spaces are more likely to involve community input, resulting in an elongated process but also a form of memory that forces the audience to
engage with and confront the past. Private spaces are at the liberty to portray any narrative or agenda and are likely to engage more specific audiences that seek them out. Additionally, they are more commonly exposed to community backlash and force more arduous confrontations. For example, the Twin Towers were privately owned prior to their collapse and legally the space was still privately owned post-terrorist attack. This caused serious community disruption as the local community felt it belonged to it, and not the business personnel any longer. Finally, it is important to point out that museums are spaces for the public and also for the donors. They receive a lot of criticism for particular choices. As it relates to memory this has the potential to create skepticism. Not in all cases but in some, if entrants feel that the museum is inauthentic or too structured for donors or benefactors it may break fluid memories and prohibit prevention efforts or community involvement.

Finally, it is important to highlight some lingering analytic questions that fall outside the scope of this research. While conducting fieldwork, it became apparent that some sites have more artistic and curatorial underpinnings than others. Is it ever appropriate to discuss the aesthetics of violence? Is it better that it be raw and untouched? Does attempting to design a space relating to genocide violate the memory? In short, is there an appropriate artistic medium for practicing collective memory as it relates to violence.

In the second part of this project, Cambodia is utilized as a vehicle to study a genocide that is not remembered. In order to carry out this segment of the research, the researcher provided contextual case-study details, a reflective exercise on her time spent living in Cambodia and presented an informal conversation had with a leading Cambodian genocide expert who is at the heart of the country’s rebuilding efforts. The conclusions drawn from the first part of this research will be applied to the case of Cambodia in the following section.
The purpose of this research is to provide a stronger foundation of the interdisciplinary research between genocide studies and memory studies. Inherently with any case-based and fieldwork oriented research design, however, there are several limitations that need to be addressed so that future scholars can adequately utilize this particular study and build upon it.

The first limitation is access. Due to the disparate geographic proximity of the different sites used within this research, the researcher faced a challenge regarding visiting sites in the same manner. For example, the Topography of Terror is located in Berlin, Germany. For the researcher to visit the museum on multiple occasions would have required funds and time beyond the capabilities for this particular project. It is important to point out that this also had an indirect effect on the mental framework of the researcher. The researcher visited the Topography of Terror before officially commencing the project and could not return. As a result, this site visit was entered into from a different mental space and framing. While the researcher honestly, and as objectively as possible, reported experiences from this particular site, it is the researcher’s responsibility to unveil this limitation.

A second limitation of the research is the sample size. Due to the nature of the topic of study, there are a limited number of sites and corresponding genocides to examine. For the purpose of this research three sites were selected, meeting the requirement for case study research (Yin, 2008). This small of a sample size makes the research less generalizable.

A third and final limitation stems from the nature of exploratory research that is rooted in fieldwork. While the researcher attempted to be as transparent and objective as possible, it would be impossible to remove all bias from exploratory research. By nature, exploratory research rests on testing and examining assumptions. As such, this type of research is vulnerable to personal
and subjective interpretations. Further, it would be impossible for the researcher to enter each site in the exact same mental framework, which could also impact the level of bias.

As with any research project, there are always ways in which the research could be improved and expanded upon in the future. Since this project is exploratory by design, it is the intent of the researcher that future scholars take this foundation and build upon to add to the field of genocide and memory studies. One way that the future scholars could improve upon this study is to visit other sites and to extend the study to encompass other genocides. Using both the Cambodian genocide and the Holocaust serves as a solid basis for research, but other genocides could add utility and reliability to the study. A second way that the research could be improved upon is by carrying out in-depth interviews and more conversations with both perpetrators and victims of different genocides. The conversation highlighted within this project sheds critical insights into the study of genocide and its relation to memory. If more conversations were had, the depth and quality of the research could be improved.
PART TWO: THE CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE
CAMBODIAN APPROACHES TO GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE

How is the Cambodian genocide remembered? To what extent do global remembrance practices exclude the Cambodian genocide? Do the current approaches used in Cambodia incorporate the features of collective remembrance outlined in the previous portion of this research? To what extent are symbols at play in Cambodia? As it relates to remembering the Holocaust, the mountain of shoes is a permanent fixture of memory for many. In other words, does Cambodia have its own version of the mountain of shoes? Could different features outlined in the site fieldwork supplement current approaches to collective remembrance of the genocide within Cambodia? Bearing part one of this research in mind, it is important to consider how accessibility, who is telling the story, and the spectrum of representation impact the remembrance of the atrocity in Cambodia.

