



Departamento de Sociologia e Políticas Públicas

Cultural NGO-interventions in post-conflict contexts: the case of the  
CLA in Cambodia (2009-2016)

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*To my family, Vicky and David*

## Abstract

The genocide in Cambodia, that lasted from 1975 until 1979, caused by the Khmer Rouge, left the Cambodian society completely devastated in a desolate state. The survivors of the genocide had to cope with many problems ranging from material poverty to physical and psychological injuries. In comparison to other conflicts, the most affected people during that four-year period were intellectuals and educated people. As a consequence the country lost 90% of its artists and therefore its rich artistic culture.<sup>1</sup> After the genocide, mostly in the early 1990s, Cambodia witnessed an influx of hundreds of non-governmental organizations. Nowadays there are in total around 3.500 NGOs registered in the country.<sup>2</sup> That means the second highest number of NGOs per capita in the world after Rwanda.<sup>3</sup> The NGOs came with the aim to help the Cambodians in general, and genocide survivors in particular, in the course of the signings of the Paris Peace Agreements on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1991, to put the Cambodian society back on its feet.<sup>4</sup> The Paris Peace Agreements, which were signed by 19 governments, offered a comprehensive political settlement aimed at ending the tragic conflict in Cambodia.<sup>5</sup> This work therefore, is a Case Study, which seeks to investigate the role of one specific Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Cambodian Living Arts. This NGO is working on the continuity and preservation of Cambodia's artistic cultural heritage. The investigation also surveys the social and political background to the genocide. The assessment was carried out through the analysis of the conducted interviews, which have been complemented with secondary data from organizational project reports and websites related to that topic. One of the major challenges of the Case Study will be, to connect my own primary research with the broader theoretical themes of the existing literature.

**Keywords:** Arts-based Peacebuilding, genocide, Cambodia, NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), Cambodian Living Arts, Khmer Rouge

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<sup>1</sup> Turnbull, Robert. „A Burned-Out Theater: The State of Cambodia's performing arts“. p.133

<sup>2</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/ngos-in-cambodia-its-complicated/>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Gottesman, Evan. 2003. Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: inside the politics of nation building. New Haven: Yale University Press. p.337

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Cambodia-20yearsonfromtheParisPeace.aspx>

## **Resumo**

O genocídio no Camboja, que durou de 1975 a 1979, causado pelos Khmers Vermelhos, deixou a sociedade cambojana completamente devastada num estado de desolação. Os sobreviventes do genocídio tiveram de lidar com muitos problemas, desde a pobreza material às lesões físicas e psicológicas. Em comparação com outros conflitos, as pessoas mais afetadas durante esse período de quatro anos foram os intelectuais e as pessoas instruídas. Como consequência, o país perdeu 90% dos seus artistas, portanto, a sua rica cultura artística. Após o genocídio, principalmente no início da década de 90, o Camboja testemunhou um influxo de centenas de organizações não governamentais. Atualmente, existem no total cerca de 3.500 ONGs registadas no país. Isso significa o segundo maior número de ONGs per capita do mundo, depois do Ruanda. As ONGs vieram com o objetivo de ajudar os cambojanos, em geral, e os sobreviventes do genocídio em particular, no decurso da assinatura dos Acordos de Paz de Paris em 23 de outubro de 1991, a reconstruir a sociedade cambojana. Os Acordos de Paz de Paris, assinados por 19 governos, proporcionaram uma solução política global destinada a pôr termo ao trágico conflito no Camboja. Este trabalho, portanto, um Estudo de Caso, que procura investigar o papel de uma organização Não Governamental (ONG) específica denominada, Cambodian Living Arts. Esta ONG está a trabalhar na continuidade e preservação do património cultural artístico do Camboja. A investigação também examina os antecedentes sociais e políticos do genocídio. A avaliação foi efetuada através da análise das entrevistas realizadas, que foram complementadas com dados secundários de relatórios de projetos organizacionais e sites relacionados ao tema. Um dos maiores desafios do Estudo de Caso será correlacionar a minha própria pesquisa primária com os temas teóricos mais amplos da literatura existente.

**Palavras-chave:** Construção da Paz baseada nas artes, genocídio, Camboja, ONG (Organização Não Governamental), Artes Vivas Cambojanas, Khmer Rouge

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# 1. Introduction

*“Culture is the soul of a nation. Without the culture, there is no nation.” – Rithy Panh*

Historically, war and armed conflict not only means death, it often goes hand in hand with the destruction of culture. The motives are diversified. But the destruction of cultural heritage is often considered as the attempt to rob the people of their history and to expropriate a part of their identity.<sup>6</sup> But Cambodia is not the only example of cultural devastation.

During the cultural revolution from 1966 until 1976 in China, Mao Zedong and his application of communism caused irreversible consequences on the country’s cultural and historical heritage. President Mao and the Red Guards destroyed centuries of pre-modern culture and traditions in the spirit of the political agenda of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>7</sup> The development of China in the fields of art, literature, science and education was set back and stagnated for around a decade.<sup>8</sup>

Why have cultural assets and cultural expressions become so often direct targets in conflict situations? It is shown that the destruction of cultural memory cannot only mean heavy material damage, but also in the case of Cambodia and China, the torture and killing of artists in the course of anti-intellectualism.<sup>9</sup> Anti-intellectualism can be defined as a „(...) negative attitude toward intellectual pursuits (...) and intellectuals in general. Anti-intellectualism has been around for a long time and has been practiced by many regimes particularly authoritarian ones.”<sup>10</sup> But „despite its anti-intellectualism, the persecution of intellectuals in China did not reach the level of brutality that was exercised against that class in Cambodia (...).”<sup>11</sup> The Cambodian anti-intellectualism was used to idealize the country, to oppress the political dissent and to demonize the cities to establish an agrarian socialism.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>[http://www.dgvn.de/fileadmin/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift\\_VN/VN\\_2016/Heft\\_1\\_2016/02\\_Beitrag\\_Schorlemer\\_VN\\_1-16\\_8-1-2016.pdf](http://www.dgvn.de/fileadmin/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift_VN/VN_2016/Heft_1_2016/02_Beitrag_Schorlemer_VN_1-16_8-1-2016.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Mittler, Barbara: Musik und Identität. Die Kulturrevolution und das „Ende chinesischer Kultur“, in: Lackner, Michael. Baden-Baden: Nomos 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Nur Zafirah Binte Zainal Abidin; Politicization of Culture: China’s Attempt at Reclaiming Cultural Legitimacy After Mao’s Cultural Revolution. Yonsei Journal. p.1

<sup>9</sup> <https://history.libraries.wsu.edu/history305-stratton-summer2017/author/curtis-donahoo/>

<sup>10</sup> Romero, A. 2016. Anti-Intellectualism casts shadow over higher ed. The Edwardsville Intelligencer 21 November 2016, p.3

<sup>11</sup> Khatharya Um (1998) Specificities: The Broken Chain: Genocide in the Re-construction and De-struction of Cambodian Society, Social Identities, p.145

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mr. Daniel Bultmann realized at December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

The positive and important role, that the revival of culture plays in recovery from conflict has not received sufficient attention yet and offers a rich field for study.<sup>13</sup>

A similar war not only against opponents but also against culture happened in the Cambodian genocide from 1975 to 1979. The Khmer Rouge regime under Pol Pot destroyed temples, traditions, arts and left no space for cultural expression. An estimated 90 percent of the country's artists, musicians and dancers were persecuted, killed or had fled.<sup>14</sup> Hence this great loss of Khmer culture resulted in the decline of the art-scene and the Cambodian culture in general from high civilization to almost nothing.<sup>15</sup> After the end of the genocide it took Cambodia very long until the cultural restoration gained importance among the society. The dreadful time was followed by two decades of economic hardship, when hardly any of the surviving master artists could make a living performing or teaching.

One of the key players of the revival of the Cambodian Arts sector was and is an NGO called *Cambodian Living Arts* (CLA).<sup>16</sup> CLA is a non-profit organization whose mission it is, to facilitate the transformation of a post-conflict country like Cambodia through the performing arts. Their focus lies on stimulating creativity, innovation, cultural reconstruction and the preservation of endangered art forms and rituals.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of a cultural organization on the peacebuilding process in a post-genocide country. The aim of the project is to produce a case-study of the NGO *Cambodian Living Arts* in Cambodia, to first, present the NGO and second, to analyze the effectiveness of the NGO in the context of the social and historical development of Cambodia. Furthermore, the research aims to examine the NGO's role as an important actor and cultural broker in Cambodian politics and explain the way in which the cultural intervention by it, impacts its target. It will highlight the application of culture as a tool for public policies in general.

The goal of the thesis is to contribute to the debate on the impact and influence of cultural interventions on peacebuilding processes in post-conflict societies.

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<sup>13</sup> Bergh, Arild, and John Sloboda. 2010. "Music and Art in Conflict Transformation: A Review." *Music and Arts in Action*. p.4

<sup>14</sup> Turnbull, Robert. „A Burned-Out Theater: The State of Cambodia's performing arts“. p.133

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.dw.com/en/saving-arts-nearly-wiped-out-by-khmer-rouge/a-16149469>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017



## 2. Methodology

How should the study's purpose be achieved and which methods and approaches should be applied? The study is a Single Case-Study that employed a qualitative research approach. The data collection is based on document analysis and semi-structured interviews. A single case study design was chosen as this allows the author to understand the role of CLA within the Cambodian context and to provide new data and information that will be useful for future comparisons and for better understanding the impact mechanism of the NGOs. A major reason and strength of the case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence (documents, archival records, interviews). Robert Yin has stated, that "(...) the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (...)." <sup>17</sup> Hence it particularly fits for examining the how and why of contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. In addition, it should also be mentioned, that a signal advantage of the case study also exists because of its more practical than theoretical level.

Single case studies have been nevertheless also subject to a lot of criticism. A possible weakness of this methodology lies in its objectivity and vulnerability that could be shaped by the investigator's own interests and perspectives. <sup>18</sup> To avoid this as much as possible, it is important, to keep an objective perspective as much as possible throughout the study. Another weakness could be the large amount of data that might be gathered. Therefore a detailed and careful analysis of the data relating to the socio-cultural dimension of the NGO-Intervention is indispensable.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the role of CLA within the Cambodian context and the impact of arts and culture-based projects on the peace-building process in Cambodia, the data for this study was collected via Expert Interviews. In this context, an expert is a person who has special knowledge related to his profession. <sup>19</sup>

The Interviews were conducted with key persons, including CLA-Students and Employees. Other interview respondents included political and historical analysts and academics.

