Scientific Charter of the Pluralistic Memories Project

1. Introduction

The present Charter outlines the fundamental principles of scientific cooperation within the Pluralistic memories project. The Charter aims to spell out a consistent framework for the joint research efforts. It should be used as a guide for discussions and decisions within the project's scientific Steering group and shared with all associated researchers to facilitate a transparent reading of the project's scientific values and goals, as well as to encourage communication around these values and goals.

2. Core values

The different researchers involved in the Pluralistic memories project are guided in their scientific conduct by a set of core values. While acknowledging that there can be tensions between singular values and that none of them takes on an absolute form, the members of the research consortium foster a continuous and critical discussion about the appropriate way this system of values can orient their research activities:

2.1. Autonomy

The research consortium strives toward protecting and strengthening the academic freedom of all of its members and aims to ensure that scientific choices are made without interference or pressure from political, economic, religious or other extra-scientific authorities.

2.2. Universality

The research work contributes to an open and critical construction of fundamental knowledge, which is aimed to be widely accessible where appropriate and relevant at local and global levels, beyond particular communities, networks, or interest groups.

2.3. Pluralism

The researchers address differences in scientific sensibilities, rooted in different societal contexts or disciplinary traditions, through constructive dialogues, which are respectful of differences without reifying them, which facilitate mutual learning without circumventing scientific arguments, and which accommodate for particular priorities while striving to identify shared objectives.

2.4. Transparency

To allow for the critical debate and assessment of all scientific findings, the research consortium promotes a culture of systematic documentation, peer scrutiny, and data sharing within the research consortium, as well as with the wider scientific community.

2.5. Responsibility

The researchers consider the impact of their research outcomes on stake-holding communities, strive toward a constructive dissemination of research outcomes and do everything possible to avoid putting their findings at risk of being used to fuel animosities or otherwise contrary to the values guiding the research effort.

2.6. Collegiality

The researchers nurture the scientific relevance and integrity of the research consortium as a whole, as well as about the scientific development and well-being of other individual researchers, and commit themselves to act jointly as well as individually to promote the values and goals expressed in the present Charter, according to their specific roles and responsibilities in the project.

3. Scientific objectives

The different researchers work together to achieve the scientific goals set out in the full research proposal, for which funding resources have been allocated to the research consortium. The design of specific research activities needs to be critically assessed and progressively adapted to the internal learning process within the research consortium as well as to changing external circumstances. Any future amendments to the research design should bring the project closer to the achievement of the following overarching goals:

3.1. Collecting testimonies

To preserve memories, new testimonies are collected on each research site through semi-structured interviews with people who are willing to share their personal memories of conflict-related events. Particular efforts are made to interview people who are diverse with regard to markers of identity that were politicized during the conflict (e.g., language, religion), generation, gender, and social background. Oral testimonies are recorded, transcribed, anonymized, translated, and archived. To allow future users to understand the specificities of the new corpus of testimonies, the circumstances and conditions of their production are carefully documented.

3.2. Observing transmission

Ethnographic analyses focus on how existing memories of conflict are produced, used, and circulated within conflict-affected communities. The research strategy should enable field researchers to scrutinize the processes by which people refer to narratives about the past in daily social interactions, political campaigns, or ritualized commemorations, and to question the understandings and motives of the actors involved in the preservation, circulation, legitimisation, or marginalisation of testimonies, or other sources of indirect historic knowledge.

3.3. Fostering resilience

To facilitate the sharing of memories within local communities, specific community workshops are organised at selected locations in collaboration with local civil society organizations. During these workshops, participants are presented with material based on the gathered testimonies and are invited to work together on designing a public event for sharing certain testimonies with a wider local audience.

3.4. Documenting change

To document changing patterns of recognition of diversified memories, a longitudinal survey should be conducted at each research site. A representative sample of the adult resident population is surveyed on retrospective life events and conflict exposure, reactions to different memory contents, conflict-related attitudes, and community climates. The survey should be designed in such a way that populations that are more diverse regarding their experiences of conflict, as well as populations living closer to locations where community workshops take place, will be over-sampled.

3.5. Training researchers

To transmit core skills, promote a common research culture, and facilitate young scholars' integration into a wider international research network, all doctoral students funded by the project participate in the project's own international training program. They are enrolled as doctoral students at the University of Lausanne, and are jointly supervised by a Swiss researcher and a researcher based at their respective research site. All doctoral students participate in yearly two-to-three-week intensive ad hoc courses, and benefit from additional mentoring support from one international steering group member.

3.6. Archiving memories

The project aims to support the development and use of local memories archives in conflict-affected societies, to secure the archiving of testimonies, field notes, and survey responses, as well as to facilitate their further exploitation for scientific purposes. For all of these purposes the research groups collaborate closely with FORS, the Swiss Centre of expertise in the social sciences. The data services of FORS support and advise the development of local data archives, store secure copies of testimonies gathered across the different sites, function as the repository for their English translations and for the collected survey data, and contribute to a proactive data dissemination policy throughout the international scientific community to stimulate secondary analyses of the gathered material and data.