For many people, the Cambodian genocide is not easily accessible. Although there is a space within the USHMM dedicated to the Cambodian genocide, outside of that there are limited sites. In the case of Cambodia, it is less about who is telling the story and more a question of if the story is even being told. Despite the fact that there are various spaces in Cambodia where physical violence occurred, it is seemingly more difficult to represent or replicate symbols and spaces of the Cambodian genocide because there is not a unique signifier that is globally recognized like the mountain of shoes or the gates of Auschwitz. This directly limits the spectrum of representation plausible for Cambodia. The site fieldwork research makes it clear why, from a political perspective, the Cambodian genocide is remembered less. In other words, the presentation of the Cambodian genocide could be better served to achieve collective
remembrance. The following research provides insights into considerations that need to be acknowledged as the Cambodian genocide begins to explore global collective remembrance.

Although the response to the genocide in Cambodia ranges on a wide spectrum, there are three main competing dialogues: 1) the local community response; 2) the tribunals; and 3) the documentation and prevention center. The following will be a discussion of these three approaches and how they operate in Cambodia.

When taken together, the three aforementioned dialogues work in unison to make up Cambodia’s response to the genocide. As a nation they have a local community response to genocide, a museum on the grounds of the violence, tribunals geared at bringing justice and reparations, and a documentation center in progress. Do these dialogues incorporate the features of collective remembrance as outlined in the previous section of this research?

The most important features of collective remembrance, as revealed by this fieldwork, are location/authenticity of sites, objectives of the remembrance and the subjects of remembrance. To what extent do the approaches in Cambodia utilize these features? In terms of location and authenticity, Cambodia has one site in operation, and another in the planning stages, that are located on actual grounds of the genocide. In this way, Cambodia has taken this feature of collective memory and attempted to encourage the community and visitors, to engage with and confront the genocide. By having these spaces where the genocide actually took place, visitors and the collective community cannot deny the memories and the narrative.

The second important feature is the objective of the sites of remembrance, namely are they designed for education or commemoration. Cambodia has Tuol Sleng- a museum that visitors can enter that again is authentic and an actual space of the violence, which is intended to commemorate the victims rather than to educate on the history of the genocide. By focusing on
commemoration, visitors are able to try to enter the mental space of the victims during the
genocide. A downfall, however, is that due to the emphasis on commemoration the memory
dictates sympathy and an emotive response rather than one that drives prevention. From this
example within Cambodia we see how this particular practice of memory determines the
collective response.

Finally, in terms of the subjects of remembrance there are two options to focus on: the
victims or the perpetrators. The national government has emphasized tribunals aimed at holding
the perpetrators responsible and accountable and to bring justice to the victims. The importance
of the tribunals as it relates to collective memory is that they shape and frame the memory
towards prevention. By focusing on accountability, it signals to the community and the rest of
the world that Cambodia is committed to never letting genocide be repeated. Through the use of
the subject of remembrance as a collective memory feature, prevention is a focal point in
Cambodia.

THE VISUAL

Identifying the reasons behind why some genocides are remembered and others are not, is
only half the problem. Another part of the issue manifests in discovering and creating an
appropriate medium by which to represent and remember genocide, if at all possible. A small
component of this research project revolves around the moral questions that one encounters
when attempting to create a space for these un-discussed genocides. Imagine you were tasked
with creating a remembrance day poster for a genocide. How would you go about it? What
would be included and excluded? Is a remembrance day even necessary for society? How does
one capture the severity and destruction of a genocide in a one-page spread? Who is or should be commemorated? Should the perpetrators be mentioned? What is being memorialized? Should graphic images be included? What would be the goal of the poster? For the purpose of this research project I attempted to create a remembrance day poster (See Appendix K) for the Cambodian Genocide in order to walk through and uncover the process of appropriately commemorating, and by extension remembering, a genocide.