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<sup>17</sup> Yin, Robert; Case study research designs and methods: Applied social research methods; London: Sage; 2004; p.2

<sup>18</sup> Becker & Bryman; Understanding research for social policy and practice, themes, methods and approaches; Bristol: Policy Press; 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Gläser, J., & Laudel, G. (2010). Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. VS-Verlag. p.11

6 Individual interviews were conducted with Hermione Brooks (Communications Manager of CLA), Phloeun Prim (Executive Director for CLA), Phina So (Program Manager/ Knowledge, Networks and Policy), Say Tola (Student of CLA), Daniel Bultmann (Author, Expert on Cambodia and Postdoc Research Fellow at HU Berlin) and Cynthia Schneider (Distinguished Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy at Georgetown University).

The list of the interview partners out of the organizational staff of Cambodian Living Arts was examined, supplemented and completed by Hermione Brooks, who is the Communications Manager of CLA. For this reason, experiences on the ability and accessibility of staff members to provide information and their willingness to pass on information were included in the selection of the persons listed. The most important criteria were the representation of the different sectors through at least one survey and the availability of the interviewees. The two other interviews (Daniel Bultmann, Cynthia Schneider) came about because interview partners named these persons at the end of the interviews (snowball method).

Individual and semi-structured Interview guides were developed for interviews via Skype that ran for between 30 and 60 minutes. Data collection was conducted between July 2017 and July 2018. Interviews were conducted via Skype or email, as the researcher was not on ground. Furthermore the interviews were conducted by an individual researcher and were held in English.

### **3. General structure of the thesis**

Interview partners gave important answers that were of relevance to all the parts of the thesis. Therefore, it was decided, that outcomes from the interviews can be found throughout the whole paper. The first part of the thesis has introduced the study, the methodology, the general structure as well as the Literature Review. The second part presents the theoretical background and the two concepts of Peacebuilding and more specifically Arts-based Peacebuilding. The third part provides an insight into the political history of Cambodia and the ideology of the Khmer Rouge. The fourth part explains the mechanism of a NGO and the way, how its activities can impact a post-conflict society. The fifth part presents and describes Cambodian Living Arts, looking at its background, its structure, activities and objectives. The sixth part will deal with the analysis of the effectiveness of CLA's work and the role of public policy on the peacebuilding process in Cambodia. The last part will give a conclusion. The annex to the report includes a bibliography and a list of the conducted interviews.

## 4. Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this research covers five areas: 1. The Political History of Cambodia and the development of the NGO sector. 2. The situation of Cambodian NGOs in the contemporary political context. 3. The Post-Conflict reconstruction challenge in Cambodia. 4. The role of civil-society in Cambodia's peace-building process. 5. Creative approaches to Peacebuilding and why culture should be at the heart of future public policy. 6. The concepts of Peacebuilding and Arts-based Peacebuilding. The literature on Cambodian history, culture and politics constitute a basis for the understanding of the genocide. The researcher has to frame the thesis within the different theories that these literatures offer. The data research and analysis focused on literature about CLA was complemented and strengthened through the gathering of supplementary literature related to conflict-transformation through culture.

## 5. Defining culture

Culture as a concept is not easy to define. It remains a hard task, as the amount of definitions is extremely manifold. The specific concepts are elusive and therefore depend on the context. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, culture has become a modern term with a widespread use and connotation. Spencer-Oatey talks in his book about 160 varying definitions of the term culture that already existed decades ago.<sup>20</sup> Their definition had a significant influence on cross-cultural psychology. In the eyes of Kluckhohn, "culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values (...)"<sup>21</sup> This approach was taken further by Geert Hofstede. In a widely cited book, he has defined culture as "(...) the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another."<sup>22</sup>

One of the reasons why the term is still so elusive, results from the fact that it was used differently in the course of history. It was used in three different ways. In the sense of the first usage, by Matthew Arnold, culture "(...) referred to special intellectual or artistic

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<sup>20</sup> Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012) What is culture? A compilation of quotations. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. p. 1

<sup>21</sup> Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions. Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum. p.181

<sup>22</sup> Jahoda, Gustav. (2002). Critical reflections on some recent definitions of 'culture'. Culture & Psychology. p.291

endeavors or products, what today we might call “high culture” (...). By this definition, only a portion – typically a small one – of any social group “has” culture.”<sup>23</sup>

The second one, by Edward Tylor, referred to “(...) a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development (evolutionary) continuum from “savagery” through “barbarism” to “civilization”. (...)“ Tylor’s definition of culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the previous definition, every human being “has” culture. This is acquired through the membership in a society.

The third definition was made by Franz Boas. Boas emphasized the “(...) uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover, he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both (...) views of culture.”<sup>25</sup> It was crucial for Boas, that one should never differentiate high from low culture.

The concept of “culture” is somehow essential and inevitable in the scientific fields. But since the concept of the term is so controversial, one might conclude, “(...) that attempts at defining culture in a definite way are futile”.<sup>26</sup> The question therefore arises, how one should deal with the term? Gustav Jahoda commented in this context that “(...) it is quite practicable and defensible simply to use the term without seeking to define it.”<sup>27</sup>

If an explanation is vital in a scientific context, the author should describe in which way the term “culture” is applied in that particular context.<sup>28</sup> This research concentrates on culture with different meanings. Culture will be used as the shared values and traditions from one specific group or people. And it will be most of all used in the sense of arts. Including creative and artistic expressions like theatre, fine arts, music, film and dance. Also known as performing arts. This usage is a quite narrow definition of culture.

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<sup>23</sup> Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012) What is culture? A compilation of quotations. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. p. 1

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Lang, A. (1997). Thinking rich as well as simple: Boesch’s cultural psychology in semiotic perspective. *Culture & Psychology*, 3, p. 389

<sup>27</sup> Jahoda, Gustav. (2002). Critical reflections on some recent definitions of 'culture'. *Culture & Psychology*. p.300

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

## 6. Theoretical background

In order to frame the discussion, the following paragraph provides a brief overview about the concept of Peacebuilding by outlining the various approaches in that field, followed by an introduction about the use of the arts and culture in peacebuilding practices.

### 6.1. Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is still a highly controversial concept for various reasons. As the opinions about the application of the term differ strongly, it covers a large range of definitions and meanings. The questions related to Peacebuilding are debated among politicians and scientists all around the world, and they relate to more general set of questions. Although it was used in the beginning almost exclusively in a top-down approach for reconstruction and reconciliation, the concept has now broadened to integrate more and more alternative approaches.

In the UN document *An Agenda for Peace* (1992), Peacebuilding is defined as an “action to identify and support structures that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”<sup>29</sup> In other words interventions, aiming to reduce the risk of a return to conflict.

According to the Agenda, it is important to note, that the concept of Peacebuilding can come into effect in all phases of a conflict, starting with the prevention of conflicts and should not only refer to the period after the conflict.<sup>30</sup>

There is one crucial point that several theories in Peacebuilding have in common. Peacebuilding is a level of the conceptual framework of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Relative to this concept, there are “(...) different processes and approaches that can be used for conflict resolution work, which depend on the particular stage of the conflict.”<sup>31</sup> Peacemaking includes diplomatic measures while peacekeeping involves military means. Peacebuilding on the other hand is usually thought of in post-war and post-conflict situations.

But the approach was taken one step further. Based on these definitions, „ (...) the actual purpose and implementation of Peacebuilding expands beyond establishing security

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<sup>29</sup> United Nations, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*, UN. Doc. A/47/277 and S/24/111, para 46.

<sup>30</sup> Theuermann, Bert (1999): *Friedenskonsolidierung (Peace-building)*. In: *Die Vereinten Nationen. Recht und Praxis*. Wien: Manz, p.103

<sup>31</sup> Zelizer, Craig (2003) “The Role of Artistic Processes in Peace-Building in Bosnia-Herzegovina.” *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol.10: No.2, Article 4.

and institutions, and building peace is an involved undertaking that requires multiple processes at all levels of society, including grassroots, mid-level, and elite-level actors.<sup>32</sup>

Originated from the initial focus on institutions and governmental structures, there have been increasing criticism including “(...) a call to focus on cultural and context specific approaches aware of local dynamics, environments and cross-cultural ways of knowing.”<sup>33</sup>

One can affirm that there is a need of several manifold tools in Peacebuilding to deal with all the complex relationships. Thus Peacebuilding relies on the ability to see new perspectives and create interactions while at the same time addressing the complicated multidimensionality of human relations. In order to transform a conflict systematically, a range of bottom-up, mid-level, and top-down approaches that build sustainable, interconnected relationships is inevitable.<sup>34</sup>

My theoretical point of view aligns with John Paul Lederach. Lederach is one of the leading researchers and experts on the subject of peace building and conflict transformation. His conceptual framework emphasizes the central role of creative expression in relation to the peacebuilding-process. In his writings, he puts the emphasis on the relationship between imagination, social change and stopping the cycles of violence. The specific thing about the concept of peacebuilding in Lederach's approach is that it stands for a very broad concept. This concept not only consists of a single or unique intervention, but includes, develops and promotes a whole spectrum of practices, approaches and scenarios necessary to transform a conflict into a more peaceful and sustainable social relationship.

Lederach does not regard peacebuilding as a temporary initiative, but as a dynamic social construct that includes a large number of activities. These include development activities, investments and the development of concepts, the coordination of resources, and activities that ensure the sustainability of a peace initiative. According to him, peacebuilding is a dynamic social process of conflict transformation.<sup>35</sup>

Lederach's approach is based on a concept that combines various components of peacebuilding into a unified integrative framework. Lederach offers a grid for the analysis of peacebuilding-projects that combines his experience as a mediator with his theoretical basis.

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<sup>32</sup> Schirch, L. (2004). *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books. p.13

<sup>33</sup> Bleiker, R., & Brigg, M. (2010) *Mediating across Difference: Oceanic and Asian Approaches to Conflict Resolution*. Honolulu, United States: University of Hawaii. p.19

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey, R. E. (2017), *Dance in Peacebuilding: Space, Relationships and embodied Interactions*, Queensland University of Technology, p.17

<sup>35</sup> Lederach, John Paul: *Building Peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided society* (1997), United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington D.C. , pp. 20/21

He differentiates the following perspectives of peacebuilding: a multi-range approach of the involved players, in which the classical top-down and bottom-up methods are further elaborated and supplemented by a mid-level approach. In addition, he provides a time frame of short- and long-term peacebuilding initiatives. Thirdly, it provides an analysis of resources, focusing on socio-cultural assets.<sup>36</sup>

In his book, *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach claims that “ (...) transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build the moral imagination. Moral imagination is described as “ (...) imagining something rooted in the challenges of the real world, yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist.”<sup>37</sup> According to Lederach, a person who has the ability to use its imagination in situations of wars and violence will develop a capacity to find creative ways to avoid and overcome violent responses.<sup>38</sup>

He sees people as a resource in the peacebuilding process and develops the assumption that identifying, understanding and dealing with problems is best done through the participation of people within their relations in their social environment.<sup>39</sup>

Lederach sees the potential for constructive change in conflicts and defines conflict transformation as follows: “In summary, conflict transformation represents a comprehensive set of lenses for describing how conflict emerges from, evolves within, and brings about changes in the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions, and for developing creative responses that promote peaceful change within those dimensions through nonviolent mechanisms.”<sup>40</sup> In the course of this process, a transformation of a social structure could sometimes be necessary. The key interdependent dimensions within the scope of this transformation are the changes in personal, structural, cultural and interpersonal aspects of the conflict.