4. Research partnerships

To provide a sustainable framework for joint research activities, the research consortium strives towards building a multilateral framework for scientific collaboration, as well as to institutionalise bilateral research partnerships between host institutions in Switzerland and in the South.

4.1. KFPE principles

The Guide for trans-boundary research partnership, elaborated by the Swiss commission for research partnerships with developing countries (KFPE), serves as a framework for the construction of partnership arrangements that foster sound knowledge generation, mutual trust, mutual learning, and shared ownership. Scientific decisions taken by the Steering group give due consideration to the 11 principles laid down in this guide, and use them as conceptual tools to monitor, critically reflect, and creatively develop scientific partnerships.

4.2. Multilateral agreement

The Project agreement between applicants regulates ownership of intellectual property, publication of results, data sharing process, and procedures in case of disaccord within the research consortium. Individual researchers commit themselves to follow the conditions and procedures spelled out in these multilateral clauses, and the Steering group collectively promotes an overall culture of scientific collaboration and exchange in line with the principles laid down in the agreement.

4.3. Bilateral agreements

Bilateral partnership agreements, between the University of Lausanne and the different partner institutions in the South, provide a binding framework that defines the responsibilities of host institutions and of individual coordinators of the respective research groups. Individual or collective decisions regarding the implementation of the research project should be informed by the roles and responsibilities laid down in these bilateral agreements, and be consistent with the overarching objective to build sustainable research partnerships.

5. Project management

The research consortium organises itself around three main management bodies. These collective bodies supplement and support the individual functions and responsibilities of the main applicant (or principal investigator) and co-applicants (or co-investigators), such as they are defined in the applicable legislation and regulations of the Swiss National Science foundation.

5.1. Scientific steering group

5.1.1. Assignments

The Steering group is the main agenda-setting body of the research consortium. Through a process of collective deliberation, it defines:

a. the conceptual framework of the common research design

b. the contents of the doctoral training programme

c. the scope of training or expert missions for members of the Advisory board

d. the priorities of the collective publication and dissemination strategy (via joint North-South and junior-senior researcher publications in particular)

5.1.2. Composition

The Steering group is composed of all researchers exerting a supervisory responsibility toward at least one doctoral student financed by the project, as a Swiss supervisor, local co-supervisor or mentor. The Steering group is chaired by the principal investigator. Whenever a new supervisory responsibility starts or a supervisory responsibility ends within one of the research groups, the principal investigator informs all members of the resulting change in the composition of Steering group. To ensure a balanced composition in terms of disciplinary, thematic, and contextual expertise within the Steering group and mentoring programme, the principal investigator can propose to include a new researcher not affiliated with one of the partner research groups, as an expert member. All proposed changes in the composition of Steering group can be accepted tacitly or, on the request of one its members, have to be approved by an absolute majority of members. In the case of refusal by the Steering group to co-opt a new member, the distribution of supervisory responsibilities should be reconsidered accordingly by the involved local research group in agreement with the principal investigator. The scientific coordinator of the research consortium is permanently associated to the Steering group, with a consultative voice.

5.1.3. Functioning

Members of the Steering group meet annually to assess the overall scientific progress of the project, discuss the joint research agenda, and design upcoming research and training activities. Decisions can be adopted by consensus or by a positive vote from an absolute majority of members, either during the annual meeting or via electronic consultation of all members. The chair of the Steering group prepares the annual meeting, moderates the group's discussions, and facilitates its decision-taking processes. To work effectively, the Steering group can delegate the elaboration of conceptual frameworks or other tasks to more compact, topic-specific working groups. The composition and scope of these working groups has to be previously adopted by the Steering group. Working groups regularly inform the Steering group about the progress of their

discussions and conclusions, and take into account feedback from other members.

5.2. Board of governance and dissemination

5.2.1. Assignments

The Board of governance and dissemination monitors and provides feedback to the project management in the following fields:

a. the investment of research funds by the principal investigators and partner researchers

b. their policies toward research collaborators

c. their compliance with research ethics

d. the communication and dissemination strategy of the research consortium

5.2.2. Composition

The Board is composed by at least three senior executives at the University of Lausanne: the Dean of the Faculty of social and political sciences (or another member of the deanship in charge of the faculty's human resources policies); the Head of the University's International relations office (or another member of the University's International relations and research department in charge of agreements with foreign universities); the Head of the Data and research information services at the Swiss Foundation for research in the social sciences (or another member of the service in charge of the data archives). The three concerned units, in agreement with the principal investigator, appoint one representative as a permanent member to the Board. The members of the Board can decide, in agreement with the principal investigator, to co-opt additional temporary or permanent members, if they consider that complementary expertise or functions are required to fulfil the Board's assignments.

5.2.3. Functioning

To be able to monitor the project management, members of the Board are regularly informed by the principal investigator about important decisions, changes, or difficulties of the research consortium. Upon request they can obtain further information on the project governance, access relevant documents, address queries to other members of the research consortium, take part as observers or participants in shared activities, or organise meetings on specific issues on their own initiative. At least once a year, the Board meets with the principal investigator to discuss a comprehensive progress report on the different facets of the project management, assess management challenges and suggest solutions. The Board can provide oral feedback to the principal investigator, or issue written recommendations. Written recommendations are based, whenever possible, on a consensus among Board members; exceptionally,

they can be adopted by a majority of Board members. Furthermore, members of the Board regularly collaborate individually with the principal investigator, and possibly other partner researchers, to discuss or solve particular situations related to their function or field of expertise.