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

At the outset of this project, I had full intentions of conducting a series of conversations with local Cambodian experts on genocide. I was convinced that regardless of the dark natured topic, seamless discussion would ensue on the events of the genocide and the ways in which the genocide is currently interpreted, perceived and remembered by the local community. Despite my confidence, the dialogue process was far more difficult to begin and carry out. This led me to question if genocide is actually something that society is willing to engage with and confront. For example, although I was excited about the thought of conversing and learning more on the topic, I had no clue how to go about probing the sensitive topic. After consulting various professors and creating a core set of questions to guide the conversation, I found myself procrastinating on actually having the discussion. Why? I had all the contacts and information ready and at my fingertips. What was holding me back? The bottom line is, talking about genocide is not easy. It’s uncomfortable and it makes you vulnerable, even if you were not directly involved.

That said, having an informal conversation with a high level diplomat halfway across the
world that I had maybe encountered briefly on a one-off occasion, in other words a complete stranger, was a daunting task. It took me hours to simply craft the email asking to arrange a time to have an informal conversation because I was sensitive to my language and word usage. The last thing I wanted was to be offensive or to ask questions that were too “deep” and had the potential to reinvigorate traumatic memories. The subject of trauma and remembrance is tricky when trying to frame a light (if there is such a thing) conversation on genocide. I wanted to encourage reflection without pressure. Perhaps we as a society do not create a space for genocides because there is no more “room” or space for them to occupy as life is already filled with other forms of trauma.

Clearly, I was not alone in feeling apprehensive at the thought of the conversation. The response I received from Youk Chhang was that he was willing to answer all my questions, however, during my next visit to Cambodia, in person. Considering the time restraint set by the project, I decided to forgo the idea and began researching elsewhere in order to avoid compromising my project and follow through in assessing the local perspective of the genocide. In the midst of this research, I got an email from Youk requesting my Skype ID and an hour of my time to talk. Elated, I followed through with the discussion. Below, I have deliberately identified themes in an attempt to unpack the conversation and uncover the local perspective of the Cambodian genocide.

TIMELINE: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE KHMER ROUGE

I began the conversation with Youk by asking him three landmark questions: what he remembers before, during and after the genocide. Youk was 14 years old when the Khmer Rouge was on the rise. That said, he doesn’t recall much before their reign. Youk was a city boy that lived in a country that, prior to the war in Vietnam, was untouched – a peaceful country. He
stated that, “the country belonged to the people in all its beauty.” As a Catholic male educated in French schools, one of the first changes he could recall was discrimination between the countryside and the urban dwellers. Schools were closed, protests began and food was scarce. Cambodia was in a sense prepared for the Khmer Rouge regime as the shelling and bomb dropping from the Vietnam War prefaced their rule. Youk told a story of his family’s helper in order to put the change in perspective for me. Before the Khmer Rouge, Youk described his family’s helper as the woman that hailed from the fields with darker skin, that helped wash their clothes, went to the market for them, the one that watched over Youk as a child, and took care of his siblings. This same woman turned into a Khmer Rouge District Chief during the regime. “She was so powerful, she had the power to kill us.” The tables turned so quickly, however, the love his family shared with her prior to the Khmer Rouge prompted her to protect his family by sending them to the collective farms instead of directly to their death. During the Khmer Rouge, she was the boss.

During the Khmer Rouge regime, the local population in the countryside would “fight over the little things, killing each other over grains of rice.” Youk describes this period as feeling lonely or in isolation. He said, “you either become a victim or a perpetrator; fight back or die, harm someone to live or die alone.”

Like many Cambodians, Youk was forced to flee as the Vietnamese encroached the boarders in the late 1970s. Youk crossed the border into Thailand and moved to the United States as a refugee where he stayed during a large portion of the political transition from the Pol Pot regime to the Vietnamese invaders. Local populations were unaware of what was going on in Cambodia during this time. The political rhetoric was unclear, was the Vietnamese intervention a liberation or an invasion? Daily life did not change as individuals were still poor and although a
new government system was in place, it was not so different to the Khmer Rouge regime. The word confusion encapsulates the local mindset during this period. There was so much change at the time that people were able to cope with the trauma. “Society was distracted.” As such, shock did not permeate the masses. In fact, Youk believes that adopting a new way of life in the United States is considered more difficult because at least if an individual stayed in Cambodia, they didn’t face the same kind of cultural and life adjustments. Youk claims that the period of social mobility and call for justice began the day after the regime collapsed and continued until 1990 when the Paris Peace Agreement was signed.