The cultural dimension “ (...) refers to the changes produced by conflict in the cultural patterns of a group, and to the ways that culture affects the development and handling of conflict. At a descriptive level, transformation is interested in how conflicts affects and changes the cultural patterns of a group, and how those accumulated and shared

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* p.94

<sup>37</sup> Lederach, J.P. (2005). *The Moral Imagination: The art and soul of building peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.29

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Lederach, J.P. (1995). *Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures*, Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press. p.32

<sup>40</sup> Lederach, J.P. (1997) , p. 83

patterns affect the way people in that setting understand and respond to conflict.”<sup>41</sup> The author emphasizes, that conflict transformation is indispensable in connection with reconciliation.

Hence any kind of effort in peacebuilding should be a response to the subjectively experienced reality of the people. Reconciliation and the reconstruction of relations are of central importance. Therefore it is vital to deal with all the individual experiences of the conflict. “Reconciliation-as-encounter suggests that space for the acknowledging of the past and envisioning of the future is the necessary ingredient for reframing the present.”<sup>42</sup>

Following this, several researchers mention the arts as an important field to promote peacebuilding at the community level in conflict-torn societies. One very useful model to stress the role of arts in that context is by Malvern Lumsden. He talks about the three zones of social reconstruction. The outer social world; the inner psychological world and a transitional zone between the two.<sup>43</sup> The arts can help with healing, exploring ideas and helping to integrate the inner and outer worlds. Thus Lumsden locates the arts in the transitional area. The arts are an additional and not ignorable process that can support peacebuilding work.<sup>44</sup>

## *6.2. The Arts and Peacebuilding*

Arts-based projects are increasingly finding consideration in the field of conflict transformation.<sup>45</sup> As stated above, John Paul Lederach focuses on the use of arts in the peacebuilding-process, by putting it at the heart of his theory. He was one of the first in the peacebuilding field to highlight the connection between peacebuilding and artistic expression.<sup>46</sup> During the last ten years, an increased awareness of the role of artists in resistance movements and as catalysts in protests against state repression has emerged in international peace promotion. The attention of science was consequently also directed towards activities that have already been known for a long time by experts in this field, namely artistic approaches in dealing with post-conflict situations and in reconciliation

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.* p.27

<sup>43</sup> Lumsden, M. (1999). Breaking the cycle of violence: Three zones of social reconstruction. In H. W. Jeong (Ed.). *The new agenda for peace research*. p. 134

<sup>44</sup> Zelizer, Craig (2003) p.64

<sup>45</sup> Reich, H. (2012). *The Art of Seeing: Investigating and Transforming Conflicts with Interactive Theatre*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation. p.3

<sup>46</sup> Cynthia Cohen, Varea Roberto, Polly O. Walker (2011) *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*. Oakland: New Village Press. p.11



processes.<sup>47</sup> This allows us to step back from the mainstream approaches for peacebuilding, and to closely examine the practices that already exist at the ground level.

However, as Premaratna states, “(...) there is limited empirical analysis of the ways in which art builds peace at an everyday level.” And “as a result, we know surprisingly little about the exact issues at stake.”<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, it is indisputably, that the significance of art for peacebuilding lies in its role as a fundamental element of life and society. “What is expressed within the imagination of art simultaneously constitutes and is constituted by the society; both a reflection of the society and a key agent of its transformation. In treading this fine line between the real and the imagined, art has the potential to elicit social residues and complexities of conflict.”<sup>49</sup> While talking about the arts in the context of peacebuilding, it is essential to keep in mind that the arts are a medium, or a vehicle and are not by nature positive or negative in themselves. Art in general and especially the performing arts can build connections and create new and alternative spaces around conflict transformation.

Historically, the performing arts have been key elements in the creation of art and in passing on values as embodied expressions of our humanity, emotions, and imagination.<sup>50</sup> One expansive notion of arts and peacebuilding is by Cohen, Varea and Walker from 2011. They divide the potential of the arts in peacebuilding in three main areas, “(...) considering that through the arts, there is the opportunity for expression of silenced words and suppressed actions, the nourishing, repair and development of capacities which may have been affected by conflict, and providing increased nuance, complexity and texture to understanding concepts of peacebuilding.”<sup>51</sup>

Another argument for using the arts in peacebuilding is that more diverse populations, especially young people, can be targeted and their opinions and voices can be included into the dialogue.<sup>52</sup>

The scholars Shank and Schirch identify four approaches to characterize the goal of a cultural intervention: Waging conflict nonviolently, reducing direct violence, transforming relationships and building capacity. So “from the approach of a project, it is easier to decide what activity will work best to achieve the project’s goals and affect change. For example, if

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<sup>47</sup> Stanley Thomas Johnson Stiftung (2016). Jahresbericht. p.8

<sup>48</sup> Premaratna, N. (2018). Theatre for Peacebuilding. The Role of Arts in Conflict Transformation in South Asia. Palgrave MacMillan. p.7

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* p.8

<sup>50</sup> Jeffrey, R. E. (2017), p.20

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.* p.21

<sup>52</sup> Pruitt, L. J. (2013) Youth peacebuilding: music, gender and change. New York: SUNY.

the goal is to transform relationships, a project could address trauma and justice as a means of forming social bonds. Activities that promote the transformation of relationships might include visual arts therapy, drama therapy and image theatre.”<sup>53</sup>

Based on that, arts in peacebuilding can offer answers to critiques of peacebuilding that focus on institution building or general strategies rather than bottom-up, contextual approaches in peacebuilding. Pretmaratna and Bleiker are talking with regard to the potential of the arts about “broadening peacebuilding beyond the parameters of conventional or formal approaches”, “context-specific solutions”, and to “bring out perspectives and voices” that have not been noticed yet.<sup>54</sup>

Hence, as “building peace requires stretching and transforming worldviews, the performing arts can use symbolic communication to change perspectives and address conflict.”<sup>55</sup>

Another very important point is the timing for the implementation or intervention. In which stage in the conflict should an arts-based method be incorporated? Although the arts might be powerful in all stages of a conflict, peacebuilders tend to employ the arts in post-conflict peacebuilding.<sup>56</sup> Because “in the aftermath of violent conflicts, relationships need to be (re-) built across the former conflict lines. This demands the active creation of a space accessible to the members of the different sides of a conflict in which they can interact, share experiences and reflect. Only with such a space is the horizontal and vertical integration of society (and, in turn, sustainable peace) possible.”<sup>57</sup> This results in a challenge. And the challenge is to create a “(...) participatory process that does more than merely reinforce the prevalent narratives, myths and forms of storytelling that already circulate in the conflict system; instead the process should encourage disentanglement from old patterns of meanings and create new signifying practices.”<sup>58</sup>

Since CLA was founded and is working in a post-conflict setting, this paper consequently focuses the mentioned phase. According to Dagmar Reichert, art initiatives in post-conflict situations have various potentials that will be examined throughout this study:

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<sup>53</sup> Chapman, S. (2014). *The Intersection of Arts and Peacebuilding*.

<sup>54</sup> Premaratna, N. & Bleiker, R. (2016). *Arts and Theatre for Peacebuilding*. In O.P. Richmond, S. Pogodda & J. Ramovic (Eds.) Palgrave Macmillan. p.83

<sup>55</sup> Jeffrey, R. E. (2017), p.22

<sup>56</sup> Cohen (2003)

<sup>57</sup> Reich, H. (2012). p.3

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* p.4

- Pointing out that life returns to normal
- Reasons for joy and scattering
- Enabling rituals of grief
- Creating a space where different stories can be told
- Generating Impetus to overcome the victim role
- Helping to find a form to process traumatic experiences
- Initiating cooperation within and between groups and reducing exclusion
- Leading to potential small sources of income<sup>59</sup>

One reason why the arts-based peacebuilding is not yet so often applied and widely accepted lies in the failure to decisively promote people's individual initiative. It is controversial whether state structures are needed to secure long-term social processes or whether civil society forces are the actual engines of development, which must therefore be promoted and protected in particular. In this context, participative elements that promote 'ownership' and 'empowerment' of people in the partner countries are central to development policy action - according to the established technical terms, for which a clear formulation is still lacking.

The empirical approach of this paper, studying the work of the NGO Cambodian Living Arts, the issues at stake and the practices and activities through which the arts foster the reconciliation process in Cambodia, makes a contribution on that field.

## **7. Political History of Cambodia**

For a deeper and broader understanding of the issues that have led to the Khmer Rouge rise to power in the 1970s we have to take a closer look at the history of Cambodia. The country went through hundreds of years of domestic and international repression, occupation or direct influence from foreign countries, territorial divisions, insurrections and violent conflicts. In the last fifty years various different military and ideological wars marked the life of the country. This dark side needs to be accounted for a duly explained in order to better understand the role such violent past now plays in contemporary society.

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<sup>59</sup> Stanley Thomas Johnson Stiftung (2016). Jahresbericht. p.10

## 7.1. History before the Khmer Rouge

After the independence from France in 1953, Cambodia was faced, like many young independent countries at the time, with a new kind of global escalation of that time, e.g. the Cold War. One may say that the Cold War and its simplistic logics has led Cambodia to catastrophe. The impact of the aftermath on the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) is clearly there even today. The Cold War days were marked by a strained relationship first between the USA and the Soviet Union after the Second World War. This was followed by tensions in the relationships between the socialist states of China and the Soviet Union marked by an ideological debate on the future of communism. Cambodia was caught between both fronts. The British journalist William Shawcross wrote to this respect: “Cambodia is a victim of its geography and of its political underdevelopment.”<sup>60</sup>

Before taking a closer look at the Cold War period, a retrospective glance over the early days of Cambodian history will help us to see the bigger picture.