5.3. International scientific advisory board

5.3.1. Assignments

Members of the Advisory board support the work of the Steering group by:

a. providing competent advice or engaging in scientific exchanges or collaborations with individual research partners on specific issues

b. implementing ad hoc training or expert missions assigned to them by the Steering group

5.3.2. Composition

The Advisory board is composed of researchers and practitioners who cover the full range of expertise required to implement the project successfully. New temporary or permanent members of the board can be nominated by any member of the Steering group. The proposed nomination can be accepted tacitly or, on the request of one its members, has to be adopted by an absolute majority of members of the Steering group.

5.3.3. Functioning

Members of the Advisory board are invited on an ad hoc basis to participate in particular training of expert missions, whose scope has been previously defined by the Steering group. They can also be contacted by individual partner researchers to reflect or collaborate on specific issues, or initiate themselves such exchanges. They are informed about the main conclusions of the annual meetings as well as about other important scientific decisions or initiatives taken by the Steering group. Feedback from members of the Advisory board should be given explicit consideration in any subsequent decisions taken by the Steering group on related matters.

6. Doctorates

Doctoral students and their supervisors strive to establish constructive working relationships, on the basis of the principles laid down in the Code of practice for the doctorate of the University of Lausanne. The following responsibilities apply in particular:

6.1. Doctoral students

Doctoral students conceive their doctoral work as striving to make an original contribution to the international scientific literature. This work is in the research domain

associated to their position within the Pluralistic memories project and based on their fieldwork on the respective research sites. They regularly inform their supervisors about the progress of their work, especially when they meet difficulties or feel that certain aspects of their research project might be reconsidered or revised. They participate actively in the project's training programme and, as far as possible, in other relevant training opportunities.

6.2. Swiss supervisors

Swiss supervisors bear the primary responsibility to guide the doctoral students throughout the implementation of a research project that fulfils the standards for obtaining a doctoral degree at the University of Lausanne. They meet their doctoral students in principle twice a year to discuss all aspects of their research, scientific training, publication strategy and career prospects. Between these meetings, they regularly provide constructive feedback and scientific suggestions on any issue relevant to the advancement of the doctoral project.

6.3. Local co-supervisors

Local co-supervisors provide regular and constructive feedback on the conceptual framework and fieldwork of the doctoral student, according to a division of tasks agreed upon with the Swiss supervisor. They support the doctoral student in their fieldwork, and, prior to each fieldwork, discuss the use of protocols for risk analysis to ensure the doctoral student's compliance with research ethics and own safety.

6.4. Mentors

Mentors offer a complementary expertise to their assigned doctoral students and facilitate their integration into a wider international scientific network. During the annual meetings of the research consortium, they discuss chosen topics related to their doctoral project and relevant dissemination strategies with the doctoral students they are mentoring. They collaborate more closely on at least one high-quality publication project with their assigned doctoral students.

7. Research ethics

The research consortium pays specific attention to develop, implement, and monitor research ethics aiming to avoid that the research activities harm participants, researchers, or stakeholders. These research ethics are distinct from and complementary to policies aiming to foster positive impact of research outcomes, and they cannot be compromised against any other objective.

7.1. Protection of participants

In order to avoid harm done to participants, prior to any fieldwork, the Steering group defines and applies specific policies:

a. to secure data confidentiality, including clear and workable data security provisions

b. to prevent re-traumatisation of participants, including ad hoc training, clear interviewing guidelines and appropriate supervision

7.2. Protection of researchers

In order to avoid harm done to researchers, from the early stages of the project on, the Steering group defines and applies specific policies:

a. to shield researchers against external threats, including local pre-field risk analyses, the establishment of secure internal channels of communication, and sensitive external communication

b. to shield researchers against internal malfunction, including a transparent distribution of responsibilities, effective conflict resolution procedures, and pro-active measures for a fair recognition of scientific contributions

c. to prevent vicarious traumatisation, including ad hoc training of field researchers, regular debriefings by competent staff and sensible work assignments that take into account potential traumatic exposure

7.3. Protection of stakeholders

In order to avoid harm done to stakeholders, the Steering group develops a pro-active dissemination strategy:

a. to prevent, as far as possible, the politicisation or use of research outcomes in ways that contradict the values of the research consortium, by means of rigorous and transparent documentation of fieldwork activities, as well as sensitive communication of findings to chosen stake-holders

b. to build networks of support that can be mobilised to react to and limit possible inappropriate uses of research outcomes by external actors

8. Ratification

The Charter has been adopted unanimously on 2 May 2014 by the Steering group, after thorough discussion of its provisions and consultation of the Board of governance. It can be amended subsequently on the initiative of any member of the Steering group, following the same decision-taking process and explicit approval by at least three quarters of the members of the Steering group

Appendices:

A. Founding members

B. Multilateral clauses