**GENOCIDE DEFINITION**

The conversation with Youk turned into a more general conversation of genocide. Youk clearly stated that genocide is a crime against humanity that doesn’t end at tribunal. He felt as though legal means are not always necessary in order to prevent future genocides. In fact, the absence of legal ramifications allows the local populations to introduce new measures of overcoming the genocide. Youk’s definition of genocide “doesn’t discriminate.” He noted the recent Paris attacks as a form of violence, alluding to genocide.

**HOW ONE REMEMBERS**

Youk reflected on his own process of remembering. It was difficult at first and took him a long time to open up about the past, which he attributes to fleeing Cambodia. He recalls doing “things” like stealing food to live. It opened up questions of personal morality for him. What makes you a good person during these times? What lengths are appropriate for individuals to reach in order to survive? He believes that the retelling of these stories is becoming normalized to the extent that the youth in Cambodia are adopting a misperception of what is and is not okay as they are not educated thoroughly on the genocide. “Education helps explain reasoning as
Memory becomes selective.”

Memory is personal. People in Cambodia used to talk and share stories after someone had passed. During the genocide, with the loss of so much life, locals have started talking more. The personal stories become the collective discourse, which builds a community. Youk believes that concept of memory by contrast also falls on state responsibility – political memory needs to mirror the collective. One quote that stuck out to me from the conversation relating to memory is when Youk stated that, “Memory is like a shadow. You see it in the sun or the person walking behind you sees it – regardless, it is always with you until you die.”

PERPETRATORS

When asked how the local community would describe the perpetrators of the Cambodian genocide, if at all, Youk answered in one word and without hesitation: “Darkness.” Youk let me marinate in his response for a few moments. The overall notion in Cambodia is that the Khmer Rouge is bad, they represent evil. There is local resistance in bringing up the Khmer Rouge in conversation. On the other hand, politicians in Cambodia use the term more colloquially to describe the opposition. Youk said, “no one appreciates the beauty when they are hungry.” In essence, the Khmer Rouge is painted as darkness but there’s something that Cambodia and the world can learn from the genocide after the fact. That said, the perpetrators cannot be entirely left out of the genocide conversation in Cambodia.

SYMBOLS

There were two symbols Youk highlighted to describe the Cambodian genocide. The first described the Khmer Rouge regime itself, their flag. Youk noted that throughout history the Cambodian people have used Angkor Wat on their flags and that today, Cambodia is the only country in the world whose flag features a building. This same historic architecture was featured
on the Khmer Rouge flag with a different backdrop. Youk claims that the flag is widely recognized by the Cambodian population. The use of the flags creates a strong juxtaposition between heaven and hell in the eyes of the locals. The second symbol is the Cambodian “Krama,” a scarf like piece that is often used to carry babies or protect farmer’s eyes from the sun. This same material was used to kill people during the genocide. As barbed wire is to the Holocaust and the machete is to the Rwandan genocide, the Krama is to the Cambodian genocide. There is no current prevailing symbol for commemoration that coincides with the Cambodian genocide to Youk’s knowledge.

QUOTES

There are two quotes used by the Cambodian community to describe the Cambodian genocide. The first, which was coined by Youk himself, is “searching for the truth.” Youk publicized this quote from conversations he shared with the locals. This quote has been used for 15 years now and persists because it is impossible for someone to know the whole truth of what happened during the genocide. The second quote surfaced as a part of the tribunal process in Cambodia. The quote itself is something along the lines of “moving forward with justice,” however, Youk says that this slogan is not echoed by the nation in the same way as “searching for the truth” because it was not locally crafted. In general, in Cambodia, memory and justice dominate the conversation of genocide.