From the 9th until the 14th century, Cambodia was one of the major powers in Southeast Asia. The Angkor Empire or Khmer Empire included for some time, besides the country’s heartland, huge areas of the current states of Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and South Vietnam. The Angkor Empire became one of the greatest civilizations of mankind. The capital of the empire, Angkor Wat, is estimated to have had a population of about one million people at a time, when the biggest European cities barely had more than 50.000 inhabitants. There are not too many buildings in the world as striking as the world-famous temple complex Angkor Wat, which is also the largest religious monument ever built.<sup>61</sup>

There are those who say that the memory of the former power was one of the reasons behind the megalomania of the Khmer Rouge leaders, sometime the Khmers referred to time and time again.

But the world politics was not paying much attention to the recent history of the country. The Khmer had come under pressure from neighbouring countries after the capital Angkor was conquered in 1431 by Ayutthaya (Thailand). Then came Siam (the old name of Thailand) and later, in the beginning of the 17th century by the Annam (the old name of Vietnam).

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<sup>60</sup> William Shawcross’s report on Cambodia, *Cambodia’s New Deal* (1994), p.5

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Mr. Daniel Bultmann realized at December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

During this period the territorial integrity of the country was threatened until the king realised the French could protect them from the Vietnamese and signed a treaty of protection in 1863. One year after that Cambodia became part of French Indochina.<sup>62</sup>

After the independence in 1953, the young King Sihanouk controlled and ruled it until the year 1970. His intention was from the very beginning to maintain the country neutral and he attended the Bandung Conference to state his position. The conference was a huge step towards participation in the Non-Aligned Movement.

This political decision was shared and supported not only by the moderate nationalists but also by the communists. The foreign policy strategy behind that was in fact an attempt to remain on the sidelines of the Vietnam conflict. The king ruled the country autocratically. He fought everyone who did not support his one-party state. Those who opposed were in real danger, especially communists. Hence most of the communists decided to leave the country to North Vietnam. Others were imprisoned or went into the underground. This led to a divide within the communist party. On the one hand we had moderate veterans with a rural and Buddhist background, initially establishing the party in cooperation with its Vietnamese counterpart. On the other hand we had the pro-Chinese extremists who were getting stronger and stronger after 1962. Most of them were from urban areas, educated in France and anti-Vietnamese. This group of young communists became more powerful and became the predominant force in the party. This would later rise to the leadership circle of the Khmer Rouge.

They too were forced to move underground and hide in fear from persecution by King Sihanouk. While living in the northern jungle of the country they planned an armed resistance against the king.<sup>63</sup>

Sihanouk responded with rigidity and repression. The reaction was a growing support to Khmer Rouge even by moderate communists. Another group, where extremists had been quickly gaining popularity were young dissatisfied people who struggled to find a job. In 1967 the communist party started the civil war in the rural areas of the country under the leadership of Saloth Sar, better known under the name, Pol Pot. Pol Pot would become the secretary-general of the party, the most powerful post.

This resulted in a radicalization and militarization of the communist party while a moderate pro-Vietnamese part of the party continued to exist. This situation of two communist parties encouraged the two dominant communist powers, China and the Soviet

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<sup>62</sup> Stöver, Bernd: Geschichte Kambodschas. Von Angkor bis zur Gegenwart, München: C.H. Beck 2015

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mr. Daniel Bultmann realized at December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

Union, to provide support for one or the other side. This intervention from outside was one of the main reasons why the conflict lasted until 1998.<sup>64</sup>

## *7.2. Cambodia during the Vietnam War*

Cambodia was drawn into the Vietnam War in 1964/65, when the USA let the war escalate. From 1966 onwards, huge amounts of rice and other foodstuff was smuggled from Cambodia into the war zone. The country's income dropped sharply as a result from the loss of export duties on rice. An economic crisis was the direct consequence which led the elite of the country to turn slowly against the king.

In the course of the war, the North Vietnamese started to use the so called „Ho Chi Minh trail“, through the Cambodian highlands and jungles as a supply route for weapons and food, while supplies for the South Vietnamese and Americans were secured through the south Cambodian harbour of Sihanoukville.

Cambodia quickly got caught in the crossfire without having any own interests. „Although it was an indigenous political phenomenon, Pol Pot's regime could not have come to power without the massive economic and military destabilisation of Cambodia by the United States (...).“<sup>65</sup>

The entanglement culminated in 1969, when the American President Richard Nixon ordered the secret bombing of eastern Cambodia with B-52 aircrafts. A short time later, King Sihanouk was toppled by „ (...) the U.S.-backed general Lon Nol. The Vietnam War spilled across the Vietnam-Cambodia border, Sihanouk swore revenge, and a new civil war tore Cambodia apart.“<sup>66</sup> Sihanouk was forced into exile and moved to Beijing, where he began to form an alliance with the radical communists. The extremists that he previously demonized and persecuted were now supported by him in the war against their common enemy, the U.S.-backed Lon Nol. Sihanouk was highly regarded by the rural population and these developments would strengthen the communists significantly. The Khmer Rouge now had control also over large parts of the rural areas, whereas Lon Nol still controlled the cities.

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<sup>64</sup> Meyer, Wolfgang: Das Rote-Khmer-Tribunal – Kambodscha im Schatten der Geschichte, In: KAS, 29.April 2008. p.74

<sup>65</sup> Kiernan, Ben: The Pol Pot regime: race, power and genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79; Yale University Press, 2008. p.75

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

The largest breeding ground for the rise of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge was created by growing American bombings from 1970 until August 1973 in the eastern parts of the country and later over the entire country. To that end, President Richard Nixon called in December 1970 his „(...) National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, to discuss the ongoing bombing of Cambodia. After expressing to Kissinger his frustration that the US Air Force was being „unimaginative“, Nixon demanded more bombing, deeper into the country: „They have got to go in there and I mean really go in... I want everything that can fly to go in there and crack the hell out of them. There is no limitation on mileage and there is no limitation on budget. Is that clear?“ After that order, Henry Kissinger called the General in charge at the time, Alexander Haig, and told him: „ He wants a massive bombing campaign in Cambodia. He doesn't want to hear anything. It's an order, it's to be done. Anything that flies on anything that moves. You got that?“. <sup>67</sup> President Nixon never got an approval for his operations and he never consulted the U.S. Congress.

Around 150.000 Cambodians were killed and almost a half of the 550.000 tons of bombs were dropped in the last months of the attack. In Cambodia alone were dropped more bombs than during the entire Second World War by the Allies on Japan and three times more than over North Vietnam. <sup>68</sup> More than two million internally displaced persons were forced to leave their homes in the countryside and pushed into the cities. The majority came to the capital Phnom Penh, which was still controlled by the U.S.-backed Lon Nol and therefore never bombarded by the Americans. By 1974 the bombing had also disrupted the nations agricultural system.

The air bombings turned out to be a catastrophic failure in history. It caused the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. Moreover the American actions in Cambodia never affected the outcome of the Vietnam War in favour of the USA. They were not even able to keep the government of president Lon Nol in power. The situation and the destruction in the rural areas pushed the Cambodians into the hands of the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge were since the very beginning enemies of the USA and were fighting together with Sihanouk against President Lon Nol. So the Cambodian people basically feared new air attacks by the USA more than a takeover by the Khmer Rouge.

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<sup>67</sup> Owen, Taylor: A Spatio-Historical Analysis of the US Bombardment of Cambodia, 1965-1973

<sup>68</sup> Goeb, Alexander: Das Kambodscha-Drama, Pol Pot und der Prozess der späten Sühne. LAIKA, 2016, p.84

### *7.3. The Khmer Rouge period – The Democratic Republic of Kampuchea (1975-1979)*

From the ashes of that war-torn country, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), also known as the Khmer Rouge, took control over Cambodia on April 17, 1975. Under the leadership of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge benefited greatly from the U.S. bombardments. „Contemporary U.S. government documents and peasant survivors reveal that the Khmer Rouge used the bombing’s devastation and massacre of civilians as recruitment propaganda, and as an excuse for their brutal, radical policies and their purge of moderate and pro-Vietnamese Khmer Communists and Sihanoukists.“<sup>69</sup>

April 17, 1975 marked the beginning of the darkest and most terrible time in Cambodia. After winning a bitter five-year civil war, Phnom Penh fell to Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge. His troops, around 20.000 soldiers, invaded the capital, but were initially received with great relief by the people. They came out of their homes gathered on the streets, cheering and waved with white cloths.<sup>70</sup>

But their expectations and hopes would soon be brutally shattered. The troops asked the entire urban population to leave the city and told them the Americans would drop bombs on Phnom Penh. They declared a new nation, the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea, and proclaimed as well a new beginning of history, the „Year Zero“. Pol Pot began to transform and re-organise the Cambodian society drastically. Their aim was to establish an egalitarian and agrarian society. The urban population was forced to move to rural areas and confined to agricultural work or sent to military camps for their "re-education. Everyone who refused to do so was threatened with execution. During the evacuation thousands of people lost their lives.

The ensuing period was dominated by mass killings, forced labour, forced marriages, rapes deportations, separation from family members, torture and starvation.<sup>71</sup> Anyone who seemed to be against the communist revolution was seen as an enemy of the revolution and therefore killed. The „(...) execution of Buddhist monks, civil servants, and the urban educated class (...) was intended to cleanse society of bourgeois elements and

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<sup>69</sup> Kiernan, Ben: *The Pol Pot regime: race, power and genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*; Yale University Press, 2008. p.75

<sup>70</sup> Khamboly, Dy: *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975 -1979)*, Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2007, p.13

<sup>71</sup> Bockers, Estelle / Stammel, Nadine /Knaevelsrud, Christine: *Reconciliation in Cambodia: thirty years after the terror of the Khmer Rouge regime. Torture : quarterly journal on rehabilitation of torture victims and prevention of torture. Vol. 21., Nr.2 / 2011, pp.71-83*



religion. Furthermore the Khmer Rouge soldiers systematically destroyed temples and other cultural sites that connected ancient Khmer culture to the present.“ All foreigners in Cambodia were send away and the use of other languages was forbidden.<sup>72</sup> People were shot only because of wearing glasses, knowing a foreign language, laughing or crying.

In the four years, between 1975 and 1979, the Khmer Rouge were responsible for the deaths of about 1.7 million people, as a result of malnutrition, overwork, murder and torture. This meant the loss of a quarter of the Cambodian population.<sup>73</sup>

In 1977 new fights between Cambodia and Vietnam started to emerge. On December 25, 1978 the Vietnamese troops arrived in Phnom Penh. It took them about two weeks to expel the Khmer Rouge out of the city. So finally on January 7, 1979 the Vietnamese army finally brought an official end to the Democratic Republic of Kampuchea. The leaders of the party managed to flee into western regions and re-established their forces in the jungle along the border to Thailand.

