Concept Note for Co-applicants

An international exchange on transformative memory between artists, activists and academics in Gulu, Uganda

Background
The Transformative Memory Partnership seeks to create an international network of scholars, artists and community-based memory workers to co-create and exchange knowledge and practice on the ways memory is employed to address the responsibility persons have towards the well-being and rights of others in the aftermaths of mass violence. State-created or endorsed memory projects include trials, truth commissions, national inquiries, museums, commissioned works of art or monuments. Such projects exist alongside victim-led and community-based memory projects, such as the creation of public shrines or tributes to the dead, large-scale marches, sit-ins, protests and demonstrations, and creative works such as memory quilts, public art installations and performances. Not all memory-building processes are transformative or even oriented towards more inclusive, pluralistic and egalitarian ways to be together. Some stakeholders can and have used memory to instill nationalistic projects based on the exclusion or dispossession of others. Taking into account these very different uses and outcomes of other types of memory projects, the Transformative Memory Partnership aims to examine what makes the work of memory transformative.

Goal
The goal of the international exchange is to foster dialogue, research and artistic creation on transformative memory in the aftermaths of mass violence amongst artists, activists and academics.

Guiding questions
The theme of the international exchange is to reflect in depth on the transformative possibilities of memory. We start from the assumption that people remember differently, and in ways that are generative. We suggest that persons and collectives who endure, suffer and live through violence – and whose memory is often denied, erased or devalued by regimes of power – transform relations between each other, the living and the dead, the material and spiritual word through memory acts. Through memory, persons transform relations of oppression, dispossession and power and raise questions about shared responsibility and ways of being together.
• What makes memory transformative? What do we mean by memory in this context? Is transformative the right concept?
• When is memory transformative of relations of oppression, dispossession and power? When is it not?
• How do place based and relational ways of knowing inform ways of being, and being together? How do they challenge or contest assumptions about memory and transformative memory?

Why an international exchange?
As guests of the Justice and Reconciliation Project in Acholi-land, Uganda, the international exchange brings participants into dialogue with each other and in relation to Acholi ways of knowing, remembering, relating and being, and will involve storytelling, art, music, walking tours, and orality. Through the exchange, we hope we to open a creative space for generating knowledge related to our themes and questions. The exchange approach purposely moves away from the ‘expert’ to foster co-learning, creation and listening. In doing so we hope to challenge assumptions and think anew.

Expectations of participants
You will be expected to play one or more of the following roles in the 5 days of exchange, please consult the agenda:

1. Prepare a 90 second introduction of yourself for the first day of the exchange, be creative but don’t go over time.
2. National participants will host a small group of international participants in your community, memory site or archive.
3. Facilitate and / or share reflections during the workshop or wang-o.
4. International participants will prepare a short contribution (a paper, creative work, a concept, a reflection) to share during the workshop, on the fourth day of the exchange. You will have 15 minutes to present this and we ask you design it in a way to engage others in a dialogue. If your contribution requires certain logistics, please contact us and we will work with you to make it happen.
5. Act as your own documentarians during the exchange, this can be in the form of journal notes, photographs, audio, or video. We propose to use this in the Digital Archive as a collective journal project. Documentation guidelines will follow.
6. Participate in the public event on day 5.

Outcomes
1. Strengthened place based and relational praxis;
2. Strengthened relations amongst participants and partners;
3. Knowledge exchange amongst the diverse group provides an opportunity to reflect on our work, rethink what we think we know about memory, and challenge our assumptions;
4. To generate new creative, policy and research knowledge related to the themes of the partnership.