THE HOLOCAUST

Although I did not want to refocus the conversation away from the Cambodian genocide, the Political Scientist in me couldn’t help but wonder if the Cambodian population was aware of the Holocaust. The answer is no. Youk himself proclaimed that he was unaware of the Holocaust until after the Cambodian genocide occurred. Youk attributes this to two things. The first is that
the word Holocaust is not easily translated into Khmer. If a language cannot seem to encompass a word, then how would a population be expected to understand, recognize or remember it? The second reason that Cambodians do not know of the Holocaust is due to political resistance by politicians. For example, Youk mentioned that the Ambassador to Israel visited Cambodia in the 1960s and chose not to spread the word of the Holocaust. Youk remembers telling the Ambassador that if he had shared his story that it could have possibly prevented the Cambodian genocide. The Ambassador felt as though the situations were very different, in fact incomparable and that he didn’t want to talk about the Holocaust at all.

Unlike the Holocaust, Youk believes that the Cambodian people simply want the international community to know what happened not necessarily remember. The priority of the Cambodian people is not centered on gaining international recognition but rather receiving a final judgment through the tribunal.
CONCLUSION

How are some genocides remembered? And does that matter? Do we need to remember? Or more broadly, *why do we as people remember and care about some lives more than others?* The question of remembrance is quintessential to the topic of genocide. The literature has suggested many reasons for remembering such as geopolitics, popular media, and the local mindset post-genocide, to name a few. Through the journey of this project, I have come to realize that some genocides are remembered and others are not for a multitude and often a combination of reasons.

Within the context of this project and using Cambodia as a vehicle, the question can be more clearly stated as, why not remember the Cambodian genocide? The most obvious reasons that surface and to be frank are difficult to ignore, is the fact that the Cambodian genocide occurred in a region of the world that is disregarded by many out of unawareness. Cambodia’s poverty levels are striking and as such its economic standing, whether through participation in a regional trade alliance or Cambodia’s role in the global economy, does not draw the attention of the Western world. The Cambodian genocide itself was the product of a spillover effect of the Vietnam War, in essence a proxy of the Cold War. In history, unless explicitly seeking out the Cambodian genocide, the effects of the war filled region on Cambodia are often overshadowed by those on Vietnam, which is most likely due to the fact that the United States had a hand in the conflict.

By extension, this would mean that the Cambodian genocide also does not garner great media attention. The level of technology in Cambodia is lacking. There is access to radio, newspaper prints, and even television, however, the majority of Cambodians still embrace an
agrarian lifestyle that does not include the use of technology like most societies today. For example, I can remember being in Cambodia when the first stoplight was installed. Another reason the Cambodian genocide is often not remembered is because the in and out groups of the conflict in Cambodia were not based off of ethnic or religious lines like many others. This makes it more difficult for the conflict to reach across state lines. Like anything else, if you are unable to personally relate in one way or another, then it is more likely that you will not understand and by extension not remember.

The Cambodian genocide may not be remembered from an international standpoint, at least not to the same degree as the Holocaust, however, regionally the genocide has left its mark. The local conversation surrounding the Cambodian genocide is prevalent and persists through time. Through my conversation with Youk, the grassroots effort to embrace, learn, and move forward from the genocide was revealed.

After having gone through the a few reasons why the Cambodian genocide is not remembered by the international community today, this project itself was meant to highlight the many reasons that it should be remembered. The Cambodian genocide does not need to steal the spotlight from the Holocaust or fill movie theatres with its history but it does need to occupy a space within the overarching conversation of genocide. Why? First of all, there is an abundance of knowledge that comes from learning about the past, knowledge that has the capability of propelling us forward and preventing crimes against humanity like these in the future. More importantly, however, the biggest take away from my project is that no one life is more important than another. By forgetting the Cambodian genocide, or choosing not to remember, whether it be out of sheer ignorance or naivety, we automatically place some lives above others on the hierarchical scale of importance. Although answering the question why some genocides
are remembered and others are not proved more difficult, understanding why remembering matters in the first place has become clear.

I conclude this project with Youk’s response to my final question during the conversation, “If you could tell an individual one thing about the Cambodian genocide, what would you want people to know?” Youk would like the world to know of a yellow flower that blooms in the fields of the Cambodian countryside. Youk brings his staff and colleagues to see these yellow flowers that flourish in the same space that the genocide took place. Even in the ugliest situations, there is still beauty. “Hope,” he said. “Hope is this flower because it continues to grow.” As a society, we need to remember and grow from the dark histories that have been written, overcome, and learn from the past and work towards brighter, more yellow flower filled futures.
REFERENCES


Chhang, Youk, personal communication, December 7, 2015.