In Phnom Penh, Vietnam was helping the creation and implementation of a new government, consisting of pro-Vietnamese communists and former Khmer Rouge members: Heng Samrin, Chea Sim and Hun Sen. The foreign secretary in this government was the 26-year old Hun Sen, who later, in 1985, became the prime minister and rules the country until today. The other two are nowadays the presidents of the two chambers in the parliament. The new communist government of the now called „People`s Republic of Kampuchea“, was supported by Vietnam and the Warsaw Pact. Consequently the USA, the western democracies, China and hence the United Nations did not recognize the new state and introduced diplomatic and development-aid sanctions on the country. Until 1992, the United Nations recognised the Khmer Rouge as the only legitimate representative of Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge, who pulled back into the jungle in 1979, restarted the civil war with the assistance of China, Thailand and the USA. As the war kept on going, the 1980s were widely considered a lost decade in Cambodia. Due to the lack of international cooperation, any kind of reconstruction in the country was not possible.

Also the pursuit of the Khmer Rouge was impossible. They were highly needed as a counterpart to the communists in Phnom Penh. Once again, the Cambodians were trapped in between the interests of the two power blocs in the Cold War. However, the Khmer Rouge finally collapsed in 1998, but their legacy remains.

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<sup>72</sup> Gellman, Mneasha: World views in peace building: a post-conflict reconstruction challenge in Cambodia, *Development in Practice*, Vol.20, Nr.1 February 2010. p.88

<sup>73</sup> Bockers, Estelle / Stammel, Nadine /Knaevelsrud, Christine: Reconciliation in Cambodia: thirty years after the terror of the Khmer Rouge regime. *Torture : quarterly journal on rehabilitation of torture victims and prevention of torture*. Vol. 21., Nr.2 / 2011, p.75

Hun Sen rules the country since 1985 with his Cambodian People's Party, the CPP and has been in power now for over more than 30 years. That makes him to the seventh-longest serving political leader in the world. Despite the fact, that Cambodia is still a formal constitutional monarchy, the CPP somehow always used to have a clear majority, although with a decreasing support.

His leadership-style is often described as very reckless. "For three decades, Hun Sen has repeatedly used political violence, repression, and corruption to remain in power." Therefore, ,, (...) Cambodia urgently needs reforms so that its people can finally exercise their basic human rights without fear of arrest, torture, and execution."<sup>74</sup>

After the death of Pol Pot in December 1998, the last combat units of the Khmer Rouge capitulated. This was accompanied by some amnesties and the integration of Khmer Rouge soldiers into the army, where they hold responsible positions these days.

In the aftermath of the need to come to terms with the past is widely discussed and is very controversial. Victims and perpetrators live side by side and are even part of the same families. In Cambodian schools for instance, the Khmer Rouge regime is widely unacknowledged and was for a long time not even part of the curriculum. This shows the problems of the Cambodian society very well and proofs once again, that there is still much to do and that there is still too little attention being paid to this area.<sup>75</sup>

#### *7.4. Ideology of the Khmer Rouge*

On 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge moved into the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh. After years of civil war, the conquest was first celebrated as a liberation and greeted with rejoicing. But the joy did not last long, as the city's population was asked to leave the city on the second day after the conquest and was forced to do so partly by force within a very short time. By evacuating the cities and setting up labour camps, an agrarian state - also known as Democratic Kampuchea (DK) - was to be created with the aim of increasing rice cultivation in order to help Cambodia flourish economically.<sup>76</sup>

The revolution under the communist dictator Pol Pot (born under the name Saloth Sar) established completely new political and social structures within a few months, which

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/13/cambodia-30-years-hun-sen-violence-repression>

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Mr. Daniel Bultmann realized at December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>76</sup> Luig, U. (2011). Töten und Kannibalismus: Erinnerungen als politischer Diskurs in Kambodscha in: Paragrana, Vol. 20, Nr. 1, pp.99-100

were imposed in radical form under coercion and partly inhuman working conditions. These included the collectivization of economic production and consumption, the abolition of money, markets and the court, the destruction of books and the elimination of schools and public education, the prohibition of freedom of opinion and travel, the prohibition of Buddhism and other religions and the subordination of the family to the party organization Angkar. At this time Cambodia is often referred to as a "prison without walls".<sup>77</sup>

In addition to hunger, overwork and illness (because there was also little medical care in the country), executions were frequent causes of death, since the enemies and critics of the revolution had to be destroyed, some of whom were "exposed" very arbitrarily by trivialities and disobedience. Above all the urban population and intellectuals - the so-called "17 April people" or "new people" - as well as monks and people with other ethnicities were among these potential enemies of the revolution and were imprisoned, tortured and/or executed.<sup>78</sup> The organization's constant fear of these possible enemies resulted in radical surveillance, which was encouraged by the dissolution of kinship and family relationships, as children were educated from an early age to serve the revolution, spy on their parents and even commit violence against them in an emergency. The omnipresence of spies and the policy of accusation led to a "climate of mistrust, fear and insecurity"<sup>79</sup>, so that even persons in powerful leadership positions had to fear for their lives.<sup>80</sup>

Another central aspect of the regime is the division of the population into base/old people and new people, i.e. those who come from the country and those from the city. The people from the country (base people) had clear advantages and higher chances of survival in the regime than those from the city. In addition, the positions of authority at local level were primarily occupied by people from the rural population.<sup>81</sup>

Hinton mentions in his book "Why Did They Kill?" (2005), three key elements in the life of the rural population before 1975 that were undermined by collectivisation: the family, the village community and religion. Before 1975 there were still about 3000 temples in Cambodia, which were destroyed during the Khmer Rouge with the banishment of religion or transformed into warehouses, hospitals, prisons and others. According to Luig, this fight against Buddhism is considered "targeted Attack on Traditional Power Structures", as

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.* p.100

<sup>78</sup> Kiernan, B. (2008), p. 251

<sup>79</sup> Luig, U. (2001), p.101

<sup>80</sup> Hinton, A. (2005). *Why did they kill?: Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press. p.11

<sup>81</sup> Shapiro-Phim, Toni. (2002). *Dance, Music and the Nature of Terror in Democratic Kampuchea*, Los Angeles: University of California Press. pp. 179-193

religion fulfilled deeply rooted social, moral and educational functions and the monks had a high degree of authority. Of equal importance was the dissolution of family and kinship, as parents and children were separated and assigned to different labour camps in which they worked and fed in collectives.<sup>82</sup>

Another aspect of the Pol Pot regime worth mentioning is the ethnic cleansing, to which Kiernan refers in detail in his book "The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79". According to Kiernan, there were two central points in the history of the Pol Pot regime: the question of race and the struggle for centered control. Although there have been some class differences in the regime (through division into new and old people), the differentiation of the population due to "race" has been of far greater importance: "[N]on-Khmers, who comprised a significant part of the supposedly favored segment of the peasantry, were singled out for persecution because of their race. (...) Favours in DK, such as they were, were reserved for approved Khmers".<sup>83</sup> Kiernan has described in detail the persecutions of Muslim Chams, Ethnic Chinese, Ethnic Vietnamese, Khmer Krom, Thais and Lao and "Tribal Minorities" in the various regions.

To report on the consequences of the regime, extensive work of its own would be necessary, since they contain numerous different aspects ranging from demographic, economic and political to social and psychological dimensions. Luig describes Cambodia's situation after the regime as follows: "With a record of one and a half to two million deaths from hunger, exhaustion, malnutrition or the violence of their tormentors, the Khmer Rouge left a country whose economic and social infrastructure was as destroyed as its formerly highly developed culture and religion".<sup>84</sup>

## **8. Non-Governmental Organizations as actors of the civil society and its role in post-conflict societies**

### *8.1. What are Non-Governmental Organizations?*

There is no clear definition of the term Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in the literature.<sup>85</sup> According to the concept, a precondition for an NGO is the non-governmental

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<sup>82</sup> Hinton, A. (2005). pp.9-10

<sup>83</sup> Kiernan, B. (2008). p.26

<sup>84</sup> Luig, U. (2012). „Spaces of Death“: Erinnerung, Repräsentation, Politik in: Historische Anthropologie, Vol. 20, Nr. 2, p. 162

<sup>85</sup> Brunnengräber, Achim / Klein, Ansgar / Walk, Heike (2005): NGOs im Prozess der Globalisierung, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, p.13

nature of the organization. The initiative to establish the organization therefore lies within the civil society and has not been influenced or initiated by a state intervention. The organization is neither represented by state members nor subject to state control.<sup>86</sup> Despite the lack of an official definition, it is also widely accepted, that NGOs are organizations, that pursue activities to relieve the suffering, promote interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, and undertake community development.<sup>87</sup> What they all have in common is the social place that they are assigned to. This social place neither belongs to the state nor the market, but to the so-called “third sector” or “civil society”.<sup>88</sup>

But the term NGO as an analytical category remains unclear. For instance, even if NGOs are neither governmental, nor profit-oriented, “(...) there are nevertheless some NGOs that receive high levels of government funding, and others that seek to generate profits to plough back into their work.”<sup>89</sup>

In structural terms, NGOs can be either large or small, formal or informal, bureaucratic or flexible. Some are funded external and some are funded locally. One key distinction is “(...) between membership forms of NGO, such as community-based organizations or people’s organizations, and intermediary forms of NGO that work from outside with communities, sometimes termed grassroots support organizations (GSOs).”<sup>90</sup> NGOs are also described as civilian groups of actors who want to influence politics without violence but through discourse. They lack the power of governments, because they cannot threaten them, but must limit themselves to discursive strategies. Possibilities of this discursive influence are, for example, agenda-setting, whereby NGOs influence the selection of the topics for the media.<sup>91</sup>

NGOs can have quite different motivations and values. Some might try to ““(...) charitable and paternalistic, while others seek to pursue radical or “empowerment” –based approaches. Some NGOs aim to meet only people immediate needs, while others take a longer-term view (...).”<sup>92</sup> Of course, an NGO can also combine some of these described motivations and values.

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<sup>86</sup> Frantz, C., Martens, K. (2006). Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NGOs). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. pp.27

<sup>87</sup> Cleary, S. 1997. The Role of NGOs under Authoritarian Rule. New York: Macmillan Press.

<sup>88</sup> Klein, A. (2001): Der Diskurs der Zivilgesellschaft. Politische Hintergründe und demokratietheoretische Folgen, Opladen: Leske & Budrich

<sup>89</sup> Lewis, D. (2009), Non-Governmental Organizations and Development. London: Routledge, 2009. p.2

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Frantz, C., Martens, K. (2006). p. 29

<sup>92</sup> Lewis, D. (2009), p.2

The term NGO is somehow a post- World War II expression. It was “(...) initially coined by the United Nations (UN). When the UN Charter was adopted in 1945, it was stipulated in Article 71 that NGOs could be accredited to the UN for consulting purposes.”<sup>93</sup> Hence the term was mainly used in the meaning of international bodies that were engaged within the UN context. That changed in the 1980s. Since then, the meaning of the term was expanded. It now also includes not only international but also national bodies, and it also includes societal actors that are engaged outside the UN context.<sup>94</sup>

## *8.2. The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in post-conflict societies*

Why did NGOs become so important in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding? The NGOs in general enjoy a high level of public acceptance. For many, they are the guarantors for the democratization of international politics. They stand for articulating neglected issues, problems and interests that are not perceived by state actors and companies.

NGOs might replace governments through providing mechanisms in areas where the government has failed. When international organizations want to work with NGOs, they do it often because they want to work with local people. And “(...) there is a search for a mechanism that can support grass roots initiatives and that recognizes and responds to local people’s realities. But large bodies or outside funders are not able to work with individuals, or with the complex and socially diverse mass of a population and need a ‘proxy client’ which NGOs can provide.”<sup>95</sup>

Another reason for the importance of NGOs according to Crowther is that „(...) NGOs appear to offer new structures, outside old and failed systems, an alternative channel for bypassing corrupt or entrenched interests in existing Government organizations.”<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, good governance is a crucial aspect for most of the NGOs. It is somehow the key to a functioning NGO. But what means good governance? It means the effective management of an NGO in a transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive way to the needs of the people.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Martens, K. (2002). Mission Impossible? Defining Nongovernmental Organizations. *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*. Vol.13, No.3, p.271

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Crowther, S. (2001) *The Role of NGOs, Local and International, in Post-War Peacebuilding*, CCTS; Nr. 15, p.3

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.* p.4

<sup>97</sup> Lekorwe, Mogopodi & Mpabanga, Dr. (2007). *Managing Non-Governmental Organizations in Botswana*. p.6

In summary, van Leeuwen refers to the role of NGOs as actors of the civil society in a post-conflict situation: “Civil society is imagined to contribute to peaceful societies in a variety of ways. Civil-society organizations are seen as alternatives to the state in providing development needs. Further, they would contribute to good governance and democracy through playing watch-dog roles or act as a form of political opposition. Finally, they could play roles in healing societies torn apart by conflict, by mediating in local conflict and other reconciliation activities.”<sup>98</sup>

At the same time, the promotion of NGOs by governments also means dependencies and opportunities for instrumentalisation that should not be underestimated. Many critics repeatedly point out the danger that NGOs, as an alternative elite in association with government institutions without social legitimacy, shape world affairs.<sup>99</sup>

And also the discussions about the extent to which NGOs are really independent are highly polarised. On the one hand, it is argued that one of its advantages is its independence from political and financial institutions. On the other hand, it is assumed that NGOs are very dependent on donor organizations. Members of NGOs are generally constantly looking for financial resources to carry out activities and achieve their proclaimed goals. Donors often have certain priorities regarding the type of projects they support. Thus, many NGOs are forming according to the priorities of the donors and their interests, only to receive support, and not because of actual deficits and problems in the country. However, there is also another interpretation of that issue. The growing interest of donor institutions in supporting NGOs gives them the power to negotiate their terms. This means that donors are no longer the only ones who decide on requirements and conditions.<sup>100</sup>

### *8.3. Civil-Society in Cambodia*

Like in many other developing countries, the scope of activities of both international and local NGOs is very broad and touches upon almost any field of social development: the environment, civil and religious education, human rights, poverty alleviation, emergency

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<sup>98</sup> van Leeuwen, M. (2008), *Partners in Peace: Discourses and Practices of civil-society Peacebuilding*. Wageningen University. p.209

<sup>99</sup> Leggewie, C. (2003): *Transnationale Bewegungen und demokratische Frage*, in: *Transit*. Europäische Revue, Heft 24

<sup>100</sup> Abdelrahman, Maha M. (2004): *Civil Society Exposed: The Politics of NGOs in Egypt*. Tauris Academic Studies.

relief and many others. In 2013, there were about 3500 registered NGOs in Cambodia, which meant the second highest number of NGOs per capita in the world after Ruanda.<sup>101</sup>

This also means that “some NGOs specialize, others try to fulfill a very broad mission. In general, though, the NGOs seek to fill gaps in government social and economic policies. According to a report in 2012, between 20 and 30 percent of Cambodia’s population benefit directly from the activities of NGOs. (...) Yet while there is widespread recognition of the significant contribution NGOs have made to Cambodia’s reconstruction and development, their role does occasionally attract controversy.”<sup>102</sup>

And despite the fact that the freedom of expression, association and assembly are guaranteed by the Constitution “(...) and through Cambodia’s accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1992, in practice these rights have been steadily undermined by a combination of recent legal measures and initiatives by the government.

The human rights organization Amnesty International published a report in February 2018, where it expresses its deep concerns about the recent developments in Cambodia:

*“The Cambodian authorities have arbitrarily and sweepingly restricted the rights of civil society groups and individuals to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. 2017 saw the first enforcement of the controversial and vaguely worded Law on Associations and Non-Government Organisations (most commonly known as the „LANGO“), a law that was adopted in 2015, without meaningful consultations with affected groups or the wider public. The LANGO imposes a number of sweeping restrictions on, and oversight of, non-governmental organisations („NGOs“) in Cambodia. Notably, it has introduced a mandatory registration scheme for NGOs and given Cambodian authorities unchecked authority to deny registration requests. It includes vaguely worded grounds for denial registration, temporary suspension and dissolution of NGOs.“*

Since the local elections in June 2017, the dismantling of democracy and human rights in Cambodia has accelerated. This development is particularly evident in the state repression by the free press and the political opposition. Numerous radio stations were closed and the english-speaking newspaper Cambodian Daily was forced to give up under the pretext of unpaid taxes. Oppositionals were arrested or exiled to avoid imminent arrest. The most

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<sup>101</sup> <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/ngos-in-cambodia-its-complicated/>

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*



prominent, but not the only example of this is the imprisonment of Kem Sokha, the president of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) in September 2017.<sup>103</sup>

With China's rise to a new regional power and the withdrawal of the US under President Donald Trump from the region, the balance of power is shifting. China has been investing in roads, housing and bridges in Cambodia for years and is also providing the government with military support. In 2016, 36 percent of development aid in Cambodia came from China - four times as much as from the USA. Gradually, the government under Xi Jinping has thus become Cambodia's most important source of foreign investment. Chinese investments have the big advantage without the condition of democracy. They allow the government to take action against critics without endangering the economic and political survival of its own regime.<sup>104</sup>

Many observers of the developments in Cambodia raised the alarm. However, the National Assembly elections, are scheduled for July 29, 2018. The European Union already warned that the elections could not be legitimate if the opposition should be excluded. Because an electoral process from which the largest opposition party has been arbitrarily excluded cannot be legitimate.<sup>105</sup> Hence the future of the Cambodian civil-society is threatened and therefore uncertain. The elections will have a huge impact in which direction the development will go.

## **9. Cambodian Living Arts**

### *9.1. Background of Cambodian Living Arts (CLA)*

Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) is an organization that is convinced, that arts and cultural expression are vital to the future of Cambodia. The NGO believes, that the arts are at the heart of vibrant and peaceful societies. The story of CLA begins during the reign of Pol Pot's tyranny. Arn Chorn-Pond, born and raised in a family of musicians, was taken from his home in Battambang and sent to a children's labour camp where he was forced to play the propaganda tunes of the Khmer Rouge. While the majority of the other camp inmates died,

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<sup>103</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/world/asia/cambodia-kem-sokha-arrest-hun-sen.html>

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/kambodscha-china-kommt-die-demokratie-geht-a-1167432.html>

<sup>105</sup> <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/kambodscha-eu-setzt-hilfen-fuer-wahlkommission-aus/20703388.html>

Arn was able to evade death by playing the flute to entertain the Khmer Rouge officers. By doing this, and because he was a quick learner, he survived and eventually escaped when the Vietnamese invaded in 1979. After spending months lost in the Cambodian jungle, he stumbled into a refugee camp in Thailand where he met the American NGO-Worker Peter Pond who brought him to live in New Hampshire in the US and later formerly adopted him. Although settling into his new surroundings was not easy at first, Arn found he could connect with the people around him through music and went on to found a series of humanitarian organizations including Children of war and Peacemakers.<sup>106</sup>

In 1998 Arn founded the Cambodian masters performers program which went on to develop and grow into Cambodian Living Arts. Arn saw that the arts, which had saved his life during the years of the Khmer Rouge were in danger of dying out and found Cambodia's remaining master artists living in poverty. Because Arn's musical knowledge literally saved him from death, the mission of CLA is to revive Cambodia through the arts. "By revitalizing these almost-lost traditions and teaching them to Cambodian youth, CLA hopes to create an environment where Cambodian arts empower and transform communities. Culture is expressed through creative outlets and the dynamism and wealth of Cambodia's artistic traditions can provide a common ground for the production of a positive cultural identity."<sup>107</sup>

For the first decade CLA worked to protect and revive traditional performing arts: music, dance, theatre and puppetry. All of these and more were at risk of being forgotten.<sup>108</sup> So CLA started to support master artists and set up classes where the masters could pass on their skills and their knowledge to young students in their communities all over the country. As the situation of Cambodia changed and the arts continued to grow from strength to strength, its work developed too. As well as supporting the master artists, CLA needed to work with the next generation. Students were growing up and need to be able to make a living in the arts.

Thus, eight years ago, CLA started to perceive the arts and culture of Cambodia evolving into the national and international signature of the country so it has constructed a 2020 vision for "a vibrant and dynamic cultural sector throughout Cambodia".<sup>109</sup> In an interview, Phloeu Prim, Executive Director of CLA described their development strategies of engaging and supporting the new and younger generations of artists and art practitioners,

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<sup>106</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2015-2016

<sup>107</sup> <https://peaceworkstravel.com/cambodian-living-arts-a-catalyst-for-peace>

<sup>108</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2015-2016

<sup>109</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2013

instead of focusing only on the revival of the tradition. The organisation launched scholarship programmes to support artist students in their education programmes to create their own work from and find their own context within the tradition. Meanwhile, they look to sustain their work within the local communities they had involved that some of their programmes now have become a professional tool in local arts development while some others have been integrated into the community as part of the arts education in schools. CLA has been developing a different model to attain economic sustainability in each of these communities.<sup>110</sup>

The role of CLA is now evolving once again. Regarding that, CLA is stating: “Over the last 20 years, both Cambodia and the arts scene have developed rapidly and we have evolved our work to match. We have focused on helping talented people to build and develop careers in the arts, through scholarships, fellowships, and support to troupes and individuals.”<sup>111</sup>

CLA is working to provide opportunities, experiences and inspiration to those artists. This means, that they can travel, create new work and start their own projects. They want to inspire young people to keep connected to Cambodia's cultural heritage and to express themselves through the arts. CLA will also continue working to grow audiences for performing arts and build links between arts communities, both within Cambodia and with their neighbors around Asia.