Appendix A. Walid Raad Informational Plaque
Document title: Let's be honest, the weather helped
Category File Type Plates: [cat. A] Raad Photographs_001-017
Date: 1998
Attributed to: Walid Raad

Summary: The following plates are attributed to Walid Raad, who donated them to The Atlas Group in 1998. In the statement accompanying the donation, Raad noted:

Like many around me in Beirut in the late 1970s, I collected bullets and shrapnel. I would run out to the streets after a night or day of shelling to remove them from walls, cars, and trees. I kept detailed notes of where I found every bullet and photographed the sites of my findings, covering the holes with dots that corresponded to the bullet's diameter and the mesmerizing hues I found on bullets' tips. It took me ten years to realize that ammunition manufacturers follow distinct color codes to mark and identify their cartridges and shells. It also took me another ten years to realize that my notebooks in part catalogue seventeen countries and organizations that continue to supply the various militias and armies fighting in Lebanon: Belgium, China, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Libya, NATO, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, the U.K., the U.S.A., and Venezuela.
Appendix C. Bullet Shrapnel Image
Appendix D. Six Big Images
Appendix E. Aerial Map of the Topography of Terror

Source: Heinle, Wischer und Partner Freie Architekten, Topographie des Terrors
http://www.heinlewischerpartner.de/Topographie_des_Terrors,_Berlin,_Neubau_Dokumentation
s- und Besucherzentrum und Gestaltung des historischen Gel%20%28%44ndes.33.0.html
Appendix F. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Mission Statement

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America’s national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country’s memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

The Museum’s primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Chartered by a unanimous Act of Congress in 1980 and located adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, DC, the Museum strives to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust through multifaceted programs: exhibitions; research and publication; collecting and preserving material evidence, art and artifacts related to the Holocaust; annual Holocaust commemorations known as Days of Remembrance; distribution of education materials and teacher resources; and a variety of public programming designed to enhance understanding of the Holocaust and related issues, including those of contemporary significance.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Website, Mission Statement
https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/mission-and-history
Appendix G. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Map

Source: Google Maps, Map of National Mall in Washington, D.C.
https://www.google.com/maps/place/National+Mall/@38.8896198,-77.0251712,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x89b7b79b5aff3d31:0x3a08ab4ca206274118m2!3d38.8896198!4d-77.0229772
Appendix H. Pledge Card

WHAT WILL YOU DO?
ushmm.org/genocide

I pledge to help meet the challenge of genocide today by:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Sign here
 Tear off and add your pledge to the glass case.
Appendix J. Brief Background of the Cambodian Genocide

The Khmer Rouge regime’s ideology was an adopted form of the Maoist-Communist model centered on ground level agrarian production. The goal was to create a “new” Cambodia and as such, the Khmer Rouge aimed to dismantle Cambodia back to what is referred to as the primitive “Year Zero.” This Year Zero deconstruction began on April 17th, 1975, when the Khmer Rouge implemented a widespread policy on Phnom Penh, the nation’s capital, and other large cities within Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge essentially forced the deportation of the urban society to the rural countryside. The transition of two million city dwellers to the countryside resulted in the loss of many. The cities became ghost towns. (Jones, 2006)

The “Year Zero” policy created a foundation for the Khmer Rouge to commit mass genocide against the Cambodian people. Once Cambodia’s population was based in the countryside, it was easier for the Khmer Rouge to indoctrinate, press and implement their extreme communist ideology on the masses. All citizens were coerced into participating in rural labor projects. The victims of this genocide include anyone in opposition to the “federation of collective farms.” (“Genocide - Cambodia,” 2015) The handicapped, ill, elderly and children were faced with the toughest realities as survival was determined by an individual’s ability to perform hard labor. (“Cambodian Genocide,” 2015) The group of society that took the greatest hit was the intellectuals and the educated figures of society. (A. L. Hinton, 2005)
Appendix K. Genocide Remembrance Day Poster

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