In the meantime, CLA has been actively participating in cultural policy formulation and CLA acts as a catalyst organisation in Cambodia bridging the grassroots initiatives and the government's cultural policy.<sup>112</sup>

Internationally, CLA pays efforts in raising the visibility of Cambodian arts. As an illustration, it led 125 Cambodian artists as ambassadors of Cambodian art to perform and exhibit in New York in April and May 2013 under the project Seasons of Cambodia. Another project that was performed outside of Cambodia is Bangsokol: A requiem for Cambodia, which was performed in December 2017 in New York and Melbourne and will be performed in 2018 in Paris.<sup>113</sup>

From humble beginnings, the organization went on to become an independent non-profit organization with the help of its dedicated team. CLA continues to work towards the vision of rebuilding Cambodia's once vibrant cultural heritage. NGOs like CLA give new

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/about-us/>

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

hope to post-conflict countries like Cambodia. Peace-Building is a long process, but probably the most important one a war-torn country can undertake. “By uniting a country around creativity, we can develop as human beings, living together through peace and understanding, rather than torn apart by hate.”<sup>114</sup>

## *9.2. Funding Model of Cambodian Living Arts*

As a relatively developed organisation in Cambodia, CLA adopts a funding model with three clearly defined income streams. With regard to fundraising strategies, Prim commented on the divergent funding models in the United States and Europe. He noted that numerous non-profit cultural organisations are totally private in the American model while European ones have been heavily publicly funded.<sup>115</sup> He then continued to point out that when there is economic recession and the resulting funding reductions, funding for cultural institutions was the first to be cut, and thus European organisations are encountering big challenge to sustain themselves. Hence, he preferred to apply a mix of strategies of generating income for CLA. Among the three different income streams, individual donations currently makes up about 31% of CLA’s income, institutional funding contributes to about 29% of that while the earned income takes up about 40% of CLA’s total income today.<sup>116</sup>

### *Individual Giving*

The first income stream is coming from individual donors, now mostly based in the United States. CLA has been historically strong in securing funds from individual American donors who believe in philanthropy and the role of arts and culture and want to engage with Cambodia by funding some of their programs.<sup>117</sup> CLA is established as a charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in the United States so they are well positioned to fundraise there, where the culture of philanthropy is remarkably strong as part of a specific American culture.

According to Prim, one of the most effective core tools for CLA to promote

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<sup>114</sup> <https://peaceworkstravel.com/cambodian-living-arts-a-catalyst-for-peace/>

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

<sup>116</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

Cambodian arts and culture is to offer cultural delegation trips to bring people from America to visit Cambodia in person and to see Cambodia through the lens of arts and culture.<sup>118</sup> This is absolutely an effective cultivation strategy for a nonprofit to engage individual potential donors to its cause. CLA runs this cultural delegation not just once a year, but it also host family trips or any people who are interested in visiting Cambodia.

More than that, Prim hoped to broaden CLA's donor base to other donors from around the world.<sup>119</sup> Undeniably, strategies to expand donor base globally are feasible given the trend of increasing globalisation and the advancement in communication technology and social media.

### *Institutional Funding*

The possible greater opportunity for CLA to acquire institutional funding was remarked by Prim who divided this kind of institutional or foundation funding into two categories:

- . (1) International funders that fund Cambodian programs, for example, the European Union, French Development Agency, and some of them have very specific budgets to fund programs in Cambodia.
- . (2) International institutional funding towards arts and culture, such as funding from UNESCO or Asia-European Foundation. These are international organizations that support the promotion of arts and culture around the world.

Obtaining such institutional funding usually involve the process of grants application.<sup>120</sup>

### *Earned Income*

Believing in the need for non-profit organisations to generate income in order to sustain themselves, CLA has created cultural products in the forms of performances, workshops for tourists and cultural delegation bringing people from around the world to see and to visit Cambodia.<sup>121</sup> In addition, CLA assists in placing artists with hotels or companies for performances at special events in various venues. Meanwhile, the organisation also sells tangible commercial products, like CDs, T-shirts and bags as souvenirs.

Furthermore, as a kind of creative industry programme, CLA has created and been

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

running a social enterprise that is a performing art platform that targets the tourist market. The platform showcases performances in different art forms created by the organisation, and then tickets are sold to tourists. The aim is to generate profits which will then be re-invested into the non-profit work of the organisation. In this sense, it develops a healthy cycle for the organisation to sustain and grow, and improves its work to better achieve its mission and vision.<sup>122</sup>

### *9.3. Activities and Objectives of Cambodian Living Arts*

The mission of Cambodian Living Arts is to promote the transformation of Cambodia through the arts and culture. Therefore, CLA runs four program areas: Arts Development, Culture & Arts Education, Experience CLA and Knowledge, Networks & Policy. The four programmes support 16 master musicians and around 300 students and assistant teachers.<sup>123</sup> Cambodian Living Arts employs 41 people (organizational staff) directly and is managed by an international advisory board of directors that consists out of nine members based in the USA and Cambodia.<sup>124</sup>

Its annual report states, that these four programs together work towards the vision of „(...) a vibrant and dynamic arts sector in Cambodia“ and that they believe “that the arts are at the heart of a vital society”.<sup>125</sup> The four main programs are discussed in more detail below.

#### Arts Development

The arts development program is the program that CLA started with in 1998. It is at the heart of its work since that time. It includes the „(...) support of artists, troupes, teachers, and communities to sustain their work in the arts and to earn a living.“ It is done by „(...) providing training in both artistic and non-artistic skills, giving financial, administrative, and logistical support, and creating opportunities for collaboration and exchange.“<sup>126</sup> Within the last years CLA has focused on two main areas. First, to support community leaders to sustain arts teaching and Second, to help artists generate income by using their arts skills.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> <https://culture360.asef.org/resources/cambodian-living-arts-cla>

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Ms. Hermione Brooks realized at December 1<sup>st</sup> 2017

<sup>125</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Pich Sarath, a teacher and leader of a community called *CLC* (The Community of Living Chapei), can be given as an example of how successful CLA is acting on that field: „*CLC was founded in May 2013 with seven youth members. Our activity is promoting the traditional art of Chapei through demonstrations by young people. (...) We got ideas and support from CLA, as we wanted to be a quality, independent troupe. We now have a clear structure within the group (...). We've learned about troupe management. As artists, we only knew how to perform before, but now we have learned how to manage as well. (...) We also earn a monthly income. We utilize social media as our promotional channel, and post photos of our activities. I've noticed that there are more young people interested in learning Chapei as well. Back in 2013, i had only three students. Now, i have almost 20 students. We also perform for good causes, such as environmental issues and promoting birth control.*“<sup>128</sup>

### Culture & Arts Education

In January 2017, CLA launched a five-year pilot program in Phnom Penh to develop a „(...) model for culture and arts education in the public education system.“<sup>129</sup> CLA is collaborating in this area with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the UNESCO. It is also planned to work with other „(...) arts and culture organizations from around Cambodia with a range of different experiences.“<sup>130</sup>

The project focuses on two areas:

- 1) Culture & Arts Education Policy: including national curriculum development, teacher training and advocacy.
- 2) Culture & Arts Education Practice: including after school clubs and workshops, artist talks, film screening and arts programming including performances and exhibitions in schools.

Arts education is indispensable to help the young generation in developing self-confidence, think critically, and develop one's own opinion.<sup>131</sup>

A singing teacher, called Kong Nary, commented on this as follows:

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<sup>128</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2014-2015. p.6.

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/arts-education/>

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

*„Through this program we started the conversation about arts education among people and experts, national and international, from ministries and NGOs. To me, arts is very important for education from a young age. It makes people peaceful and creative.“<sup>132</sup>*

### Experience Cambodian Living Arts

Experience CLA is the name of the cultural enterprise program. Its aim is to create “(...) sustainable and fairly paid jobs for artists and technicians, and give audiences an opportunity to experience quality, authentic Cambodian performing arts.”<sup>133</sup> The long term aim is that in the future, Experience CLA could also make profit to support and fund other programs of CLA.<sup>134</sup>

The main activities are a Traditional Dance Show, Living Arts Experiences and Cultural Tours and Trips around Cambodia.

The Traditional Dance Show is a regular show at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. It is performed almost every night by a troupe called *Yu Vek Selapak* to an audience up to 200 people per night.<sup>135</sup> The leader of the troupe, Phal Saravuth, talks about his work:

*“Our group has developed so much since we started dancing in CLA’s Traditional Dance Show. The young artists (...) have learned new skills; they can do all types of dances. Folk dancers can do classical dance, classical dancers learned folk dance, and the artists help each other to grow. Many artists started off as students, but now they are professional artists. They have increased their incomes, and they can support their studies and buy vehicles. My troupe performing at the National Museum is really what I wished for – I couldn’t believe I have this opportunity, it’s a dream come true.”<sup>136</sup>*

Living Arts Experience is the general term for tailored workshops, that CLA offers to people, who are looking for a “(...) hands-on experience of the arts, where they can meet local artists and try out Cambodian dance, music, or shadow puppetry for themselves.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017. p.9

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/experience-cla/>

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>135</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017. p.27

<sup>136</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017. p.27

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.



The third activity is the Cultural Tours and Trips around Cambodia. In 2016, CLA “(...) organized two customized cultural tours of Cambodia for family groups and two trips for school groups this year.” Their team “(...) guided guests through a unique cultural journey, including performances, workshops, and visits to artists`homes and studios, and other cultural sites. Through these experiences, people who are passionate about arts in Cambodia can immerse themselves (...)”<sup>138</sup> in the Cambodian culture.

Experience CLA started as a small project five years ago, and has grown to become a program with an annual turnover of over \$ 500.000.<sup>139</sup> So CLA aims to be a role model for creative and genuine Cambodian cultural experiences.

### Knowledge, Networks & Policy

This program supports the development of the arts sector in Cambodia, by building knowledge about arts and culture; strengthening networks (in Cambodia and with neighboring countries); and engaging with cultural policy development.

In the context of this program, CLA works with cultural practitioners – including artists and managers, both emerging and established – working independently or with organizations, and from both private and public sectors.<sup>140</sup>

## **10. The effectiveness of the work of CLA**

Let us take a look at the extent to which the activities of Cambodian Living Arts described above are having positive effects on the Cambodian post-conflict society. If one takes the theories of Lederach and especially Reichert as a basis, one can take a closer look at specific aspects. A number of these effects were identified by the respondents.

### Pleasure and Joy

The activity and work of CLA helps their students and participants of the workshops as well as the visitors of the concerts, dance shows or any other events to return to normal life and

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p.28

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p.10

serve as an occasion for joy and scattering.<sup>141</sup> The founder of CLA, Arn-Chorn Pond refers to that: “When people come together and play music, old or young, their relationship starts to build, then they start to sing, and then they start to talk, and then something else happens. (...) They become happy and the community starts coming together and they start clapping and they start dancing, and the place becomes hyped up (...).”<sup>142</sup> Pond is also convinced that without the entertainment, there would be more violence in Cambodia<sup>143</sup>.

### Increased Communication and Cooperation within and between Groups

The work of CLA also helps those involved, to deal better with grief and express it in an artistic and creative way. Furthermore it creates a space for different stories.<sup>144</sup> One of the main and first aspects in the courses and workshops is, that the students learn to access their emotions.<sup>145</sup> Because according to Boal artistic activities „(...) have the potential to overcome verbal barriers, communicating and reaching hidden emotions and feelings that everyday language is unable to bring to life. Art has the power to “democratize” therapy and healing, moving it out of the realm of professionals and enabling ordinary people to work together to engage in their own therapeutic processes.”<sup>146</sup>

The different activities of CLA became also a tool for dialogue between different group members in a conflict. The various platforms are meeting places for people to hear and understand experiences of the others. The concerts, danceshows and workshops also became very important for the young generation to hear and understand the stories of their ancestors.<sup>147</sup>

Meanwhile, members of CLA also attended various international conferences to exchange ideas with other organisations in the field of "Arts-based Peacebuilding". It is about sharing the Cambodian experience, and learning from the different experiences that the other countries have had. Phloeun Prim explained the advantages like this: „At conferences like in Salzburg or Phnom Penh, it is really interesting to hear peers that were in Africa or in the Middle East that have went through the same issues as us. Differently from

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Ms.Say Tola realized at December 18<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>142</sup> <http://www.viewfromthepier.com/2011/07/29/arn-chorn-pond-cambodia/6/>

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Ms.Say Tola realized at December 18<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Boal, Augusto. 1985. Theatre of the Oppressed. New York: Theatre Communications Group

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

different conflict zones and different issues but at the same time where the role of arts and culture had played such a predominant role.<sup>148</sup>

In 2016, CLA even hosted the first „Forum on Living Arts in Post-Conflict Countries“ in the capital, Phnom Penh. At this Forum, 50 people from all over the world who are working in the fields of cultural renewal and development, youth resilience, and social innovation came together and discussed the role of arts as a unifying and peacebuilding factor.<sup>149</sup>

### Reconciliation, Confidence and Identity-Building

Another crucial point is the changing of the narrative and overcoming the trauma and victim role. The Executive Director of CLA, Phloeun Prim states in this regard:

*“ When you ask most of the people about the first image that comes to their mind when they think about Cambodia? The first answer the majority will give you is the Killing Fields and Angkor Wat. So Cambodians have been victims for the last 50 years, waiting for someone to rescue them. But what I believe is that our destiny is in our hand. And that we can have all the Cambodians working on changing the country. We finally have to overcome and change this narrative. The Khmer Rouge have tried to kill many artists but not the artistry of Cambodia. Because it is our soul. I think we have to grieve and remember the loss, but I do not think the genocide should stand as dominant symbol of the country. I have seen for the last years so many examples of the transformation of the arts and all those kids, masters and artists. That makes me feel optimistic about the future of Cambodia. ”<sup>150</sup>*

### Give the Artists a Livelihood and Creating new cultural Leaders

The company creates remarkable job opportunities through its activities. For example, 70 permanent positions for artists and technicians who are only responsible for the dance shows. In addition, 170 artists from all over the country were able to earn money through private performances. Another 100 people have found temporary income through Arts Workshops.<sup>151</sup>

But the main goal of CLA is to train the cultural leaders of tomorrow so that one day they will stand on their own feet and start their own companies. Hence CLA helps artists

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/2-report-living-arts-in-post-conflict-contexts-practices-partnerships-possibilities/>

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

<sup>151</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017

and arts professionals to develop both artistic and non-artistic skills, through its work, it aims to make sure, that the arts sector has a supply of well-trained creative professionals in years to come.<sup>152</sup>

CLA is offering opportunities for creation in the contemporary context, while staying rooted in tradition. However, the economic side does not seem to be ignored by their Executive Director Phloeun Prim: “I have also been exploring an economic model for culture. I don’t want them to think that becoming an artist means living an impoverished life. I want to create projects for people to find values and have dignity while being an artist. When it comes to sustainability of the cultural sector, artists cannot continue creating alone; they need arts managers. (...) Therefore I thought we would need to develop the leadership of the next generation – to take over the foundation.” So the focus of CLA lies at the model of socio-entrepreneurial, where arts can sustain a living. In order to achieve this, CLA is helping the students to think about economic development through some programs looking at ways in which these arts can sustain and then develop and regenerate themselves.<sup>153</sup> There are already a number of positive examples. One fellow is running e.g. two independent art-spaces in Phnom Penh. These spaces are quite successful and she is also engaging students from the Fine Art School. One of her venues became already one of the most known art-spaces in Cambodia.<sup>154</sup>

## **11. The role of cultural policy in the development of Cambodia**

The recognition of the role of culture in development has been increasingly advocated in Cambodia in recent years. The challenge is still, to ensure that the full range of benefits of culture is taken into account and that culture is integrated into national development plans and policies as a defining and sustainable component.<sup>155</sup>

But of course it must be mentioned that there have been setbacks time and time again. Recently, censorship became a growing mandate of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MCFA). This and the few rent-seeking opportunities in cultural policy are likely to keep MCFA at the bottom of the government portfolio. Although this is not a worldwide novelty, the case of Cambodia may be unique in that neopatrimonial networks in the cultural sector are probably not so strong and thus offer an opportunity for the establishment of a potential cultural agency. The Ministry is underfunded, its staff is not well trained and any

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<sup>152</sup> Cambodian Living Arts, Annual Report, 2015-2016

<sup>153</sup> <https://jfac.jp/en/culture/features/asiahundreds012/>

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

kind of support is welcome.<sup>156</sup>

It is important to understand that Cambodia does not yet have a large cultural infrastructure and the little there is, you can especially find in the urban centres like Siam Reap or Phnom Penh. For performing artists, this means a lack of opportunities to perform and a low income.<sup>157</sup>

The Cambodian economy is primarily agricultural. The mechanisms and structures that would enable the cultural sector to grow still need to be developed, as do the official data and the capacities of the majority of employees in the public cultural sector. Today, foreign aid programs largely finance the development of the cultural and creative industries, and the country lacks bookstores and cinemas. As a result, cultural participation and social respect for all arts and culture-related professions remain limited.<sup>158</sup>

In addition to the few artistic activities, there is no universal art education in public schools, leading to a generation that grows up culturally uneducated. Although national cultural policy is officially dealing with this topic, it has so far failed to adequately implement the given objectives. Other cultural policies are generally irrelevant, weak or outdated.

While in the past there was hardly any participation in the formulation of cultural policy, the situation is different regarding the national cultural policy. As some civil society actors and the UNESCO were involved, it resulted in consultations and clear invitations to civil society involvement found their way into politics. This could be seen as the beginning of a change that the government wants to facilitate.<sup>159</sup>

## 12. Conclusion

This dissertation has drawn on the role of cultural interventions on post-conflict societies through the case study of the NGO *Cambodian Living Arts*. Now at the conclusion of my investigation This research, which is supported by secondary data, confirms that the cultural interventions like the one by *Cambodian Living Arts* in Cambodia, contribute to the reconciliation and peacebuilding-process in a post-conflict society.

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<sup>156</sup> Brennert, K., Towards an arts council formula: Exploring cultural governance solutions in Cambodia, Paper to the ICCPR, Seoul, 2016

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017

<sup>158</sup> UNESCO, Strengthening the Governance of Culture to Unlock Development Opportunities. 2013. pp. 24-27

<sup>159</sup> Brennert, K., Towards an arts council formula: Exploring cultural governance solutions in Cambodia, Paper to the ICCPR, Seoul, 2016

In conclusion, and with a view to the theories of Lederach and Reichert, some things can be noted. As Lederach pointed out, a closer look at CLA's work has shown that people, who have the ability to use their imagination in post-violence situations, can and will develop a capacity to find creative ways to overcome violent responses.<sup>160</sup>

CLA has furthermore recognized that through the participation of people within their relations in their social environment, it is possible to identify and deal with the problems in the best possible way. Reconciliation and the reconstruction of relations are of central importance. CLA has therefore identified, that it is essential to deal with all individual experiences of the conflict and process them through artistic confrontation.<sup>161</sup>

As Lederach additionally said, the activities and engagement of CLA demonstrates, that the performing arts can build connections, create new and alternative spaces around conflict transformation and target especially the young generation.

Although there still exist areas for further research, it can be concluded that cultural interventions hold much potential for contributing to peacebuilding. They are powerful tools for transforming relationships that closely link them to the processes of peace-building and conflict transformation.

But something also became very clear through the research. Cultural policy as a so-called „soft power“ will probably always have a hard time asserting itself in the fight for limited resources, precisely because its effects cannot usually be measured linearly. And there is also the fact, that reconciliation concepts are difficult to measure because there is not a single meaning for reconciliation. Moreover, the success of reconciliation activities depends on a gradual process, which is made more difficult by a series of small and broad context-specific social, political and cultural influences.<sup>162</sup>

Lederach therefore concluded that peacebuilding, like the artistic process, has its own sense of timing and process, which has unexpected results and does not fit into the regular development and humanitarian models.<sup>163</sup>

For societies that went through a conflict like Cambodia, there are a number of social, political and cultural challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve social reconstruction. These challenges must be addressed by a range of actors and through different approaches. And as it has been shown, art and culture initiatives definitely have the potential to address some of these challenges and problems.

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<sup>160</sup> Interview with Ms. Cynthia Schneider realized at May 30<sup>th</sup> 2018

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Lederach, J.P. (2005). *The Moral Imagination: The art and soul of building peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.35

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### 13.3. Conducted Interviews

1. Interview with Ms. Hermione Brooks realized at December 1<sup>st</sup> 2017
2. Interview with Mr. Daniel Bultmann realized at December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017
3. Interview with Ms. Phina So realized at December 14<sup>th</sup> 2017
4. Interview with Ms. Say Tola realized at December 18<sup>th</sup> 2017
5. Interview with Ms. Cynthia Schneider realized at May 30<sup>th</sup> 2018
6. Interview with Mr. Phloeun Prim realized at June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018